Syracuse University (SU) has gained national attention in recent years for the ways in which it has re-emphasized its public mission, and that of higher education more generally, by tapping into a tradition of engaged scholarship (Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Peters & Eatman, 2013; Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011). For over 20 years, Syracuse University has recognized individual students, student groups, classes, and faculty across campus engaged with local and global communities. For example, the 2013 Chancellor’s Award for Public Engagement and Scholarship (CAPES) featured residence hall programs, student organizations, and over 200 individual academic courses (Rodoski, 2013). These courses represented innovative curricular approaches to civic learning through architecture, public health, social work, and education initiatives.

Clearly, civic engagement has the potential to contribute to student growth and learning in multiple ways (e.g., Finley, 2012; Flanagan & Bundnik, 2011; Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012). Cress (2012) summarizes educational outcomes associated with college student participation in civic engagement such as increased graduation rates, pursuit of subsequent graduate studies, learning more academic content, developing higher order skills such as critical thinking, and increases in emotional intelligence. As Finley (2011) concludes from an extensive literature review of social science studies examining college students’ civic engagement, “Beyond learning gains, the literature suggests students’ participation in civically oriented activities … has a significant impact on their intrapersonal and social development” (p. 10).

While Syracuse University promotes students’ engaged learning in innovative ways, more work is needed to capture the fullness and complexity of student engagement in and outside of the classroom. Through this project - From Self to Civic: Promoting Student Well Being through Communities of Engaged Learning - we developed and implemented a multi-method approach to study the impact of engaged learning on well being for college students on our campus. Some of the questions addressed include: How has engaged scholarship been integrated in academic courses? What are some key examples and how can we better understand the implications of such learning including through the narratives of students? How does or might Syracuse University promote student well being through communities of engaged learning?

With support from Bringing Theory to Practice, we measured facets of socio-emotional well being for students enrolled in three courses that illustrate SU’s commitment to educating the whole student and that draw students from across disciplines. The courses include: Intergroup Dialogue (SOC/WGS/CFE 230); Personal and Social Responsibility (SPM 101); and Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to Stress Reduction (HTW 405/605). Faculty who lead these courses share a commitment to experiential learning that addresses self-inquiry and critical thinking, empathy and perspective-taking, personal and social identities, agency and civic engagement. The three courses served as the basis for the development of survey instruments and interview protocols to better understand the impact of engaged learning on college student well being.
Intergroup Dialogue (Sociology, Women’s and Gender Studies, Cultural Foundations of Education 230, 3 credits) brings together members of groups with a history of conflict or limited opportunities to engage in meaningful discussion of controversial, challenging, or divisive issues (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001; Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). At Syracuse University, dialogue courses are offered that focus on race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, class, and faith. As shared with students, the goals of intergroup dialogue include: (1) understanding social identities and the role of social structures and institutions in creating and maintaining inequality; (2) developing intergroup and other communication skills; and (3) planning and enacting collaboration. These courses are organized around multi-disciplinary readings (e.g., historical, sociological, personal narratives), experiential learning activities, an intergroup collaboration project, and weekly written critical reflections. Students also write a final paper reflecting on their learning through the course. These courses are supervised by program director Gretchen Lopez, a faculty member in Cultural Foundations of Education and associated faculty in Women’s and Gender Studies. Earlier research has demonstrated student participation in intergroup dialogue academic courses is associated with greater awareness of societal inequality, enhanced intergroup understanding and communication skills, and stronger motivation to bridge difference (e.g., Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Gurin, Nagda, & Zúñiga, 2013; Lopez, Gurin, & Nagda, 1998).

Personal and Social Responsibility (Sport Management 101, 3 credits) is designed to assist students with the transition and challenges of college, athletic life, and beyond. The goal of Personal and Social Responsibility is to engage students in understanding and developing wellbeing in all areas of their life. The course is intentional in including student athletes, together with others across campus, in discussions of civic engagement and well being. The key elements/topics of the course focus on social well being, financial well being, physical well being, and community well being. Students enrolled in this course are required to keep a journal in which they reflect on each class session and the corresponding readings for that class. Students also complete weekly written assignments related to the course topics, and engage in community services within the Central New York area. The culminating project for the students is a final paper reflecting on their learning through the course. The course is visible on campus given SPM 101 students organize a donation drive for the Syracuse Rescue Mission during which students sleep in cardboard boxes overnight on the SU Quad to raise awareness and educate the SU community about homelessness (Barrett, 2013). The course is taught by Jeffrey Pauline, a faculty member in the Department of Sport Management in the Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.

Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to Stress Reduction (Public Health 405/605, 3 credits) bridges neuroscience and theories of cognition and behavior with engaged practice of mindful meditation. The core of the course engages students in the practice of mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) based on the eight-week curriculum developed by Kabat-Zinn (1990). Students are challenged to cultivate awareness and insight of the relative and malleable nature of thoughts, judgments, and identity; and to heuristically examine attitudinal foundations of non-attachment, non-judging, non-reactivity, acceptance, trust, open curiosity, and patience. This course is taught by Dessa Bergen-Cico, a faculty member in the Department of Public Health. Published research conducted with students enrolled in this course has revealed significant increases in students mindfulness and observation skills, acting with awareness, sense of common humanity, coupled with significant decreases in isolation, anxiety, and self-judgement (Bergen-Cico & Cheon, 2013; Bergen-Cico, Possemanto, & Cheon, 2013).

Building from earlier faculty research (Bergen-Cico & Cheon, 2013; Bergen-Cico, et al., 2013; Lopez & Zúñiga, 2010; Zúñiga, Lopez, & Ford, 2012), course assessment surveys (pre/post) included multiple forms of campus and public engagement. More specifically, surveys administered to students contained items from the Multi-University Intergroup Dialogue Research Project (Multi-University Intergroup Dialogue Research Project Guidebook; Gurin, Nagda, & Zúñiga, 2013; Lopez & Zúñiga, 2010; Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009; see also Michigan Student Study, 1990) measuring: (1) academic engagement, engaged learning outside the classroom; (2) social identities, beliefs about conflict, comfort in communicating with people across social groups, motivation to bridge differences; and (3) intergroup collaboration including skills in dealing with conflict; involvement in campus organizations
and activities; and post-college anticipated involvement in redressing inequalities. Additionally, surveys included the Self Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF, Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011) given use in previous research assessing the outcomes of mindfulness-based programs on psychological health (Bergen-Cico & Cheon, 2013; Bergen-Cico, et al., 2013). Importantly, we also drew from the Bringing Theory to Practice Toolkit (Assessment Survey) including items from (1) National Survey of Student Engagement, Deep Learning Scale, and (2) scales measuring student abilities developed in service learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999). To assess student well being in particular, we included the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF, Keyes, 2009, 2013a) and the Flourishing Scale (Diener, et al., 2010).

In gathering qualitative data, we were interested in capturing student narratives about engaged learning and well being. These data provided the opportunity to explore questions such as: Do these courses inform students’ understanding of their education as a whole? Do they affect social relationships outside of academic or class settings? Do these courses inform students’ thinking about future careers and/or participation in diverse democracy? Based on previous assessment and research, we anticipated vivid examples of application and construction of knowledge from students’ involvement in the courses. Indeed, video recorded interviews captured student reflections about critical educational spaces and engaged learning. This summer, the filmed interviews of students in two of the courses (Intergroup Dialogue, Personal and Social Responsibility) were edited into short films (approximately 8-10 minutes) describing student experiences and learning in the courses. These videos display the changes and growth of students who were active participants in courses focused on engaged learning and well being. We organized a luncheon event (June) with invited college administrators, faculty, and staff to share and discuss the short films and what they indicated regarding the impact of educating the whole student.

Preliminary findings were also presented and discussed at this luncheon, as well as earlier at two conferences (American Educational Research Association 2015, Association for Applied Sport Psychology 2014). Survey and interview data were collected and analyzed separately for each course. In regard to Intergroup Dialogue, pre-post survey results provided some support that engaged learning in this course is associated with the construct of deep learning. Moreover, intergroup dialogue students demonstrated (over span of semester) enhanced communication skills including critical self-reflection; willingness to work across difference and conflict; and interest in public engagement (post-college) focused on addressing race, class, and gender based inequalities. In regard to Personal and Social Responsibility, pre-post survey results provide support that engaged learning in this course is associated with student well being including several aspects of mental health, flourishing, self-compassion, and interpersonal skills. Finally, in regard to the Stress Reduction course, pre-post survey results provide strong support that engaged learning through this course is associated with mental health, flourishing, self-compassion, and interpersonal skills. Students in another course taught by the same instructor, without the same kind of engaged learning pedagogy, did not demonstrate the same kind of on these same measures over the course of a semester. Thus, the general objective of this initiative to provide the opportunity to more fully understand, disseminate, and discuss these examples of engaged learning was met. To follow up on this initiative and the promising assessment results, we plan to further disseminate the findings both within and outside of the university. In addition, we will share key aspects of the curriculum (for each course) accompanied by student narratives and reflections on engaged learning (captured in short films). The initiative has served as, and we imagine will continue to be, a catalyst for discussions about holistic forms of education that must be prioritized as the structure and broader purpose of higher education is debated.

**Budget.** Expenditures for the project were in keeping with the categories of the original proposal. The grant covered personnel including graduate research assistants ($ ), and video support specialists ($ ); materials, specifically three pockets drives for video file exchange, storage and editing ($ ); and conference travel for two faculty members including registration, transportation, and/or hotel ($ for Professor Gretchen Lopez; for Professor Jeffrey Pauline). These expenses are further detailed in the table below.
Personnel: [redacted] subtotal

Graduate research assistants (hourly rate)  
Contacted students, scheduled and conducted interviews, transcription and preliminary coding; survey administration, data entry and preliminary analysis; literature review  
[Jermaine Soto, Jacob Bartholomew, Meredith Madden]

Video support specialists  
Video-recorded, stored, and transferred interview files; video editing, production, and collaboration  
[Holly Zahn, Mary Kasprzyk]

Materials  
Purchased three pocket drives (1/faculty member) for video file exchange and storage

Travel – School of Education Faculty  
Conference presentation at AERA 2015 in Chicago, American Educational Research Association  
[Gretchen Lopez, Ph.D., principal investigator]

Travel – Falk College Faculty  
Conference presentation at Association for Applied Sport Psychology 2014 in Las Vegas  
[Jeffrey Pauline, Ph.D., co-investigator]

TOTAL EXPENDITURES [June 2015]  

In regard to matching ($), the amount originally proposed was covered through academic year effort plus fringe benefits for the three faculty members/investigators (Gretchen Lopez, .28 AY month; Dessa Bergen-Cico, .29 AY month; Jeff Pauline, .26 AY month).  

In regard to additional expenses covered by the institution, the cost of catering for the luncheon at the end of the academic year (and grant period) was covered through the Intergroup Dialogue Program (School of Education).  

The remaining balance from the Bringing Theory to Practice grant is $ As allowable, we are requesting that this amount be applied (reimburse the Intergroup Dialogue Program) for the luncheon during which the findings of the project were exchanged, presented and discussed with university administrators and faculty leaders. We were not able to charge this amount to the grant at the time given the luncheon was held on June 30, 2015 (given administrator schedules) and Syracuse University catering did not bill for the event until July 2015.

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Please submit an electronic copy of your report through BTtoP.org’s Submit Grant Report feature and mail a hard copy of your report with your electronic submission email receipt to Bringing Theory to Practice Project, 1818 R St. NW, Washington, DC 20009.