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The Role of Portland State University as a Community Partner in Addressing Homelessness

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THE ROLE OF PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY AS A COMMUNITY PARTNER IN ADDRESSING
HOMELESSNESS

By

Jennifer Hoskins

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of Portland State University as a community partner in addressing the issue of homelessness. The research includes a literature review, findings from a 10-month participant observation study, and interviews with community and academic leaders. The findings from the study focus on community needs, which include having a citizenry educated on issues of poverty and homelessness; having vocal support for public policies that serve people who are homeless; insight from research; and having labor to get work done. The research findings also focus on university needs, which include classroom curriculum centered on poverty and homelessness; service opportunities for students; research partnerships for faculty and students; fieldwork locations; and affordable housing for students and their families.

Recommendations are given for how Portland State University can better partner with the community to address homelessness. These recommendations first suggest studying the impact of university-community partnerships from the perspective of individuals living in homelessness. Recommendations also include establishing committed senior capstones focused on different aspects of homelessness in Portland; increasing course offerings on poverty and homelessness; developing a stronger connection between the Office of Research and Strategic Partnerships and community organizations; and forming student organizations that focus on homelessness.

Finally, recommendations suggest looking to PSU's School of Social Work for guidance on how to build successful partnerships that serve individuals living in homelessness.

Introduction

In the winter of 2015 I was working at Lines for Life in Portland, Oregon, answering crisis calls for the suicide hotline. One particular night was especially rainy and chilly. I had been on the phone with an individual calling from a cell phone at a location just a few streets away. The caller didn't have a weapon on him, and he wasn't going to cause himself immediate harm, but he told me that he hoped not to survive the night. Through our conversation, I learned that my caller had been living outside for several months. The misery of rain drenched, isolated nights on the cold sidewalks of Portland had become unbearable for him, so much so that he was hoping not to wake up the next day. As the voice on the other side of the line, my job was to try to connect him to available resources. However, these just did not exist. He had placed his name on several waiting lists for a shelter bed. It was more than a six-month wait for a cot. There was no place other than outside for him to sleep. We were less than a mile apart from one another, and there was little more I could do for him. That night I stayed on the line with him until he fell asleep.

As part of my junior year honors internship at Portland State University (PSU), I served in the position of suicide intervention call worker. The work of de-escalating suicide situations was life changing for me, and I had decided to focus my academic work on social issues such as mental illness, poverty, and homelessness. As a student at PSU, I was learning in an urban environment where the issues I was studying were unfolding in the community around me. My community-based learning experience at Lines for Life sparked my research interest in exploring the role played by the urban university in its surrounding community, especially concerning issues that affected vulnerable populations. I chose to observe PSU as a community partner

through the lens of homelessness in Portland. I wondered, how are university-community partnerships working to serve individuals living in homelessness?

I determined to understand the role of PSU as a community partner within the Portland region. To do so, I set out to perform participant observation research in the community. This work included multiple service opportunities and extensive interviews. During one of my first community service experiences, in the summer of 2015, I provided a meal to a student who had been my classmate in the prior quarter. He had come to Sisters of the Road Café for a needed meal, and I was there to learn. The more I went out into my community observing, the more I realized that my research question would never be about whether partnerships should occur. Members of the community are students at the university, and university students are members of the community; a relationship between university and community already exists. Instead my research needed to focus on the nature of these relationships.

When I set out to complete my thesis, I could not have predicted the sudden swell of attention that homelessness would receive during 2015 and 2016 in the Portland region. The crisis of homelessness came under intense focus by media groups, politicians, activists, and local businesses. This intensity provided a unique opportunity for me to conduct interviews and participate in the community during a time when community leaders and academic leaders were interested in discussing the issue of homelessness.

This thesis will include an extensive literature review focused on university-community partnerships within the context of homelessness, followed by findings from a ten-month participant observation research study. In order to interpret the results of the study, it is necessary to have a general understanding of Portland State University as well as an understanding of the current crisis of homelessness in the Portland community.

About Portland State University

Portland State University sits on a 49-acre campus in downtown Portland, Oregon. The university supports 28,000 students in both undergraduate and graduate programs (Portland State University, 2016). PSU is an urban university where students attend classes in the heart of a busy city and many of the spaces on campus used by students are also open to the community (Portland State University, 2010). Although it houses some students in campus dormitories, most students instead commute to the university from neighborhoods within Portland (Portland State University, 2010). The average age of a PSU student is 26 with 66% of students being over the age of 23 (Harris, 2014, pg. 2).

PSU is a research and teaching university offering more than 200 degrees (Portland State, 2016). The university employs 7000 individuals of which 3000 are student employees and graduate assistants (Portland State University, 2014). According to the 2014 economic impact report, 67% of PSU graduates remain in the region following graduation (Portland State University, 2014). The annual economic impact of PSU to the Portland area and the state of Oregon is 1.44 billion dollars (Portland State University, 2014).

Portland State University regularly receives accolades for being a national model for how universities can partner and engage with their communities (Portland State University, 2016). Yearly, PSU students participate in almost 1 million service hours in the community (Portland State University, 2016). The university's strategic plan for 2016-2020 includes as one of its top five goals "extending our leadership in community engagement" (Portland State University, 2016).

The Crisis of Homelessness in the Portland Community

The increased interest in the crisis of homelessness in Portland began in January 2015 with *The Oregonian's* eight-part series by Anna Griffin, titled *Our Homeless Crisis*. The first article focused on reasons for the failure of the Portland region's ten-year plan to end homelessness. Griffin noted that the same number of individuals were experiencing homelessness in 2015 as had been ten years prior (Griffin, 2015). At the time of creating the ten-year plan, the architects of the plan were unaware that they were heading into the great recession, that budgets would become tight, and the numbers of families and individuals in crisis would increase.

To receive federal funds allocated towards homelessness, communities must produce "statistically reliable unduplicated" counts of the number of individuals who are homeless, living sheltered or unsheltered, during a one-night period (Agans, Jefferson, Bowling, Donglin, & Silverbush, 2014, pg. 215). This is referred to as the "point-in-time count." The figures I will present in relation to numbers of individuals living in homelessness will come from the published figures of the biennial point-in-time count. These numbers are highly controversial. Activists question the accuracy of the count for many reasons including the time of year it is held and the difficulty of accounting for all individuals in one night (Boden, 2009). The numbers of people living in homelessness are suspected to be higher than what is presented in the point-in-time count (Boden, 2009).

In January 2015 there were 1,887 individuals counted sleeping unsheltered on the streets of Portland's Multnomah County, 1914 were in emergency shelters or transitional housing, and an additional 12,543 individuals were sleeping in what is termed as "doubled-up" living (Kristina Smock Consulting, 2015, pgs. 3-6). The point-in-time count shows there were 1161 women

sleeping on sidewalks or in shelters in Portland with half reporting being victims of domestic violence (Kristina Smock Consulting, 2015, pg. 3). Amongst those sleeping outside, entirely unsheltered on the night of the count, 76 were young children (Kristina Smock Consulting, 2015, pg. 3). When looking at those living in emergency shelters, 704 were elderly, more than 40% were people of color, and 54% were identified as having a disability (Kristina Smock Consulting, 2015, pg. 8).

The life circumstances that result in homelessness are varied, and the needs of each person may be unique, but they do not remain un-housed in Portland for lack of expert know-how, or community desires. The primary problem is a lack of affordable housing. The wait to find a place in an emergency shelter in Portland is six months (Griffin, 2015). This is because there are few emergency beds (roughly 600 total) and the people in them are staying longer (Griffin, 2015). The waiting list to be placed in permanent housing is 1.5 to 10 years depending on the individual's needs and circumstances (Griffin, 2015). In September 2015, Mayor Charlie Hales of Portland declared a housing state of emergency and promised 30 million dollars from the city and county to begin addressing this crisis (Bayer, 2015). While this is a start and has immediately been used to increase shelter bed numbers, housing experts have suggested that the Portland region must invest \$50 million annually in affordable housing over the next twenty years to adequately address homelessness and Portland's housing crisis (Schmidt, 2015).

At present, community leaders are organizing legislative action to increase funding for affordable housing. Activists are working to dismantle anti-poverty laws targeting vulnerable community members sitting or lying on Portland's city streets. Many organizations provide direct service to individuals experiencing homelessness through meals, shelter space,

employment services, addiction rehabilitation, and healthcare. Several of these organizations are current partners with Portland State University in various capacities.

Literature Review

The local issue of homelessness affects PSU because the university sits geographically in the midst of the crisis. According to literature produced by PSU, the University functions as “an anchor institution for the Portland area, providing thousands of jobs, investing millions of dollars in capital projects, and adding an estimated \$1.44 billion in annual economic impact” (Portland State University, 2016, pg. 4). What responsibility does the anchoring institution have to respond to the city’s current homeless state of emergency? What is Portland State University’s role as a university-community partner in supporting the community in addressing the crisis of homelessness?

At Portland State University the goal of partnering with the community is woven into the structure and pedagogy of the institution (Kecskes & Foster, 2013, pg. 109). The university was one of the first to make an institution-wide effort to embrace community-based learning (Kelly, 2007, pg. 2). While my research question focuses on what is happening with PSU and the community in regard to the issue of homelessness, it is important to understand the history of university-community partnerships and current research in the field in order to place into context the findings of my study. This literature review will first focus on the general concept of university-community partnerships. I will then present viewpoints from the current state of research in this field. I chose five case studies specifically focusing on university-community partnerships targeting homelessness. These case studies will be analyzed against the backdrop of Portland State University as a university partner. The current research will show that for

university partners to be effective and sustainable community knowledge must be valued, both the university and the community must meet their needs, and equal partnerships must be formed between both entities. The research will point to classroom learning as a vital tool for preparing students for community engagement. The research will also show service-learning enhances awareness of issues of homelessness and makes long-term relationships more sustainable. The research will point to communication as a vital component of university-community partnerships, and that matching students with their service opportunities leads to greater success in the community and the classroom.

The History of University-Community Partnerships

The first attempts at the university functioning as a community partner were a result of the Morrill Act of 1862, establishing land-grant colleges whose primary focus was research and professional development in agriculture and industry (Mayfield, 2001, pg. 233). At that time, the relationship was the university as “expert” and community as “client.” The settlement house movement followed from 1880 to 1920. In settlement houses, university students, who were predominantly educated white middle-class women, immersed themselves in working class life as a means of performing community-based research and analyzing urban social conditions (Mayfield, 2001, pg. 233). In this relationship, the university was the “researcher” and members of the community served as “test subjects.”

Following World War II, government financial support for higher education dramatically increased and the population of the university shifted from members of the elite class to becoming more representative of the general community. This shift in demographics of the student population also caused a shift in university priorities. Many in the social sciences

focused on economic and community development (Mayfield, 2001, pg. 233). In this role the university and community functioned as “collaborators.” Loomis Mayfield’s research points to an emerging tension during this time between the urban university and the community. As the university expanded, its need for land and space also expanded. Communities interpreted this encroachment, real estate procurement, and management, as being the primary university interest (Mayfield, 2001, pg. 235). In this relationship, the university functioned as “land developer” and the community as an “amenity.” According to Ray Bromley universities recognized that their ability to expand was impacted by their relationship to their neighboring communities and began to view themselves as “local stakeholders” (Bromley, 2006, pg. 11). Being a local stakeholder grouped universities with the chamber of commerce, houses of worship, school districts, community centers, neighborhood associations, and banks and utilities (Bromley, 2006, pg. 11). The task of a university as a local stakeholder was to improve the neighborhoods around their campus, strengthen the local economy, and improve the image of the region (Bromley, 2006, pg. 11).

In 1979, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges issued a Declaration of Metropolitan Universities. This document, signed by 48 university presidents, included a commitment to the urban university to be responsive to the needs of the metropolitan community (Bromley, 2006, pg. 15). This also led to the creation of the Metropolitan Universities: An International Forum, which is a quarterly journal focused on university outreach in metropolitan communities (Bromley, 2006, pg. 16). Beginning in the 1980’s, academics such as Derek Bok, president of Harvard, called for an expanded mission of higher education, one that addressed the basic social needs of neighboring communities (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004, pg. 14). The current concept of the university-community partnership was developed

during this time and further promoted in 1996 by Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Boyer denounced the ivory tower concept of higher education and “proposed that missions of higher education achieved their greatest fulfillment when they served larger purposes such as building a more just society” (Fisher et al., 2004). This new form of university-community partnership emerged in partial response to the policies of the Reagan administration shifting social welfare responsibilities to non-profits, local community groups, and even universities (Fisher et al., 2004, pg. 22).

Current Research in the Field of Community-University Partnerships

According to Fisher, Fabricant, and Simmons, the current university-community partnerships model typically consists of the following three approaches: service learning, local economic development, and community-based research (Fisher et al., 2004). Service learning is the most common form of university-community partnerships, and it includes both the opportunity to serve in the community and also a reflective, analytical component for the student (Fisher et al., 2004, pg. 25). Examples of local economic development include partnering with community-based organizations that are engaged in community development and sponsoring or creating entities that have an economic impact such as bookstores and childcare centers (Fisher et al., 2004, pg. 26). Economic development can also include hiring from the community and providing job training to the community. Community-based research involves partnering with the community to solve problems through academic research. The opportunity to study the community, gather data and observe real-life situations is beneficial to university researchers and students. The community benefits from university research partnerships because often local

organizations lack the technical skills, resources, or data to develop the information needed to pursue specific agendas (Fisher et al., 2004).

Credit courses specifically designed for service learning with community partners are emerging at universities. An example of service learning as part of the required academic experience is the senior capstone project at Portland State University. In 1996, PSU developed the university studies program, culminating the senior year with a six-credit capstone project (Kecskes & Foster, 2013, pg. 109). This program pairs students with community organizations to design a project that addresses a pressing issue for the community partner. The senior capstone course requires a weekly service-learning component with the partner agency (Center for Academic Excellence, 2013, pg. 2). The University of Georgia provides an example of optional service learning course opportunities. Currently, this university has 150 three-credit hour courses designed around service learning in which 6500 students participate annually (Morris, 2014, pg. 92). Eastern Michigan University developed a multi-campus service-learning faculty development institute. This program fosters faculty support for credit courses and capstones designed around university-community partnerships (Moely, 2012, pg. 132). According to research performed by Barbara Moely and Andrew Furco published in the *Journal of Higher Education*, there is a concerted effort to encourage university faculty to incorporate service learning with community partners in a range of credit courses across disciplines (Moely, 2012).

Research by Weerts and Sandmann, shows shifting approaches to university-community partnerships since the mid 1990's from a "one-way street" model of university engagement in the community, where the university holds an authoritative role, to a "two-way street" model, where greater value is placed on community expertise (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, pg. 74). This form

of university-community partnership recognizes a need for community partners to play a role in creating and sharing knowledge (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, pg. 74). The key language in this new model of “two-way street” partnership includes referring to the community and the university as “equal partners” and the whole as a “community of learners” (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, pg. 80). Within these partnerships interactions between the community and the university ideally occur at every stage and includes a mutual exchange of perspectives, materials, and resources (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, pg. 80).

University-community partnerships have emerged as critical components of higher learning, and community engagement has developed into engaged scholarship. Robust research points to the benefits of community engagement for both the university and their community partners. Much of the research is focused on identifying effective methods of forming such partnerships and evaluating the impact these partnerships have on students and the community partners. Some research highlights how these relationships can serve the institution’s financial goals by creating community goodwill that could lead to increased funding at the state level (Weerts, 2014, pg. 134). Limited research exists, however, on how university-community partnerships impact the community members they intend to serve (Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, 2010). There are few case studies looking specifically at university-community partnerships focused on homelessness. For this literature review, I selected five case studies. These studies represent what is currently available in this field of research. Only one of the five case studies gives voice to an actual community member living in homelessness.

Case Studies of University-Community Partnerships Centered Around Homelessness

The following five case studies focus on university-community partnerships serving individuals living in homelessness. All five focus on different forms of service learning experiences. One case study is presented from the viewpoint of the community member receiving services. The other four case studies are presented from the viewpoint of the faculty representative associated with the university-community partnership. All five case studies function under the assumption that university-community partnerships are beneficial to both the community and the university. The research focuses primarily on best practices and new ideas for university-community partnerships serving individuals in homelessness.

Clemson University

The case study presented by Catherine Mobley (2007) at Clemson University emphasizes the important role community service learning plays in creating student awareness of homelessness, but also finds significant value in traditional classroom learning. In the fall of 2001, Mobley, the associate director and coordinator of graduate studies at Clemson University partnered with Coalition, an organization coordinating support services and advocacy for 100 agencies and 13 counties. Together they established Breaking Ground, a sociology course organized around National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week. Breaking Ground was funded by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for the purpose of developing a service learning course focused on policy and social change. The project had five strategies: “1) integrated lectures, 2) frequent project meetings with community partners, 3) policy research

about homelessness, 4) the design and implementation of awareness-raising events, and 5) celebration and reflection.”

Breaking Ground students met five times during the course with Coalition, their community partner. The bulk of the students’ time was used to implement their learning into a campus and community awareness project during National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week. This event included a film screening, fundraising, and a petition sent to the governor. During the last week of the course students met with Coalition where they celebrated their joint accomplishments, Coalition updated the students on the state of legislation impacting homelessness, and the students presented Coalition with the funds they had raised during the awareness week.

Students were given a pre-test and post-test to assess their awareness of homelessness and perceptions of homeless individuals as well as their knowledge and skills in relation to policy and advocacy. The results of these two tests were compared to a control group of students who studied homelessness with Professor Mobley in a classroom setting but did not participate in the Breaking Ground community partnership. The test findings showed students in the control group who experienced traditional classroom learning showed a greater understanding of policy and sociological concepts, while the students who participated in the community developed a greater understanding of everyday life for homeless individuals and developed greater empathy for individuals living unsheltered. Mobley suggests Breaking Ground would have seen greater success had it occurred over two semesters where students could benefit from both the classroom setting experience and the service learning experience. At Clemson University, longer term projects are gaining popularity and Mobley explains that beginning with a classroom research experience followed by a semester in the community could better meet the learning needs of her

students. Breaking Ground created momentum for the second and third annual National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week and was successful at dispelling stereotypes about homelessness amongst the students involved.

Gonzaga University

The experience of Jerri Shepard and Deborah Booth (2009) at Gonzaga University emphasizes the need for the University to understand their community partner, the region they are working in, and the needs of community members. Shepard and Booth, professors in the school of education at Gonzaga University, partnered with the YWCA of Spokane, Washington to develop the Heart to Heart Art after school program for children living in homelessness. Under the guidance of the volunteer coordinator at the YWCA, Shepard and Booth volunteered to investigate the needs of the children attending the YWCA. In partnership with the YWCA, the school of education at Gonzaga developed an art program tailored to meet the children's specific needs. The daily curriculum instruction at Heart to Heart Art is performed by students in the education department, which provides an opportunity for the students to implement course theories. The program was intended to be ongoing and has completed four years of service. Shepard and Booth explain that keeping the program sustainable has required continual refinement and development to meet the needs of both the children and the community partner.

A unique aspect of the Heart to Heart Art community partnership between the YWCA and Gonzaga University has been the program's ability to form additional community partnerships. The YWCA volunteer coordinator along with Shepard and Booth reached out to an assisted living senior center in the community. The idea behind the partnership was that many seniors at the center feel displaced from their homes as well and that this shared commonality

between the children and seniors could be a source of comfort for both. This additional partnership allowed student teachers to reinforce curriculum involving the themes of giving and sharing with others by having the students visit the assisted living center and deliver handmade gifts to the residents. Through another partnership pictures are taken of every art project the children create. With permission, these images have been placed on tote bags, bookmarks, calendars, and greeting cards and are then sold by a community partner as a fundraiser for the YWCA's programs benefitting homeless children.

Based on the four years Heart to Heart Art has functioned at the YWCA in Spokane, Shepard and Booth point to two lessons learned. First, student teachers need to meet after hours to discuss any issues that arose during program facilitation. The children have experienced painful traumas and continue to live in hard conditions causing behavioral issues to manifest during the art sessions. Second, greater success has come through applying resilience theory, encouraging teachers to focus on what they perceive to be going right with the children and build upon those successes rather than trying to fix what they perceive to be going wrong. The Heart to Heart Art partnership found success by developing a program tailored to the specific needs of the children living in homelessness in the Spokane area.

Eugene Lang College and The New School

The following case study by Allahwala, Bunce, Beagrie, Brail, Hawthorne, Levesque, & Visano (2013) presents the work of Jurgen Von Mahs at the Eugene Lang College and The New School in New York City. Von Mahs emphasizes the benefits of establishing long-term university-community partnerships. As a professor of urban studies at Eugene Lang College and The New School, Von Mahs was given the task of developing undergraduate courses in

homelessness and homeless policy. In 2007, Von Mahs created a semester service-learning course in partnership with The New York Coalition for the Homeless, Women in Need, and Picture the Homeless. After an initial period of classroom learning about homeless policy and the practical and ethical concerns of doing community work, the students were assigned to volunteer five hours a week with one of the three community partners. Von Mahs focused on reciprocity in his community partnerships ensuring that the organizations he partnered with received needed service hours from students and that the service provided also resulted in a valuable learning experience for the students. Students shadowed program directors working as assistants and performed daily shelter tasks, delivered food through the Grand Central Mobile Food program, and worked on housing civil rights campaigns with individuals formerly homeless or living in homelessness.

Von Mahs secured a grant from Project Pericles, an organization focused on partnerships between liberal arts colleges and community organizations. In order to ensure that the partnership would remain sustainable, Von Mahs has been offering the course every semester at Eugene Lang College and The New School since 2007, resulting in strong ties between the classroom and the three community partners. Each semester the students and the community evaluate the course for efficacy. Through these evaluations, Von Mahs has continued to tailor the course to meet both the needs of his students and the community partners. The course is now offered both in class and in an online format. The service learning opportunities are now offered at night and on weekends for non-traditional students with confined schedules.

Von Mahs found that students and community partners both expressed positive feedback in regard to the service learning experience. The case study did not address feedback from the community members being served. Few students were able to continue volunteering when the

semester ended. The students' terminating volunteer relationships is a potential drawback for the community partners because the organizations have invested time training the students. Von Mahs believes offering a two-semester course titled Urban Homelessness I and II would enhance the program's benefits for the community partners by extending the student volunteer commitment through two semesters. The extension would allow for the addition of a research component to the course offering during the second semester. To provide a two-semester course, Von Mahs is looking into additional grants.

University of Toronto

A case study featuring Shauna Brail's service learning course at the University of Toronto, presented by Allahwala, Bunce, Beagrie, Brail, Hawthorne, Levesque, & Visano (2013), emphasizes the important role the student plays as the face of the university in a university-community partnership. Brail, a professor of urban studies at the University of Toronto, created a service-learning module in 2009 for second-year urban studies students. The students worked in community organizations such as food banks, homeless shelters, and programs for unemployed immigrant women. As the instructor for the course Brail played a significant role in developing the service learning opportunity with the community partner and ensuring that the experience was mutually beneficial. Once the course began, she found that her students had more contact with the community partner than herself.

For the service learning opportunities to be successful, the community partner, course instructor, and students needed to have open communication. Brail found that while students were enthusiastic about volunteer opportunities, it was difficult to match the realities of student life with the needs of the community partners. Students who were volunteering at a homeless

shelter in Toronto found it difficult to find public transportation to the shelter during the early morning hours that the community partner required. In some cases, students showed up to volunteer with a community partner but did not find adequate work to fill the student's time during those hours. Brail explains that it was necessary for the partnership to be flexible to the changing needs of the community agencies and students.

Careful selection of students for service-learning opportunities proved beneficial when working with individuals living in homelessness and immigrant populations. Brail partnered bilingual students with individuals receiving services who spoke the same languages and often had similar backgrounds. The students and the individuals experiencing homelessness created bonds around their shared backgrounds and were able to work more effectively for the community partner. These students reported finding their service learning opportunities to be more beneficial. If the students reported having a meaningful experience with the community partner, the students were more likely to continue volunteering and to transition from student volunteer to community volunteer.

Pitzer College

This final case study focuses on the perspective of a community member experiencing homelessness who participated in a university-community partnership. In 2001, Professor Marie Sandy (2014) was living and working at the "Ontario House" owned by Pitzer College as part of the Ontario Community University Partnership (OCUP). Sandy functioned as the higher education representative for OCUP. This case study presents conversations with one individual who experienced transitioning from homelessness to a stable living situation while working with OCUP. The individual is referred to as "Delilah," a pseudonym the interviewee chose. Delilah

first shares her experience in homelessness, which Sandy includes for context, and then shares her viewpoints on the university-community partnership. During her time living in homelessness, Delilah was invited to sit on a committee formed by OCUP. She represented homeless community members.

During interview sessions, Delilah explains to Sandy that a lot of head butting occurred on the committee because the university representatives, service providers, and community members were rarely in agreement. She refers to them as the “experts.” An example she gives focuses on the creation of a directory the experts thought would be beneficial to the community. Delilah explains that the experts did not see value in certain information being included in the directory, although Delilah knew the information would be desirable to families experiencing homelessness. At the same time, she explains that the finished product turned out better than she imagined because of the input of so many individuals on the committee and the experts’ ability to produce and distribute the directory.

Delilah also shares an experience working with a medical doctor from the University, who helped to create tip sheets to be handed out at the food pantry. From Delilah’s point of view, the doctor’s advice was “hilarious.” The advice was out of touch because he had never experienced homelessness and food insecurity while raising children. The Doctor encouraged mothers not to go without eating food even when they only had enough for their children. Delilah believed that any parent in the world would go hungry to feed their children, so for the doctor to give such advice meant “he’s never been there.”

As part of the partnership, community members experiencing homelessness shared advice with one another and taught mini classes. According to Delilah, this created some issues because her advice, which was focused on surviving, was not always viewed by the experts as

safe or appropriate. For example, Delilah taught about how to cook hot dogs in a toaster and top ramen in a coffee pot, a helpful tool when families live in cheap hotels without kitchens. The experts voiced concern that these practices were unsafe, and the food choices were unhealthy. These issues of health and safety seemed irrelevant to Delilah because at the time her situation was dire.

Delilah felt that the Ontario Community University Partnership was valuable because it created the opportunity for her to share her experiences, connect with others who were also living in homelessness, and receive important resources. Her advice to the experts was to spend more time listening to the community members tell their stories and to withhold judgment. However, when Delilah was participating in projects or teaching mini classes, she stated she felt “really good.”

Sandy and Delilah’s case study only looks at one individual’s experience. Sandy points to this fact when analyzing what can be learned from the case study in relation to university-community partnerships. Sandy suggests a “from the ground up” approach when creating partnerships where the individual experiencing homelessness is treated as an expert. Sandy points to research showing that when community members in crisis are involved in creating solutions intended to make a positive change in their lives, the solutions are more likely to work. At the same time, Sandy highlights Delilah’s experience to show how partnerships can sometimes “miss the mark.” According to Sandy, partnerships should demonstrate respect for the community member experiencing homelessness, and this is often missing.

Case Study Analysis

In analyzing the five case studies, I found certain findings frequently surfaced. Unique findings also arose specific to the partnership or focus of the research study. Clemson University, Gonzaga University, Eugene Lang College, The New School, and the University of Toronto all found their partnerships would have functioned better had they spanned more than one academic semester. Gonzaga University established its partnership with the YWCA with the intent of being long term. Building a long-term relationship was cited as a reason for continued success because the university and community partner had the opportunity to evaluate and refine the program. University of Toronto, Eugene Lange College, The New School, and Clemson University all suggested their partnerships would have improved if expanded over two semesters rather than one. Developing the service learning experience over two terms benefits both the faculty member and community partner because of the time intensive nature of training the students to work with populations in crisis. This credit commitment could prove to limit the number of students involved in such projects. Students majoring in disciplines that do not traditionally focus on individuals living in homelessness may find two-quarter commitments do not fit into their academic plan. Brail at the University of Toronto found pairing students with service opportunities matched to their unique background produced greater results for the community partner and the student. However, finding students with diverse backgrounds, studying in various disciplines, and willing to commit to two quarters may be more difficult.

Eugene Lange College and The New School along with Clemson University suggested that further developing a research component to their partnerships would be beneficial. Only Clemson University looked at whether the students were benefitting by the partnership as compared to a traditional classroom learning environment and found that for some concepts the

traditional environment was superior. Mobley at Clemson University suggested combining the traditional in-class module with a service learning component and spreading the course over at least two terms. Mobley also recommends adding a research component to the traditional class module. The concept of university-community partnerships performing community-based research with individuals experiencing homelessness has received limited focus in academic journals and should be further developed.

Sandy's research at Pitzer with Delilah suggests universities need to commit more time to learning about and listening to the community members they are serving. There is a need for more research giving voice to individuals living in homelessness. While Delilah's viewpoints only represent her unique experience, she provides much-needed insight on the perspective of an individual being served by a university-community partnership. Delilah's experience of working with individuals perceived as experts but who had no understanding of living in homelessness points to a need for respecting the knowledge held by the community members being served.

These case studies, with the exception of the stories told by Delilah, do not delve deeply into the intricacies of serving vulnerable individuals living in homelessness. This shallow focus can be attributed, in part, to the newness of the field. University-community partnerships and engaged scholarship have emerged as fields of focus only within the last thirty years. Further narrowing the focus to the populations being served by these partnerships seems to be a relatively new area of research with little focus on homelessness. Portland State University is considered to be a leader in the field of university-community partnerships, but the research shows even at this university limited attention has been placed on partnerships serving individuals living in homelessness.

Portland State University as a Community Partner

Portland State University uses the University Studies program to engage undergraduate students in what the university refers to as community-based learning with community partners. Annually more than 4000 students participate in community-based learning courses with hundreds of faculty and more than 400 community entities (Morris, 2014, pg. 92). Prior to graduation students complete the senior capstone project, a rigorous 6-credit 400 level course, where students are partnered with a community entity to develop a project meeting a particular need for the community partner (Center for Academic Excellence, 2013, pg. 2). Portland State University has made the capstone a requirement, leading to local and national support in the form of large and small grants funding the creation of community-based learning courses and projects (Kecskes et al., 2006, pg. 55). The university employs a capstone program director (Center for Academic Excellence, 2013, pg. 13). The program director and the University Studies office support faculty members in the creation of capstones and community-based learning opportunities relevant to the majors in their fields (Center for Academic Excellence, 2013, pg. 13). PSU offers more than 400 community-based learning courses supporting the university's core value of creating socially responsible, engaged students (Kecskes et al., 2006, pg. 58). Portland State University's strategic plan for 2016 to 2020 includes the goal of "extending our leadership in community engagement" (Portland State University, 2016, pg. 12). The objective of this goal is to "enhance engagement opportunities to further strengthen the reciprocal relationship between PSU and the broader community" (Portland State University, 2016, pg. 13). The Carnegie Foundation, the Peace Corps, and the Corporation for National & Community Service have recognized Portland State University for civic engagement work (Portland State University, 2016, pg. 13).

Portland State University has emerged as a leader in university-community partnerships. The university employs strategies campus-wide that reflect the current research on best practices in the field. The partnerships created through the senior capstone projects focus on a pressing community need where the community partner functions as a leader and expert in the field. These mutually beneficial relationships are sustained over long periods of time to ensure the capstone is continually refined and developed. Currently, there is a senior capstone project focused on homelessness and women, previously there was a capstone titled Street Roots: Exploring Issues of Homelessness, and there are a few other capstones that indirectly study homelessness in relation to hunger or poverty (University Studies: Senior Capstone, 2016). As compared to the total number of capstones at Portland State University, the issue of homelessness receives little undergraduate service learning attention. While there have been and continue to be some community-based learning courses and projects focused on homelessness these community relationships have not been researched to gauge efficacy. There is potentially a need to expand the capstones offered to include more courses directly relating to homelessness.

Literature Review in Relation to Research Thesis Project

The limited research in the field of university-community partnerships specifically focused on homelessness is a gap needing additional attention. This limited focus on homelessness is present in the community-based learning course offerings at Portland State University as well. The university's strategic goal of extending leadership in community engagement should include an increased focus on the pressing issues being faced by the neighboring community. My research project will shine a light on Portland State University's relationship with the community of Portland in regard to homelessness. This focus is necessary

because the current crisis of homelessness in the community of Portland is dominating headlines, community conversations, and the energy of local government officials.

Based on this literature review, the key components of a successful university-community partnership, especially in regard to homelessness, appears to be:

- A) Classroom learning is a necessary tool to prepare students for community engagement.
- B) Long-term relationships between community partners and universities are more sustainable.
- C) Communication is vital between universities and community partners.
- D) Thoughtfully matching students with service opportunities leads to greater success in the community.
- E) Consideration for the community members being served should be at the center of the partnership.

The next section of this paper will review the main findings of my interviews and observations related to homelessness and university-community partnerships in Portland. I will then make recommendations for PSU to best partner with the community given the conclusions from this literature review and the realities of homelessness in Portland. My research seeks to study the role of Portland State University, considered to be a leader in the field of university-community partnerships, as a community partner in supporting the efforts to address the crisis of homelessness.

Methods

This research utilized qualitative data from textual research, extensive participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. Documents included current newspaper articles from *The Oregonian*, *Street Roots*, and *Portland Tribune*. One book was used to contextualize

statements made during observation, *Voices from the Street: Truths About Homelessness from Sisters of the Road*.

During a ten-month period, I attended a series of community meetings, board meetings, neighborhood meetings, and political gatherings to observe the current climate in the city of Portland concerning homelessness. I attended the monthly board meeting for A Home for Everyone, which is the community-wide effort to address homelessness in Portland and Multnomah County. I also attended neighborhood board meetings in Old Town China Town a neighborhood that is home to significant service providers whose primary focus is the homeless population. Other meetings I attended included the Portland Business Alliance breakfast with Lloyd Pendleton and the Legislative Speak Out on the housing crisis.

I volunteered in capacities affording me the opportunity to witness Portland State University students and employees engaged in community projects serving the homeless community. My volunteer work included the Stand Down for Homeless Vets event supported by Portland State University's Veterans Resource Center. I also volunteered bi-weekly at Sisters of the Road in Portland, a café staffed by volunteers in the community, including Portland State Students fulfilling fieldwork hours. On a monthly basis, I volunteered at Lines for Life, a call center for the Veterans Crisis Line and Suicide Hotline, staffed by volunteers including Portland State University students fulfilling internship hours. I also participated in campus service projects including a sock drive for a night-shelter located next to Portland State University.

I assisted Portland State University's Graduate School of Social Work in performing academic research through a street outreach survey project. These surveys gathered information for non-profit agencies looking to provide hygiene services to individuals living in homelessness in Portland. This research project created the opportunity to observe a partnership between

Portland State University and a community social service provider by way of academic research work. I also traveled with the Graduate School of Social Work as part of a Portland State University student service trip to San Francisco to perform street outreach with the homeless community.

Through interactions during participant observation, I identified individuals for interviewing. All participants in interviews were experts in their fields and frequently spoke publicly on the issue of homelessness. Interviewees represented diverse backgrounds in the community including activists, directors of non-profit organizations, political figures, university professors, academic leaders, and local business leaders. During these interviews, I sought to address three major areas: What is the current relationship between the community and Portland State University in regard to the issue of homelessness in the Portland area? Is there an interest on the part of the community to continue or form new partnerships with the University to assist the community in addressing homelessness? Is there a benefit to Portland State University or interest on the part of the university to continue with or form new partnerships to support the community's efforts on homelessness?

During this ten-month experience, I made a conscious effort to inform those I interacted with of my status as a student researcher at Portland State University. I made efforts to address my individual biases by reviewing my observations regularly with my research adviser. I chose an adviser with a background different than mine. I recognized the potential for bias as a result of observing a narrow sector of the community and therefore sought out diverse organizations to observe throughout the year, including those representing government, grassroots, academia, large and small non-profit organizations, and private companies.

While conducting interviews or immediately following participation periods I recorded my observations in handwritten field notes. This qualitative data combines extensive observations in the community with one-on-one interviews. This study is modeled after the work of Howard S. Becker, who is a pioneer in the field of participant observation research. Becker posited that spending extended periods of time in the community as an observer allowed the researcher to fact check the information garnered through interviews (Becker & Geer, 1957, pg. 31).

Auto-ethnographic research, such as the participatory observations I conducted, has recently come under scrutiny. Ethical questions have been raised about the manner in which data is collected and the role the researcher plays during observations with vulnerable populations (Benson, 2015). During my observations, which often were in the form of service work in the community, I interacted with individuals who were experiencing homelessness. Those interactions are not the subject of this study. The findings of my research are derived from interviews with individuals who are working professionally in the community and at the university. These findings are within the context of forming partnerships to serve vulnerable populations. The purpose of observing within the community was to witness and document how current partnerships are working and where partnerships may be needed. Throughout the research process and at the end of the ten-month study I carefully reviewed my field notes. This process included extracting common needs that surfaced throughout the interview process. There are viewpoints presented that are representative of only one or two individuals. These occurred because some interviewees hold particular positions in the community or at the university and were able to share a unique viewpoint.

Findings

For a university-community partnership to be successful and sustainable, the venture must be beneficial for both parties (Wiewel & Broski, 1997, pg. 2). Consideration should be given to the needs of both the community and the university. The field notes from ten months of observations and interviews contain needs expressed by both the community and university surrounding the issue of homelessness. The results of the study are divided into two categories. I will first focus on my observations and interviews at Portland State University. The common threads that surfaced during my time participating at the university and conducting interviews with university representatives will be presented as “university needs.” I will then focus on my observations and interviews in the Portland community with individuals and organizations working on homelessness. The common threads that surfaced during my time participating in the community and interviewing community experts will be presented as “community needs.” The needs of the community and university are presented within the context of the issue of homelessness in Portland.

University Needs

The university needs opportunities in the community for internships, practicums, fieldwork, real world observations, and service for students. For instance, at the Honors College students entering their third year must arrange an internship experience in the community. For students majoring in social science fields, it is common to seek out placements in non-profit community organizations some of which serve individuals living in homelessness. These internships have led to research and career opportunities. It can be difficult for undergraduate students to arrange these internships for several reasons, including the fact that students have

limited adult working experience, some students are new to the community and unaware of potential opportunities, and students have complicated schedules that change quarterly. In conversations with the interim dean of the honors college, I learned that the college was seeking ways to broaden and strengthen relationships with community organizations to further support internship placements for honors students.

Faculty members explained that some of the most compelling educational experiences for their students occurred in the community, participating and observing. An adjunct professor in the gender studies department requires students to visit community organizations serving LGBTQ individuals. One such organization is Outside In located near PSU campus. This organization serves LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Students are encouraged to make an appointment to tour the facility. The assignment raises student awareness of issues surrounding homelessness, medical care, and mental health treatment for LGBTQ youth. The students have provided feedback to faculty that this type of experience can be awkward and feel like voyeurism. Students find themselves standing around in the waiting room of Outside In where they feel as though they are intruding on a private moment in the life of a vulnerable individual. If learning opportunities are not well executed, the student may gain knowledge, but the vulnerable individuals that the assignment revolves around may feel exploited.

Community members experiencing homelessness have also confirmed the feeling of being “zoo animals” when students have visited their community spaces to gain a greater understanding of the realities of homelessness. As part of my research, I traveled with the Graduate School of Social Work on an alternative spring break service-learning trip to the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco. The purpose of the trip was to do service in shelters and meal centers serving houseless community members, and to participate in training with

housing activist groups. It is common for student and religious youth groups to visit the Tenderloin neighborhood during spring break. I was able to observe the service learning methods of these other groups. I observed that many groups did not have a relationship with the community members they were serving. I witnessed community members sitting and lying on the street who asked visiting groups to leave their neighborhood. I also witnessed students from other universities snapping photos on their cell phones of vulnerable individuals. Some of the service learning groups appeared to be participating in “poverty tourism,” a term sometimes used to describe service trips where the suffering of marginalized individuals is used to create a growth experience for student learners.

The team I traveled with to San Francisco had formed relationships through the Western Regional Advocacy Project with individuals working and living in the Tenderloin neighborhood. We met with local housing activists, social workers, and individuals who experienced homelessness in that community. Our trip was organized with thoughtful consideration for the vulnerable individuals living in homelessness and was guided by people living in that neighborhood. The students traveling in my group made meaningful connections with other activists and social workers while learning about successful projects currently underway in that neighborhood. I also witnessed group members sharing valuable information from their work surrounding the issue of homelessness in the Portland area with individuals doing similar work in the Tenderloin neighborhood. The trip was mutually beneficial.

University students desire service opportunities because the student’s ability to demonstrate a history of service in the community is beneficial for scholarship applications, graduate school applications, and job applications. Organizing service opportunities can be difficult because the time frame of the university often doesn’t match the time frames of life

within the community. University students at PSU work in ten-week quarters. Service providers working with vulnerable populations must train the volunteers who work with their clients. Training is time intensive, making it difficult to find meaningful service for a classroom of students in the short time-frame of a university quarter. Faculty members organizing service learning experiences in their classrooms expressed to me that time-frame constraints have hindered the effectiveness of their projects. Community members expressed that the quick turnaround of a ten-week quarter made it sometimes difficult to accomplish meaningful work and impacts relationships. When service experiences are linked with particular classes, the student's relationship with the service provider severs at the end of the quarter, which can be difficult for the service provider and their clientele.

Portland State University seniors are required to complete a six-credit senior capstone project where they work with a community organization to address a pressing problem. There is a need for university-community partnerships in order to form these capstones. Service providers involved with PSU's senior capstone project expressed that initially it was a lot of work to partner with undergraduate students. I interviewed the director of Street Roots, which houses one of two PSU capstones project specifically focusing on homelessness. He also expressed that it was initially time intensive to build the capstone experience and work with undergraduate students who had limited understanding of poverty and homelessness. At the same time, service providers involved with senior capstone projects saw benefits long-term once programs were established. University administrators shared that there was a long list of community members interested in establishing capstones at their organizations.

During my interviews, I received positive feedback from directors of community organizations who are partnering with the Graduate School of Social Work for field placements

of graduate students. Many service providers working with individuals experiencing homelessness have masters of social work (MSW) students placed at their organizations. Several of these organizations have expressed a desire to take on additional MSW students. The service providers expressed high regard for the students performing fieldwork in their organizations. In a conversation with PSU's online option coordinator for the Graduate School of Social Work, it was explained that PSU's School of Social Work takes great care to nurture their relationships with community partners and that there is an extensive process to match the appropriate student with the community partner.

The university also needs research opportunities. Social science students expressed difficulty in creating thesis projects specifically surrounding the issue of poverty and homelessness. These projects can require support from the community. Ideally, both graduate and undergraduate students would perform research achieving academic goals while in return producing knowledge for the community. University administrators explained, however, that the community often needs information on a faster timetable than the university can provide. The university and student researchers can be tied to an academic calendar beginning in the fall and frequently including time off during the summer. The community, however, is functioning year round and their need for knowledge can be more immediate.

As part of this research, I volunteered to work with the Graduate School of Social Work performing survey research in the community with individuals experiencing homelessness. This research project was created through a partnership formed between a professor of a university graduate class focused on poverty and Sisters of the Road in Portland. I was invited to volunteer in the second round of surveys because the class on poverty in the year previous had not been able to amass enough surveys for the project. The year wait to complete the survey speaks to

some of the issues created by classroom time-frame restraints. The survey itself consisted of questions created by members of the community experiencing homelessness who were invited by Sisters of the Road to assist with the survey project. This approach ensures that the individuals being served by the research are placed at the center of the project. Partnering with Sisters of the Road created a needed connection to the community.

University students have expressed a desire to study the issue of homelessness. According to the academic adviser for the honors college at least 50% of 2016 honors applicants expressed an interest in the issue of homelessness (this may be connected to recent intense media coverage of Portland's homeless crisis). There is not a specific focus on homelessness at the University, making it difficult for students to connect with faculty experts on the subject. There are, however, many researchers looking at homelessness in unique ways throughout the campus. At the same time, there are few classes that specifically educate students in depth on homelessness. A search of the course catalog for PSU 2015/2016 academic year shows that there were two classes on poverty, one in the Graduate School of Social Work, and the other an undergraduate sociology class (Portland State University, 2015). There were no classes specifically on homelessness. There was one available senior capstone focused on women's homelessness (Portland State University, 2015). In the past, there has been a capstone with Street Roots working with individuals experiencing homelessness. The College of Urban Studies and Planning offered one course touching on homelessness: Urban Housing Policies (Portland State University, 2015). The College of Education also offered one counseling course that touched on homelessness titled Youth at Risk (Portland State University, 2015). There are likely other courses spending time looking at homelessness and poverty but it would be difficult for a student to locate the class during registration without inside knowledge. A student would

also find difficulty connecting with professors who are knowledgeable about poverty and homelessness because there is not an obvious place to find this type of information on Portland State University's website. One professor, who is currently teaching the class on poverty, expressed concern that she is viewed as an expert on the subject of homelessness. The professor explained that she has only a master's degree and is not performing research. She also pointed out, "Truly the experts on homelessness are the people living unhoused."

Finally, university students themselves have a need for affordable housing. Portland State University is located in the downtown of Portland, meaning the students are members of the community. Housing affordability and homelessness are issues the students are facing. Faculty expressed that they are interacting with students whose education is directly impacted by their inability to secure housing. Both faculty and administrators expressed suspicion or knowledge that some students were living in homelessness. Other students are commuting long distances to the university. Their search for housing is taking them farther and farther from the city of Portland. The city's homeless crisis is an issue the students are both witnessing and sometimes experiencing.

Community Needs

The community needs citizens to be educated on poverty and homelessness. Service providers, government employees, and non-profit directors all stated that there is time lost at the community level to educate citizens who do not have an understanding of poverty. They expressed a desire for PSU students graduating and entering the workforce in all fields to have developed competence on the issue of poverty and homelessness. Many decisions affecting vulnerable populations are decided by the electorate and powerful community entities. These

individuals either promote or hinder work focused on benefitting individuals living in homelessness.

During my year observing in the community, I witnessed situations where vulnerable community members experienced marginalization because of a general lack of awareness. While attending the Lloyd Pendleton breakfast sponsored by the Portland Business Alliance the moderator interviewing Mr. Pendleton made broad statements insinuating that individuals experiencing homelessness are typically addicts. This same assumption was on display during March of 2016, when the Portland Business Alliance sponsored a billboard in Portland. The billboard suggested that a handout to a homeless individual is supporting an addiction. The billboard was highly controversial but also not based on factual evidence about the realities of homelessness in Portland. The 2015 point-in-time count shows that of the 3800 individuals living on sidewalks, shelters, or in transitional housing 1064 had substance abuse issues (Kristina Smock Consulting, 2015, pg. 27). The remaining 2736 included children, women escaping domestic violence, elderly, veterans, and individuals with disabilities or experiencing mental health issues (Kristina Smock Consulting, 2015, pg. 27). Representatives of the Portland Business Alliance explained to *The Oregonian* on March 15, 2016, that homelessness was presented through the framework of addiction because addiction has “potent negative impacts” (Marnum, 2016a). Eight days later the Portland Business Alliance announced that the billboard would come down, likely because of the strong pushback from community members concerned about the harmful impact of stereotyping all homeless individuals as being addicts (Marnum, 2016b). Community activists expressed to me that it is difficult to make meaningful community change around an issue that has become so politically charged and mired in inaccurate information.



(Marnum, A. (2016, March 15). Not all homeless are addicts, petition against panhandling billboard says. *The Oregonian*. Retrieved from http://www.oregonlive.com/window-shop/index.ssf/2016/03/panhandling_billboard_petition.html)

While interviewing the director of Street Roots, he expressed to me that the community needs unexpected voices to advocate on behalf of populations in crisis. He said, “They can see me coming.” It is difficult to move issues forward or make positive change when the voices are coming from activists only. University students educated on poverty and homelessness have the potential to advocate for members of the community. Service learning experiences at the university level foster awareness of homelessness and prepare students to be empathetic voices. During my interviews, it was explained that there is a need for student awareness beyond

traditional social science majors. Non-profit directors stated that the community needs advocacy from diverse fields because the issue of homelessness is affecting all aspects of the community.

The community needs knowledge typically garnered from research. For non-profit agencies functioning on limited budgets research can be too expensive to be performed in-house. Both local government representatives and service providers expressed that they do not have the staffing capable of performing necessary research. Community representatives expressed a desire to work with the university to obtain needed knowledge. The university has access to data that is not widely available in the community. During my research, I toured with the president of Portland State University a major non-profit in Portland providing services to homeless individuals. The executive director of the organization had arranged the tour and wanted to discuss with the university president a research need. The organization was seeking to form a relationship with the university and create a research project focusing on a particular population experiencing homelessness.

The research work I participated in with the Graduate School of Social Work surveyed community members living in homelessness on the issue of access to hygiene services. A potential outcome of the research is expanded hygiene services to this community. It was necessary to conduct a survey amongst community members to assess what were actual needs and desires, and to gain a greater understanding of current access to hygiene resources. Students in the poverty course in the Graduate School of Social Work were ideal candidates for performing the research because they were studying poverty and homelessness at the time, had research experience, and were able to walk in the community seeking out individuals appropriate for the survey. The size of the university class made it possible to obtain a higher volume of surveys. At the same time, the ten-week time frame of the university course caused the research

to come to an end before enough surveys had been completed. It was necessary to wait several quarters till the professor was teaching the poverty course again to be able to bring the research project to completion.

The community-research need is not necessarily just focused on the individuals living in homelessness. One local official explained to me that during the original ten-year plan to end homelessness in Portland a system-wide evaluation was never performed. He expressed a desire to partner with a local university to do research on efficacy and program evaluation. Program directors expressed a desire to have research performed by an outsider with an unbiased perspective.

There is also a need for unbiased perspectives in other areas of community work on the issue of homelessness. Within the community, there are competing ideologies at work attempting to alleviate homelessness. These competing groups often come together in different ways on community boards and councils and attempt to arrive at a consensus. Local officials expressed a need for unbiased perspectives to join the community dialog. Throughout my research, I frequently observed board meetings for A Home for Everyone. One board member is a PSU professor who is not an expert on homelessness but rather organizational systems. She helped to mediate discussions and ensured the board stayed committed to social equity as they worked to develop a plan of action. Board members expressed that it was helpful to have a representative who focused on the process but did not represent any competing group. On May 2nd, 2016 this same professor spoke at the CityWise lecture series sponsored by Portland State University about her work with A Home for Everyone and specifically about using collaborative governance to house individuals experiencing homelessness. Her speech focused on efforts at A Home for Everyone to address racial inequities with a collaborative framework.

The community also needs physical bodies to get work done. There is a great demand for volunteers to provide service throughout the community in homeless shelters, performing street outreach, meal preparation, and in community centers providing daily services. Service providers expressed a desire to attract university students to their organizations as volunteers. They also expressed a desire to work with the University on programs that brought students to their organizations in the form of internships and service learning opportunities. The director of a local non-profit explained to me that her desire is to work with student volunteers who grow into lifelong community volunteers. In 2015, PSU researchers David Osborne, Jennifer Alkezweeny, and Kevin Kecskes published research in *Metropolitan Universities* titled *Beyond the University: An Initiative for Continuing Engagement Among Alumni*. Through a pilot program called the Continuing Engagement Program, PSU studied ways in which students can be encouraged to continue civic engagement as alumni (Osborn, Alkezweeny, & Kecskes, 2015, pg. 181). Osborne et al. found that students felt empowered and more invested in service work that could continue throughout their lifetime (Osborn et al., 2015, pg. 183).

There is a need to gather individuals who are passionate about the crisis of homelessness in Portland. Activists expressed an urgent need for large groups of individuals willing to get involved politically by canvassing in their local neighborhoods to raise awareness of upcoming legislative bills impacting housing and homelessness. Service providers and activists expressed a need for individuals willing to share their experiences with homelessness at speak-outs, through social media, and at legislative meetings. Non-profit directors, service providers, and local political leaders all expressed a desire to attract university students to these causes and magnify their voices to make a change.

Many of the needs expressed by both the representatives of the community and the university were complementary. In my interviews, both parties supported university-community partnerships serving individuals experiencing homelessness. There were, however, conversations surrounding efficacy. Questions arose about how to integrate campus culture with community life. It was sometimes difficult to differentiate between the community and the university because of PSU's location in downtown Portland. The University is part of the community, and there are many in the community being educated and working at the university. During my interviews and observations in the community and at PSU there was a constant overlap of both entities.

Recommendations and Conclusion

There was universal agreement among members of the community and the university that partnerships to serve individuals living in homelessness and to address issues of homelessness should continue. In some ways, the findings of my ten-month observation and extensive interviews matched the outcomes of my literature review. Current academic research and my participant observation research point to a need for the continued study on the issue of university-community partnerships in relation to serving vulnerable communities such as individuals experiencing homelessness. There is little research looking at these partnerships from the perspectives of the person being served. I recommend further study in this area. My remaining recommendations focus specifically on Portland State University forming partnerships in the community surrounding the issue of homelessness.

University-community partnerships need to be established with the intent of being long-term. Long-term relationships relieve the community partner and the faculty member from

having to rebuild programs continually. Longer relationships also allow for critical feedback and constant improvement. I recommend establishing committed senior capstones focusing on different aspects of homelessness in Portland. The research findings noted that initially setting up a capstone can be time-consuming for community partners. It will be necessary for the university to provide extensive upfront support to interested community organizations to encourage them to form committed relationships. PSU has developed a web page providing support and information for potential community partners at <http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/community-partners>. A handbook prepared for community partners, which explains the capstone process, can be found at http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/sites/default/files/CAPCommPartnHandbook-Print6-11-2013-PDF_0.pdf. My research findings note an increased interest on the part of students to study issues of homelessness in Portland; senior capstone course offerings should meet this interest.

Community-based learning should not replace classroom learning. I recommend increasing the number of undergraduate courses focusing on poverty and specifically homelessness. A searchable catalog of PSU coursework can be found at <http://pdx.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2015-2016/Bulletin>. While it is possible that many courses are using classroom time to study the issue of homelessness, this is not information readily shared in course descriptions in the PSU course catalog. A search of the course catalog using the keywords “homeless” and “homelessness” turns up two courses. For courses that are currently devoting classroom time to homelessness, I suggest including this information in course catalog descriptions. The following is an example of a course catalog description indicating homelessness as a coursework topic:

Coun 445 Youth at Risk:

Designed to provide participants with an overview of information focused on counseling and teaching youth-at-risk. Emphasis will be placed on identifying youth-at-risk for depression, suicide, eating disorders, pregnancy, AIDS, use and abuse of alcohol and drugs, homelessness, gang membership and several other at-risk behaviors. Ideas for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention from individual, family, school and community perspectives will also be presented. Particular attention will be paid to guidelines for development of tragedy response plans for school campuses in conjunction with the topic of tertiary prevention. Presented in a varied format structured to include lecture/discussion, audio-visual presentations, participant self-evaluation of their own at-risk behaviors, role-plays and small group discussion. Also offered for graduate-level credit as Coun 545 and may be taken only once for credit.

(Portland State University. (2015) 2015-2016 Bulletin. Portland State University. Retrieved from <http://pdx.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2015-2016/Bulletin>)

Both the university and community desire to form partnerships around research on the subject of homelessness. During my interviews, community members expressed confusion about the process of forming a research partnership with PSU. Upon further review, I found that PSU has a fully developed department focusing on community research partnerships that can be found at <http://www.pdx.edu/research/university-research>. I recommend the university further promote the Office of Research and Strategic Partnerships. Promoting this office is now being addressed as part of PSU's current strategic plan. Facilitating opportunities to form community partnerships for applied and collaborative research is initiative 2.2 under goal 3 (Portland State University, 2016, pg. 13). Currently, a community partner can access the Office of Research and Strategic Partnerships directly at <http://www.pdx.edu/research/> or by keyword searching "research partnership" from PSU's homepage at pdx.edu.

On campus, there is a general interest on the part of students to get involved in volunteer work and internships serving individuals experiencing homelessness. Students themselves are being impacted by Portland's housing crisis, and some are experiencing homelessness as well. Community organizations expressed a desire for students to be involved in both service work and activism work. I recommend forming student organizations focusing specifically on poverty and homelessness in the Portland community working in conjunction with local organizations. Information about joining or starting a PSU student organization can be found at <http://www.pdx.edu/student-leadership/join-or-start-student-organization>. Student organizations are managed through Student Activities and Leadership Programs (SALP). The Student Community Engagement Center offers the Student Leaders for Service program, which partners students with community organizations. This program requires students to commit to 4-6 hours per week with a community organization and in return provides a \$400 quarterly scholarship. Information about Students Leaders for Service can be found at <http://www.pdx.edu/student-community-engagement/student-leaders-of-service>.

Portland State University's School of Social Work has developed relationships with community partners serving individuals experiencing homelessness. I received continual feedback from community organizations that these partnerships are highly successful. In conversations with faculty from the School of Social Work, I found that extensive work is put into these relationships and that the faculty employs several strategies to ensure their continued success. I recommend other colleges and groups on campus look to the School of Social Work for guidance on how to form successful partnerships serving individuals living in homelessness.

Portland State University sits geographically in the center of the city's crisis of homelessness and poverty. The students attending this university are community members

facing these same issues. When university students graduate they become the community leaders making vital decisions about social issues facing Portland and therefore facing Portland State University. I recommend that the university increase its focus on poverty and homelessness at the undergraduate level to ensure that students graduating from all fields have an in-depth understanding of the social inequities oppressing marginalized community members.

Portland State University is a nationally recognized leader in community-based learning and civic engagement. University-community partnerships focusing on vulnerable community members, such as individuals living in homelessness, are only beginning to receive academic attention. The Portland community, however, is currently intensely focused on the crisis of homelessness. I suggest now is an ideal time for the university to expand its focus on poverty and homelessness and further partner with the community to address this crisis.

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