Chapter 5

Insights, Next Steps, and Future Research

ABSTRACT

In this final chapter, the three researchers share their insights, next steps and future research as faculty invested in student achievement and development. They identify six key areas of focus that they use as a framework of guiding principles for others who may be interested in doing this work at their respective programs and institutions. Civic engagement is discussed at the classroom level, community level, and an individual level. Faculty should strongly consider and plan how service learning assignments and maintaining community connections on their part gives students needed space to deepen their civic engagements and commitments. The insights of the students' who completed the portfolios are also shared and analyzed as well.

These opportunities have made Keene State not only a place where I will be getting an education for the next four years, but a place I am happy to call home. – First-year student

INTRODUCTION

The processes of planning, collaborating, collecting data, analyzing data, and reflecting on our process and outcomes over the past four years have

allowed the team of researchers to think deeply about our pedagogical goals in promoting and supporting students' reading, writing, research, and civic engagement. Here we share our insights, next steps, and future research within the following framework of guiding principles:

1. **Building a Scholarly Approach to Civic Engagement:** (Pedagogy as Scholarship)
2. **Building a Sense of Connection with the Local Community:** (Community Day, Going into the schools in the first year, etc.)
3. **Building Reflection Into Community Engagement:** (The framing of the experience before and after--discussion and writing built into these experiences, tracking and documenting the process through writing, portfolios)
4. **Building Relational Connections:** (Between people, ideas, and concepts)
5. **Building a Rhetorical Awareness About Communicating With Others:** (Professors, professionals, community members).
6. **Building Real Opportunities for Innovation/Creativity Into Civic Engagement Work:** (Writing, action/activism—encouraging students to step out, to develop and act on new ideas—getting students to *act on* what is important to them)

An institutional commitment that values faculty teaching and scholarship in civic engagement allows faculty to commit to this work, allows civic engagement to become interwoven into the daily life of the institution, and allows students to engage in these conversations as well. As Feldman (2008) argues, "When faculty members find that research in these new, more public situations changes their habitual approaches to writing, new sorts of conversation with students become possible" (p. 3). Once these conversations with students become possible, though, how then do we convince students that they, too, should value this work, and that they should participate? This book has offered some insights into how we've pursued these questions with first-year students in the linked Reading and Writing Initiative program at Keene State College. Thinking more broadly about these questions, we will share below what our research has shown us about six key principles to consider when working with millennial students in the classroom around civic engaged.

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