

Transformative Social Impact

A Journal of Community-Based Teaching & Research

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Editor's Note

May 28, 2025

Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure and genuine excitement that I welcome you to the inaugural issue of *Transformative Social Impact* journal. As we launch this new academic platform, I am filled with optimism about the meaningful conversations, rigorous scholarship, and practical innovations that will emerge from these pages in the years to come.

The mission of *Transformative Social Impact* is to advance and disseminate knowledge at the intersection of community engagement, service-learning, and social impact. In creating this journal, we sought to establish a dedicated space where scholars, practitioners, and community partners could share insights, methodologies, and outcomes that demonstrate how academic work can directly benefit communities while enhancing educational experiences.

This first issue exemplifies the journal's scope and ambition. The twelve articles span diverse disciplines—from human resources and nursing to religious studies and design—yet all share a commitment to engaged scholarship that bridges theory and practice. Our contributors represent institutions across the United States and internationally, including Wingate University, La Salle University, King's College London, University of North Carolina Greensboro, University of Tennessee Knoxville, Radford University, University of St. Thomas, and Utah Valley University.

Our journal structure reflects the multifaceted nature of community engagement work. The *Research Advances* section features empirically grounded studies like "Food and Faith," which demonstrates how service-learning can revitalize liberal arts education. The *Reviews* section includes valuable analyses such as "The Impact of Medical Respite Care on Healthcare Costs and Outcomes for Homeless Populations." Perhaps most importantly, our *Community Voices* section elevates perspectives from practitioners implementing transformative programs, like the "Practice What You Teach" article on trauma-informed pedagogy.

The articles in this issue touch on critical societal challenges—homelessness, trauma, aging, family stability—while offering evidence-based approaches to address them. From the Service & Research Projects Hub at King's College London to the Stronger Families Project at Utah Valley University, our contributors demonstrate how academic institutions can become meaningful partners in community development.

As we look to the future of *Transformative Social Impact*, I envision a journal that continues to grow in reach and influence, bringing together diverse voices and perspectives. We aim to be not just a repository of knowledge but a catalyst for action—inspiring new collaborations, methodologies, and programs that create lasting positive change in our communities.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our contributors, reviewers, and editorial team who made this inaugural issue possible. And to you, our readers, I invite your engagement, feedback, and future contributions as we build this scholarly community together.

With optimism for the transformative work ahead,

Dr. Jonathan H. Westover
Editor-in-Chief
Transformative Social Impact Journal

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Article Abstracts

Reviews Section

Submission Date: March 25, 2025; Acceptance Date: April 14, 2025; Early Access: April 16, 2025

The Impact of Medical Respite Care on Healthcare Costs and Outcomes for Homeless Populations: A Literature Review

Authors: Amanda Chase, Utah Valley University; Angelea Panos, Utah Valley University; Patrick T. Panos, University of Utah

Abstract: National homelessness rates are steadily rising, posing challenges in health care. Homelessness exacerbates health conditions, increasing chronic mental and medical diagnoses, while reducing traditional treatment efficacy. Research highlights medical respite care as an effective intervention, improving post-hospitalization outcomes and reducing Emergency Department utilization, hospital stays, and readmissions. This literature review examines various medical respite models and their impact on clinical outcomes, patient experience, and healthcare costs. Different funding approaches are explored, ultimately advocating for shared financial responsibility among multiple stakeholders to ensure sustainable support for these programs.

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Research Advances Section

March 31, 2025; Acceptance Date: April 22, 2025; Early Access: April 28, 2025

Food and Faith: A Two-Year Study on the Impact of Service-Learning and Community Engagement Practices in a General Education Religion Course

Authors: Catherine Wright, Candace Lapan, Rickie Sarratt, Wingate University

Abstract: Identifying pedagogies that promote critical thinking, ethical leadership, and collaboration is essential to prepare students for a complex world and to achieve institutional goals. Service-Learning and Community Engagement (SLCE) is a vital pedagogy that integrates academic inquiry with real-world application to promote civic learning outcomes, enhancing student success, employability, institutional and departmental appeal, and knowledge democratization, while supporting underserved students (COPIL, 2021; Wright & Wall-Bassett, 2023). SLCE pedagogy offers a powerful way to demonstrate the real-world relevance of religious studies, aligning program goals with civic learning outcomes and underscoring the discipline's role in cultivating engaged, informed citizens (Wright et al., 2018). This two-year study assessed the impact of SLCE pedagogy in a religion General Education course, Food and Faith. This study reveals significant gains in civic engagement, civic skill efficacy, civic responsibility, and 21st-century competencies—all of which align closely with the civic and ethical goals of religion programs. Notably, 68.8% of students expressed interest in further SLCE courses, and 61.8% found it more beneficial than other university courses. These findings underscore the potential of SLCE pedagogy in religion to generate transformative social impact and reinvigorate liberal arts education, particularly when supported by institutional backing.

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Submission Date: March 31, 2025; Acceptance Date: April 15, 2025; Early Access: April 17, 2025

Understanding Self-Determination in People Experiencing Homelessness to Inform: Community Engaged Teaching & Learning

Authors: Jacqueline Kayler DeBrew, UNC Greensboro; Whitney L. Hicks, Elon University

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to understand what health related activities of residents living in transitional housing for the homeless increases their self-determination in managing their own health, what barriers exist, and what could nursing students do to increase their self-determination in managing their health. **Methods:** A qualitative approach using interviews, PhotoVoice, and observations was used. Twelve semi-structured interviews utilizing Critical Incident Technique, photos submitted by eight participants, and observation notes were used to learn more about the self-care health practices of people experiencing homelessness. **Results:** The themes that emerged from the interviews and PhotoVoice supported the Theory of Self-Determination, which states that in order for a person to be motivated to self-care, autonomy, competence, and relatedness must occur. **Conclusions:** Understanding the needs of the homeless is key to improving nursing care for this vulnerable population. This study fills the gap of understanding what health related activities of residents living in transitional housing for the homeless increases their self-determination in managing their own health, what barriers exist, and what nurses can do to increase their self-determination in managing their health.

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Submission Date: March 31, 2025; Acceptance Date: May 22, 2025; Early Access: May 24, 2025

Suits – Developing Consulting-Based Service-Oriented HR Programs to Create the Next Generation of HR Professionals

Authors: Bernd Kupka, Radford University, Jonathan H. Westover, Western Governors University

Abstract: This article explores the integration of service-learning (SL) with a consulting approach within human resources (HR) education programs in higher education. We highlight the nature and importance of this andragogical approach, examining how it bridges the theory-practice gap, cultivates professional competencies, fosters civic engagement, and enhances student motivation and satisfaction. The article delves

into the reasons why HR education is particularly well-suited for SL with a consulting approach, including the emphasis on people-oriented skills, the multi-disciplinary nature of HR, and the alignment with HR roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, we outline the critical roles of key stakeholders, including students, faculty, community partners, university administration, and professional associations, in the successful implementation of such programs. Finally, we provide practical guidance on program-building within HR curricula, highlighting a successful case study that demonstrates the tangible outcomes and positive impact of this innovative approach to HR education.

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Submission Date: Jan. 21, 2025; Acceptance Date: Feb 13, 2025; Early Access: March 16, 2025

Service-Learning Community Partner Collaboration Prediction Model & Tool

Authors: Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University

Abstract: This study examines the factors influencing community partner collaboration in service-learning projects through a predictive model based on student competencies and project outcomes. Data was collected from 183 community organizations (80.62% response rate) partnering with a large public university in the Intermountain West. The research assessed 13 student professional competencies and 2 project value metrics across 16 service-learning course sections involving 565 students and 12 faculty members from six departments. Using Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis, the study investigated how student professional competencies and project quality influence community partners' likelihood to engage in future collaborations. The findings aim to enhance understanding of successful service-learning partnerships and provide insights for improving program design and implementation. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on effective service-learning practices and community engagement in higher education.

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Community Voices Section

Submission Date: March 31, 2025; Acceptance Date: April 18, 2025; Early Access: April 20, 2025

Practice What You Teach: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy Through Experiential Learning

Authors: Kimberly Lewinski, Trent McLaurin, Ashley Herr-Perrin, La Salle University

Abstract: In this faculty spotlight, we will highlight two professors of education and their approach to teaching and modeling trauma-informed pedagogy. In their courses they are teaching pre-service teachers about trauma-informed pedagogy and taking intentional steps to build spaces within their higher education classrooms that are also trauma-informed. This allows students to experience what trauma-informed instruction feels like in practice. Additionally, these professors worked together to blend their two courses and involve members in the local community to prepare pre-service teachers with a greater connection to the local communities in which they will student-teach and potentially one day work.

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Submission Date: March 31, 2025; Acceptance Date: April 17, 2025; Early Access: April 23, 2025

Bridging Academia and Community: Experiences in Implementing a 'Service & Research Projects Hub'

Authors: Zak Evans, Faiza Inamdar, Naureen Abubacker, Patricia Zunszain, King's College London

Abstract: In response to shifting higher education landscapes and increasing calls for civic engagement, a 'Service & Research Projects Hub' was scoped at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, a faculty of King's College London, to evaluate the feasibility of connecting postgraduate students with local community organizations for collaborative dissertation research. Through mixed-methods evaluation involving 96 stakeholders, including students, faculty and community partners, this paper explores the opportunities and

challenges of embedding community-engaged research within academic structures. Findings reveal high levels of enthusiasm across groups but also highlight barriers such as lack of research training, time constraints, ethical complexities and uneven institutional support. This study outlines key recommendations for improving collaborative research frameworks and proposes a scalable model for integrating community partnerships into academic teaching and research, with implications for wider institutional adoption.

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Submission Date: March 31, 2025; Acceptance Date: April 15, 2025; Early Access: April 17, 2025

Designing for Our Future Selves: A Case Study in Age-Inclusive Design Education Through a Reflective Workshop

Authors: Kimberly Mitchell, School of Design, University of Tennessee Knoxville

Abstract: As the global population ages, the design field faces an urgent imperative to confront ageism and foster more inclusive practices. Yet age-inclusive design remains underrepresented in both education and professional settings—often treated as a niche concern rather than a universal human experience. This case study presents a two-part intervention that seeks to reframe aging as a creative, joyful, and necessary focus of design practice: the Design for Aging Resources website and a national workshop titled Designing for Our Future Selves. Together, these initiatives equip design practitioners and educators to address age-related bias, explore the intersection of accessibility and aesthetics, and engage in imaginative futures thinking. The online resource hub curates over 100 tools, frameworks, and case studies to support age-inclusive and values-driven design, while the interactive workshop guides participants through reflective and speculative exercises using tools such as the Radar Diagram and Futures Cone. This work demonstrates how participatory methods and evidence-informed frameworks can surface hidden assumptions, shift mindsets, and generate design responses grounded in empathy, dignity, and autonomy. In doing so, it offers a replicable model for integrating gerontological knowledge into design education and practice—inviting designers to envision aging not as someone else's issue, but as a shared and vital dimension of our collective future.

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Submission Date: March 20, 2025; Acceptance Date: March 29, 2025; Early Access: April 1, 2025

Building an Authentic and Sustained Partnership: Critical Reflections from a Community Partner and Faculty Member

Authors: Brenisen Wheeler, Adler Graduate School; Jessica P Hodge, University of St. Thomas

Abstract: The field of community-engaged learning continues to evolve, particularly as we focus on learning from the community partners involved in course-based partnerships. Traditional measures, such as surveys and interviews, are often used to gather insights from community partners; yet many argue that these partners remain the 'unheard voices' within the field. This study highlights the critical reflections of a community partner engaged in a multi-course, multi-year collaboration, revealing key findings on the importance of trust, sustained communication, and shared decision-making in fostering authentic partnerships. Additionally, insights from both the community partner and faculty member demonstrate that centering the partner's needs enhances engagement, mitigates power imbalances, and strengthens long-term collaboration. Based on these findings, this article offers practical recommendations for building sustainable, community-driven partnerships that prioritize the active involvement of community partners in co-creating meaningful learning experiences.

doi.org/10.70175/socialimpactjournal.2025.1.1.5

Submission Date: March 19, 2025; Acceptance Date: March 28, 2025; Early Access: April 1, 2025

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities: The Impact of the Utah Valley University's Stronger Families Project

Authors: Julie K. Nelson, Kaicee Postler, and Rachel Arocho, Utah Valley University

Abstract: Families need support so that communities remain strong. The Stronger Families Project (SFP) at Utah Valley University is a unique and powerful resource in the communities surrounding the university.

Families attend a free, eight-week, evidence-based family life education program aimed at teaching skills to parents, teens, and children that are necessary for healthy family life. The program is rooted in Family Systems Theory, offering tailored age-based classes and a whole-family class to address mental health and developmental wellbeing of both the individual and family unit. Classes are taught in English and Spanish by interns from family science and related majors, and the program is further supported by service-learning students performing community service hours. In more than 15 years of service, SFP has supported over one thousand families and trained hundreds of students to deliver effective and impactful family programming to their communities. Ongoing research measuring positive outcomes for community participants shows statistically significant results for all variables.

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Submission Date: March 19, 2025; Acceptance Date: March 25, 2025; Early Access: March 28, 2025

Academic Service-Learning at Utah Valley University

Authors: Summer B. Valente, Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University

Abstract: *Utah Valley University's Academic Service-Learning program represents a highly effective high-impact educational practice that delivers significant benefits to students, faculty, and the community. During 2023-2024, the program engaged over 9,000 students across 450 course sections, involving 375 faculty members and 1,000 community partners. Research demonstrates that service-learning participants experience enhanced learning outcomes, improved faculty interactions, higher degree completion rates (30% more likely), and greater semester-to-semester persistence (84% higher). The program generated over 180,000 service hours with an estimated \$6 million economic impact, representing approximately \$188 in community value for every dollar invested. With its proven record of enhancing student diversity, academic achievement, and career readiness while serving community needs, UVU's service-learning initiative stands as a cost-effective model for engaged learning that advances the university's educational mission.*

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Submission Date: Aug. 21, 2024; Acceptance Date: Oct. 10, 2024; Early Access: Feb. 14, 2025

Cultivating Cross-Course Collaboration: A Model for Student Consulting Projects

Authors: Jacque P. Westover, Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University

Abstract: *This discusses a unique cross-course collaborative model implemented at Utah Valley University between organizational development and change, advanced business statistics, and integrated studies courses. This fall semester, upper-division undergraduate students formed multi-disciplinary teams to complete a semester-long consulting project with the university's Women in Business Impact Lab. Through an iterative process of proposal development, data analysis, and solution implementation, students gained valuable consulting experience while working across course boundaries. The model integrated skills from each discipline by having teams develop proposals, analyze data provided by the Impact Lab, and develop recommendations. Regular cross-team meetings allowed students to leverage diverse expertise. This presentation will outline the course structure, team processes, challenges encountered, and lessons learned. Experiences to date suggest the model enhanced students' collaborative and applied skills. The cross-course approach can serve as a template for other institutions seeking to provide real-world experiences through multidisciplinary teamwork.*

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