



BTtoP Research: Evaluation Report

Ashley Finley
Dickinson College

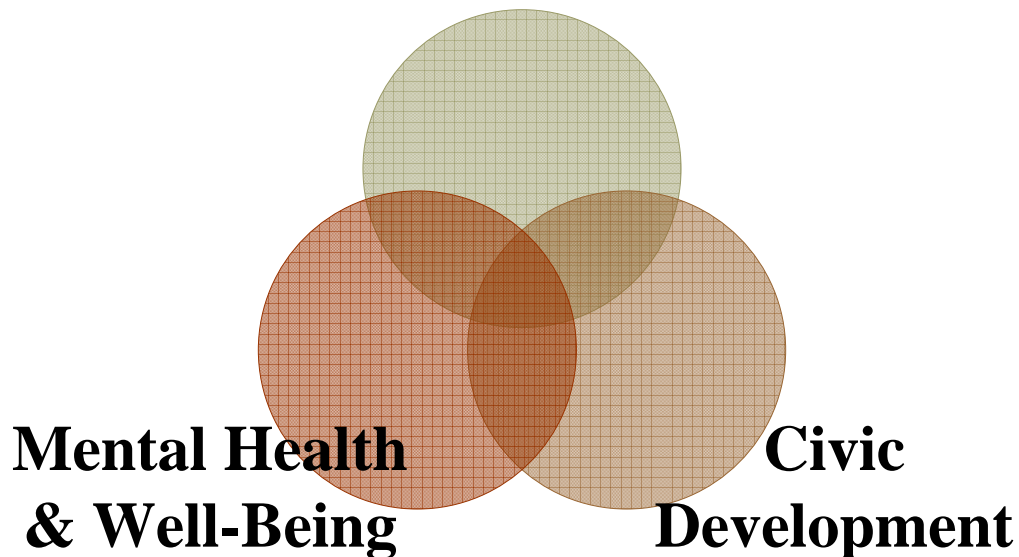


Research Foci

- Understanding the nexus of 3 critical concepts & their impact on college students:
 - Engaged Learning
 - Student Mental Health & Well-Being
 - Civic Engagement & Responsibility
- Understanding the dimensions of these concepts
- Understanding effective pedagogy for implementation

Research Foci & Evaluation Design

Engaged Learning



□ **Guiding Principles:**

- **Multivariate**
(engaged learning, mental health, civic development = complex constructs)
- **Longitudinal (2+ yrs)**
- **Quasi-experimental (comparison grps)**



Demonstration Project: Design Overview

Campus Level

- Quantitative:
 - Pre-test/Post-test (depression, alc., CSXQ)
 - Existing data sources (CIRP, CAS, CORE, ACHA-NCHA)
 - Comparison Groups
- Qualitative:
 - Clinical/In-depth interv.
 - Focus groups
 - Document analysis

Cross-Site Level

- Quantitative:
 - College Student Exps Questionnaire (CSEQ)
 - Natl Survey of Stud. Engagement (NSSE)
- Qualitative:
 - Student Focus Grps
 - Cross-Constituency Focus Grps
 - Cross-Site Conferences



4 Major Thematic Findings

- We Are Not Wasting Our Time
 - Alcohol usage decreased
 - Programs are good for learning
- Reality Check
 - Students who participate in service or civic based learning understand this is complicated & on-going work.
 - Gain realistic perspective on what it means to be “civically engaged”
- Questions = More Questions
 - Complexity of variables
 - Complexity of Meas.
 - Complexity of Environments
- Time is Key
 - Untangling relationships
 - Stabilizing engagement programs
 - Increase participation across constituencies
 - Engagement involves and benefits everyone



National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

- All 7 consortium schools along with 550 schools
- Random sample of first-year students and seniors
- Core Survey
 - Activities in & out of class, “meta” skills, relationships with faculty & students & administrators, time allocation, & demographic info.
 - Focus on 5 “Benchmarks”
 - Academic Challenge
 - Active and Collaborative Learning
 - Student/Faculty Interaction
 - Enriching Educational Experiences
 - Supportive Campus Environment



NSSE Consortium Questions (Just 7 Demonstration Sites):

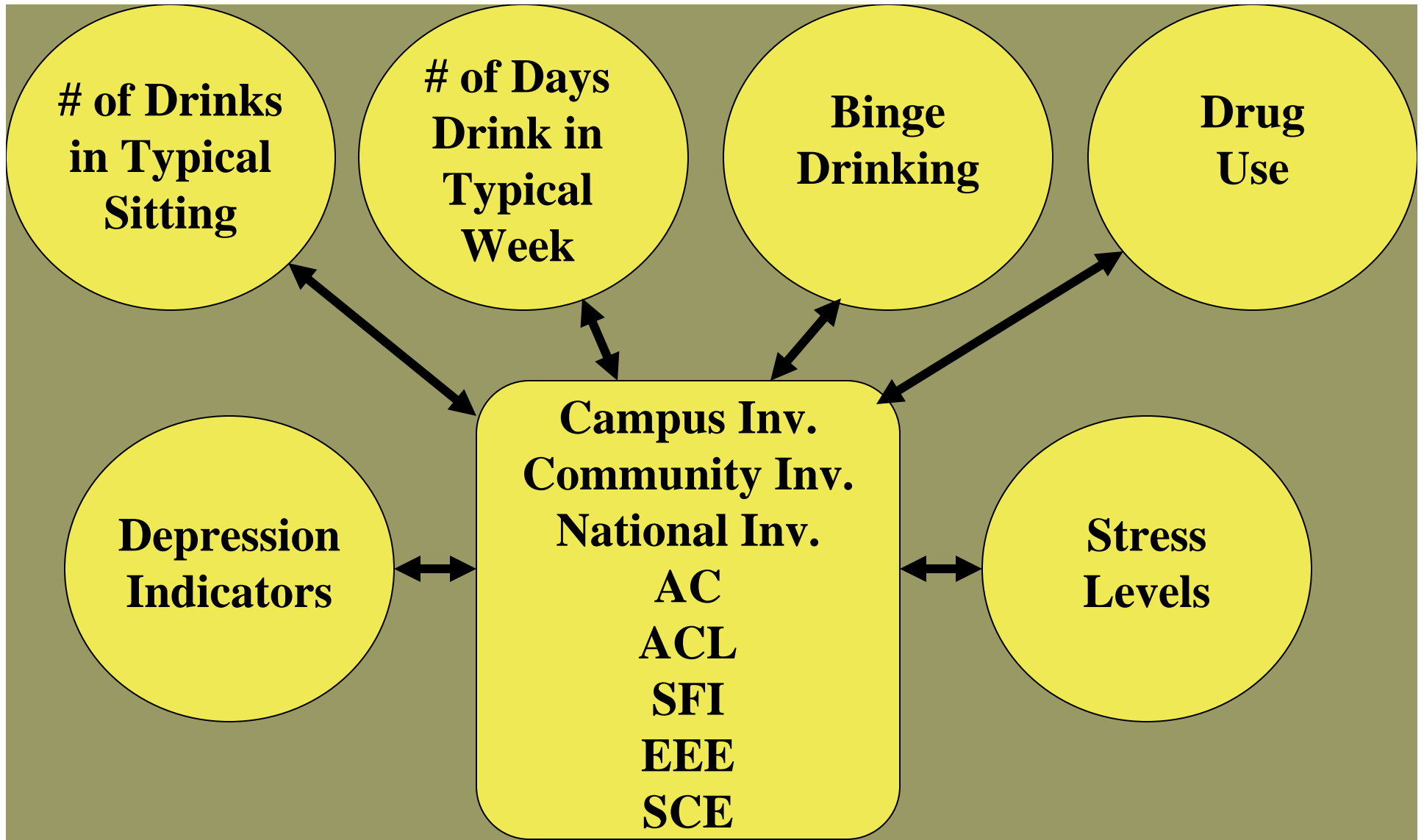
- Civic engagement at campus, local, and national levels (civic knowledge, leadership, belief of ability to effect change, voting behavior)
 - Scales were constructed to represent degree of engagement at each level
- Frequency and number of drinks*
- Use of illegal substances, including prescription drugs for recreation
- Consequences of alcohol or drug use*
- Depression (felt hopeless, sad, etc)*
- Sources of stress

*Items from CORE/CAS surveys used with permission



National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

- Sample of 2545 students
 - First-year students = 61.4%, Seniors = 38.6%
 - Women = 65.9%, Men = 34.1%
 - White = 73.3%
 - Asian = 7.6%
 - “I do prefer not to respond” = 6.4%
 - Black = 4%
 - Hispanic/Latino = 4.4%
 - Multiracial = 2.6%



What is the impact of engaged learning experiences and civic development on students' well-being?



Findings: The High(& Low)Lights

- Across all levels of involvement (campus, community, national), students reported the lowest levels of community involvement.
- Men have higher correlations of involvement than women
- Out of 2550 students, 5 checked that they NEVER use alcohol and drugs.
- Across all benchmarks, students reported the lowest levels of student/faculty interaction.
 - And the highest levels of Academic Challenge & Supp. Campus Env.
- The average drinks per sitting was 4.3
 - Most students do not use drugs



Correlation Results Between Measures of Engagement & Alcohol/Drug Use

- **HIGHER** levels of community involvement are sig. correlated with **FEWER** # of drinks per sitting & the decreased likelihood of binge drinking
 - As are **HIGHER** indications of Active & Collaborative Learning, Faculty/Student Interax, and Enriching Educ. Env.
- **HIGHER** levels of national & campus involvement are sig. correlated with drinking **MORE** days per week
 - As are **HIGHER** levels of Active & Collaborative Learning and Enriching Educ. Env.
- **Higher** degrees of involvement across all campus, community, and national levels are sig. correlated with **LOWER** marijuana usage
 - Decreased marijuana usage also correlated with ALL NSSE benchmarks
 - Students who reported having a Supportive Campus Env. also correlated with decrease use of illegal & prescription drugs



Correlation Results Between Measures of Engagement & Mental Health

- **HIGHER** levels of campus, community, and national involvement correlated with **LOWER** levels of depression
 - As are **HIGHER** levels of Active & Collaborative Learning, Faculty/Student Interax, & Enriching Educ. Env.
- However – **HIGHER** levels of all measures of engagement or involvement are associated with significantly **HIGHER** stress levels.
 - **HIGHER** levels of Supportive Campus Environment are associated with **LOWER** stress levels.



Research Limitations

1. **Self-selection bias**
 - **Do students who are inclined to drink less and be more engaged select INTO programs?**
 - **Comparison groups still don't necessarily reach students who are less inclined toward engagement or more prone to heavy drinking**
2. **Sample size**
 - **Engaged learning experiences are generally at periphery of the curriculum**
 - **On average, our demonstration sites reach 9% of target population**
3. **Instrumentation**
 - **Little consensus in the literature for defining & measuring engagement in learning, student mental health and wellbeing, and civic...**
 - **Because instruments generally measure one dimension of constructs is an "additive" approach valid, or do we need to develop new instrumentation?**



Future Directions

1. Conclusion of second year of demonstration project and analysis of data
2. Further analysis of NSSE data
3. Overcoming research limitations – and build findings into new designs
4. “Field development” & Our Learning Curve