Developing Integrative, Place-Based Approaches to Global Learning and Student Agency

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Place-Based Learning

• What does it mean to you?

• How does it promote global learning?

• How does it advance student agency?
Place-Based Projects at WPI

- **1st year:** Great Problems Seminar
  - 6 credit hours, interdisciplinary
  - “Situated problems” around the globe

- **2nd year:** Humanities and Arts Capstone
  - 18 credit hours in chosen area
  - 3 credit hour seminar or practicum

- **3rd year:** Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP)
  - 9 credit hours, interdisciplinary gen ed
  - Research project for local organization
  - 70% completed fulltime off-campus

- **4th year:** Major Qualifying Project (MQP)
  - 9 credit hours, capstone in major field
  - Authentic application in context
WPI Global Projects Program
Global Projects Program Logistics

• Typical cohort is 24 students
  – 6 teams, each with a different project and sponsor
  – 2 faculty co-advisors

• Problems proposed by local organizations
  – NGOs
  – Non-profits
  – Government agencies

• Required 4.5 credit hour preparation
  – Context, culture, (language)
  – Background research
  – Research proposal
Examples of Place-Based Projects

- Promoting solar energy use, Nantucket Energy Office
- Parks and recreation management plan, Nantucket Town Manager
- Population estimation, Nantucket Data Platform
- Creating a food asset map, Sustainable Nantucket
A Blend of Experiential Learning Models

Study Away

Project-Based Learning

Service Learning
Long-term impacts of projects?
Preparation for career and life?
Experience of different groups?
Professional Skills and Abilities

responsibility for learning
problem solving
effective teamwork
written communication
effective leadership
“[Project work] gave me opportunities to come up with multiple ways to attack a problem. To try them out and to see why they did and didn’t work. And to be open to ... going down a different path if the first one is not working.”
Personal Impacts

- stronger personal character
- confidence in one’s ideas
- taking multiple perspectives
- being able to make a difference
“[The projects]... give you the opportunity to become independent, work on your own, find ... solutions...it just gave me the opportunity to develop my character and drive.”
Impacts of Project Work Off-Campus

more positive benefits in 33/39 areas
“I don’t think it really mattered where I went... my entire experience after the [project] was different than before... Somehow, something changed. I felt like a different person when I came back. ... I saw the reason why I went to college, because I saw something taken to completion in the real world.”
Place-Based Learning

- What approaches work for you?
- What are the challenges?
- What are the outcomes?
Thanks

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