

**High Impact Practices: What We Know
about their Impact on Underserved Students**

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Jayne E. Brownell, Hofstra University

Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen, AAC&U

DRAFT

Outcomes of High Impact Practices for Underserved Students:

A Review of the Literature

Lynn E. Swaner, Ed.D., LMHC, NCC, ACS

Jayne E. Brownell, Ed.D.

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Abstract

This literature review examines the known outcomes of five high-impact practices – learning communities, service-learning, undergraduate research, first-year seminars, and capstone courses and projects – for underserved student populations, namely underrepresented minorities, low-income students, and first-generation college students. There is evidence that these practices can lead to a range of positive outcomes (academic, personal, and civic) for the general population of college students as well as underserved students (see pages 128-129 for a detailed table providing an overview of these outcomes). The strength of evidence for these outcomes, however, is weakened by the limitations of existing research. In addition, little is known regarding moderating variables for each of these practices and their impact on student outcomes. Future research efforts, by seeking to mitigate these limitations, can provide insight into the potential benefits of high-impact practices for the educational experiences of underserved students.

The full draft the literature review can be found online at:

http://www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/documents/DRAFTProjectUSALiteratureReview.pdf

Please forward your comments to Nakia Bell by October 31, 2008 at bell@aacu.org.

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Table 2. High Impact Practices: Outcomes, Variables, and Research Issues

HIGH IMPACT PRACTICE	General Outcomes	Outcomes for Underserved Students	Moderating Variables	Research Issues
Learning Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher grades • Higher persistence rates • Ease college transition • Higher levels of academic engagement • Greater interaction with faculty and peers • Perception of campus as more supportive • Self-report of critical thinking gains • Gains for intellectual development • Higher levels of integrative thinking • Gains in writing and reading • Greater appreciation for diversity/different viewpoints • Higher rate of civic engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher grades • Higher persistence rates • Ease college transition • Greater interaction with faculty and peers • Helps build identity as learner/recognize academic potential • Sense of belonging • Gains for intellectual development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variability of LC formulation/type (residential, non-residential, linked courses, etc.) • Degree of student and faculty interaction • Classroom environment (positive, negative, mixed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominance of single-institution studies • Variability of LC formulation/type • Lack of comparison group data across LC type • Short-term nature of most research • Reliance on self-report data • Examination of outcomes for specific populations rare
Service-Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher grades • Higher persistence rates • Academic gains (including applying course learning) • Higher levels of academic engagement • Increases in critical thinking and writing skills • Greater interaction with faculty • Greater levels of civic behavior, social responsibility, social justice, and sense of self-efficacy • Gains in moral reasoning • Greater tolerance and reduced stereotyping • Greater commitment to service-oriented career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased retention rates • Better academic performance (grades) • Positive changes in civic attitudes • Negative experiences/isolation due to orientation of service experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of service experience (type, hours, contact, supervision) • Characteristics of learning experience (reflection, faculty connection of material with service experience) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-selection bias • Short-term nature of most research • Lack of involvement in service-learning experiences by underserved students • Lack of research on experiences of underserved students

HIGH IMPACT PRACTICE	General Outcomes	Outcomes for Underserved Students	Moderating Variables	Research Issues
Undergraduate Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher rate of persistence • Higher rate of graduate school enrollment • Improvement in research skills • Increased interaction with faculty and peers • Gains in problem-solving and critical thinking • Greater satisfaction with educational experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher rate of persistence • Higher rate of graduate school enrollment • Findings mostly limited to studies of UROP/SROP students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of faculty mentor • Quality of mentoring relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of empirical studies (vs. program descriptions) • Selection bias (promising students often selected for UR opportunities) • Impact of mediating variables unknown • Lack of research on outcomes beyond retention and graduate school enrollment
First-Year Seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher rate of persistence • Higher graduation rate • Short-term positive effect on grade point average • Gains in commitment to social justice/multicultural awareness • Greater academic and campus engagement • Greater faculty and peer interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some evidence for short-term increase in grades and persistence rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYS type • Course content • Contact hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominance of single-institution studies • Variability of FYS formulation/type • Lack of comparison group data • Short-term nature of most research • Outcomes limited to persistence and grades • Examination of outcomes for specific populations rare
Capstone Courses & Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited evidence for applying and integrating knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of empirical studies on outcomes (for any population) • Impact of mediating variables unknown