

Charting the Trajectory of a Flexible Community-University Collaboration in an Applied Learning Ecosystem

Kelly McShane, Amelia M. Usher, Reena Tandon, and Joanne Steel

ABSTRACT Current fiscal cuts provide numerous challenges for community organizations in their mission to provide evidence-based services. Universities are focusing on career-related experiences, largely experiential learning opportunities, to support enhanced student outcomes. Community engagement is often touted as a goal for universities and community collaboration is increasingly viewed as favourable in research. Thus, a community-university partnership which focuses on evaluation would serve to meet the needs of both groups currently experiencing challenges in service delivery and training, respectively. This article presents a case study of a community-university partnership between Renascent and Ryerson University that has evolved over time to meet the needs of both partners. We discuss the applied learning ecosystem, which extends from the supervisory context to the history of the academic institutional partner. We also discuss the flexibility in collaboration, noting the change over time to meet the evolving needs of both the university and the community partner. We aspire to contribute to the literature documenting the range of community-engaged partnerships by providing experiences and reflections to support others in this area.

KEYWORDS community-university collaboration, evaluation, service learning, addictions

At present, there are only four community psychology or community prevention graduate academic programs in Canada (Society for Community Research and Action, 2014), which means that training in community-engaged approaches within the field of psychology is exceedingly limited. Important outcomes and products of training programs and community-academic collaborations in general are accordingly diminished (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Such outcomes can include rigorous external, impartial evaluations and capacity building (Conley-Tyler, 2005). As well, financial constraints have become central to both the public and private sector in recent years, resulting in additional reductions in avenues supporting evidence-based

practice and training, for instance, as well as funds available for community-based research (Savan, Flicker, Kolenda, & Mildenberger, 2009). A growing emphasis on evidence-based practice, which is predicated on a strong evaluation culture and infrastructure, places many community agencies at a disadvantage (Jackson, Pitkin, & Kingston, 1998; Taxman & Belenko, 2012). This development compounds the challenges faced by community organizations in their attempts to advocate for additional resources as they lack the “evidence” that politicians and funders require.

For those actively engaged in community-based research or community-engaged scholarship (CES), out of this challenge arises an opportunity to address the needs for community infrastructure to evaluate and document the effectiveness of community programs and policies. At the same time, community collaboration is increasingly viewed as favourable and in some instances as required for research funding and projects (Wenger, Hawkins, & Seifer, 2012). Notwithstanding, certain challenges and opportunities still remain in community-engaged scholarship. From a policy perspective described by Holland (2010), there is a need for different conceptualizations of community-engaged scholarship to reflect local context; for recognition that the workforce is changing and the younger generation is supportive of this kind of scholarship; and for exemplars of how it relates to traditional scholarly and research activities. Lenton (2010) also noted the need to provide students a voice. Participants at a conference on community-engaged scholarship elaborated on these points and presented others; for example, establishing mutually beneficial relationships, distinguishing community-engaged scholarship from service learning, training graduate students, and establishing a welcoming institutional environment for CES (Wenger, Hawkins, & Seifer, 2012).

This essay provides an in-depth account of a collaboration between Ryerson University and Renascent, a community-based addiction treatment centre. Our first goal is to describe the institutional context of this partnership, describing both the community and academic partner and how both partners created a welcoming environment for this collaboration. Our second goal is to show the flexibility in collaboration by providing concrete examples of projects that have both pedagogical value in an academic context, and relevance and necessity for the community partner (illustrating the mutually beneficial relationship). This will also serve as an opportunity to explore how traditional scholarly activities can easily be reframed as CES activities. This essay is authored by a community-engaged scholar, graduate student, community partner, and administrator; we seek to address the challenges listed above and outlined by Wenger, Hawkins, & Seifer (2012).

Community Partner: Renascent

Originally established in 1970, Renascent was founded by a group of business people, some of whom were in recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction. A women’s only residential treatment program opened in 1981 and since then has grown to four sites in the greater Toronto area. A fully accredited addiction treatment institution,

Renascent has a governance model consisting of a Board of Directors, a number of whom are in addiction recovery. As part of the organization's most recent strategic plan, the Board of Directors committed to an organizational development objective to increase professionalization and addiction treatment system engagement. Dr. Patrick Smith was named CEO in 2011 with the specific mandate of implementing this strategic direction and facilitating a culture change to increase evidence-informed approaches in both programming and organizational activities.

The core addiction treatment program is a residential (inpatient) 21-day intensive program that has as its foundation the 12-step philosophy and principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. The program is an abstinence-based program intended to serve those with serious addiction to alcohol and other drugs. There is a 15-week outpatient Continuing Care Program that addresses early recovery needs and relapse prevention in early recovery. Additionally, a Family Program (Essential Family Care) and a Children's Program provide education and support for children in age appropriate language and activities. Lastly, the Contacts Program based within Alumni and Volunteer Resources offers one-on-one support for those living with addiction on an outpatient basis, consistent with the general principles of other mutual support programs (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous).

The three programs involved directly in the collaborations described here are the Essential Family Care (EFC) program, Contacts program, and the Children's Program. The essential family care is a four-week, group psychoeducational program for the family members or loved ones who experience addiction delivered in-person or distance delivery (using teleconference technology) for those outside commuting distance. The program focuses on understanding the impact of addiction, developing coping strategies, and reducing codependency. The Contacts Program, as stated above, offers one-on-one support for those living with addiction on an outpatient basis. The Children's Program, a four-day family-based outpatient program delivered to children and their parent or caregiver, aims to provide education on the impacts of addiction, support effective parenting, enable open discussion about addiction, and support with appropriate coping skills.

Applied Learning Ecosystem at Ryerson University

Ryerson University has a longstanding focus on applied learning that can be traced back to its roots as a polytechnic institute established shortly after the Second World War. In fact, it was the first vocationally focused university in Canada (Marshall, 2004). The university's mission emphasizes the "provision of programs of study that provide a balance between theory and application" and "the advancement of applied knowledge and research in response to existing and emerging societal needs" (Ryerson University Act, 1977). The university's current Strategic Mandate Agreement (2014 to 2017) with the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (2014) further enshrines the focus on applied learning by affirming the university's position as a leader in experiential learning. Relevant areas of strength, which differentiate Ryerson University from

other Ontario institutions, include active collaboration with the not-for-profit and public sectors; student-based community collaborations; and career-related education. As well, all undergraduate programs have advisory councils comprised of industry experts who ensure that students graduate with career-related knowledge and skills. Finally, the university has received a commitment from the provincial government to allocate an additional 6,000 graduate student spaces over the next three years. These investments suggest that Ryerson University's respected position as an applied institution, focused on career-relevant education, and its continued engagement with community, will be strengthened over the coming years.

Within the institution, a number of key infrastructures exist to support the implementation of the strategic plan. The Faculty of Arts has a dedicated Community-Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT) office, which includes a coordinator who functions more as a co-investigator on CELT projects, as well as undergraduate-level research assistants. The office can identify community partners, collaborate on the development of curricular projects, assist in the evaluation of the projects, and serve as a co-investigator on research funding applications and projects. The Learning and Teaching Office also offers a teaching grant dedicated to the development and evaluation of undergraduate level programs to support experiential learning (including, but not limited to CELT) in the classroom. Finally, Ryerson University also offers a number of awards supporting experiential learning and collaborative research.

The openness and flexibility of the CELT office is a facilitative factor for university-community partnerships. For example, for this longitudinal project, the coordinator extended the purview of its mandate to include graduate courses as a pilot, in order to build continuity between the graduate and the undergraduate courses. This multi-faceted and on-going collaboration between the office coordinator and the academic lead, through a number of service learning / CELT courses over multiple semesters facilitated longitudinal service and collaboration to the community partner, as well as continuity in mentoring for undergraduate and graduate students. This institutional partnership with the CELT framework extended the research and program evaluation-based partnership and provided enhanced support and service to the partner through student involvement in conducting the evaluation and developing the logic models. The extension of the partnership within the CELT framework provided added confidence to the partner and allayed fears associated with earlier partnerships with academics, as the purpose here was not just the vested academic interest of the university-based researcher, but included student learning outcomes and, at the same time, benefits for the partner through course-based service-learning and CELT assignments. The office provides support for reconceptualization of traditional courses into community-engaged courses, balancing student learning with community partner goals. The support in terms of course design, developing and maintaining partnerships, developing MoUs and consent and waivers for partners and students, developing project-based research and publications provides an extended framework for community engaged academic endeavours at Ryerson and in the Faculty of Arts.

Lastly, dedicated operational and administrative support through the CELT office provided an avenue for students to draw information and support as needed for their experiential learning goals.

Based on documented strategies (Wenger, Hawkins, & Seifer, 2011) for developing and supporting community-engaged scholarship, Ryerson University is making progress. For instance, regarding strategies for creating a welcoming atmosphere, there is evidence of support for bottom-up changes and the beginnings of institutional commitment (seen in connection with community in the current strategic mandate). With respect to evaluating and rewarding community-engaged scholarship, slower progress has been made. This limited progress is quite consistent with survey results from Canadian universities on their ability to support community-based research. In fact, a lack of institutional support (including reward structures) was noted as the most important barrier to overcome for academic and hospital organizations in striving for CES support (Savan et al., 2009). Ryerson University strategies to support community-engaged scholarship include the establishment of enhanced administrative support, provision of skill development of both graduate and undergraduate students, as well as community members (detailed below).

Spectrum of Collaboration for Student Learning Environment

The above description of Ryerson University paints a picture of an institution with community and applied roots; however, it does not necessarily clarify how such values permeate all levels of the institution, ranging from the student-advisor relationship, graduate curriculum, department, and the university's Research Ethics Board. For this Ryerson-Renascent community collaboration, the advisor and student were also engaged in a successful collaboration, where both the faculty advisors and students were co-learners in the pursuit of knowledge, with the student working "with" and not "for" the advisor, consistent with best practices identified by Jaeger, Sandmann, and Kim (2011). The advisor and student discussed some of potential benefits of engaging in community-based research (CBR), noting it is an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the community whilst learning tangible, real-world research skills (van der Muelen, 2011) and deriving unique training opportunities seldom the focal point of traditional graduate training (Morgan, Curtis, & Vincent, 2008). For example, students who incorporate community-based research into their graduate training have the opportunity to learn valuable, transferable skills such as project management, community service, budgeting, grant writing within the not-for-profit sector, and stakeholder engagement (Morgan et al., 2008). It is with this mindset that the advisor approaches community-engaged scholarship and student mentorship on community-engaged projects.

This collaboration between the student and advisor was the backdrop for specific skills training, development of a research agreement, and negotiation of academic and community goals. Effective research agreements should outline the shared goals of the project, principles of the partnership, roles and responsibilities, and guidelines

for how data management and dissemination will be handled (Flicker, Travers, Guta, McDonald, & Meagher, 2007). Under guidance from the advisor, a memorandum of understanding was created in collaboration with Renascent. This document outlined guiding principles for respectful collaboration, shared values for conducting community-engaged research, roles and responsibilities, guidelines for respecting confidentiality and data security, and shared ownership and responsibility for data and dissemination. This allowed for an exceptional learning opportunity for the graduate student, as these documents are typically overlooked in traditional psychology research studies. The added value for the graduate student was the opportunity to gain experience negotiating the terms of this document with the community partner with support from an experienced academic advisor.

Institutional departments have specific requirements and expectations for graduate student theses, which may be at odds with engaging in meaningful community partnerships (van der Muelen, 2011). For example, the ability to complete the project within the timeframe for graduation imposed by the department may not be feasible for the community partner. Negotiating to meet both academic and community goals presented logistical issues including graduate committee expectations for what is considered an appropriate doctoral study. For example, expectations around sample size, participant recruitment methods, and research methodology may not be in line with what is feasible for the community partner. In this project, this conversation took place on several occasions. In the department of psychology, the CES allies were enlisted to serve as members of the supervisory committee and were supportive of CBR and the few identified challenges were successfully resolved.

Another area for negotiation is the frequent lack of structural support from academic units, such as funding, appropriate course work, and opportunities for professional development (Jaeger et al., 2011). In the case of the current project, some of these issues were mitigated by funding provided by the community partner that allowed for the evaluation to take place. As well, advocacy for courses on program evaluation and qualitative research methods to be taught within the department facilitated training opportunities. In fact, two brand new course offerings (Program Evaluation and Qualitative Research Methods) were both implemented during the course of the graduate students' research project and were taught by the advisor.

Moving beyond the department, the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board (REB) was involved in this project, in some innovative ways. Program evaluation falls under the domain of administrative research and therefore does not require Ethics Board approval (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). However, some researchers have argued that more debate is needed on the role of Ethics Boards in program evaluation (Thurston, Robinson Vollman, & Burgess, 2003). In addition to tri-council policy, the American Evaluation Society has outlined guidelines for program evaluation standards which stipulate that program evaluation be feasible, practical, and consistent with ethical standards

which include taking into account the welfare of all those involved in the evaluation (Thurston et al., 2003). The Canadian Evaluation Society also upholds these standards. Knowledge of this pertinent landscape was shared and discussed by the advisor and graduate student. Ryerson University Research Ethics Board engaged in consultations with the student and advisors about the parameters of conducting community-engaged research and evaluation. This process of graduate mentorship for the Ethics Board application allowed for deeper appreciation of the complexities inherent to community-based research. A joint decision was made, in conjunction with Renascent, to seek Research Ethics Board approval for the project and the Ryerson graduate student and graduate supervisor took the responsibility to ensure ethical approval from the university. At Ryerson University, we are quite fortunate that the Research Ethics Board Chair is a community-based researcher, and is thus well versed in negotiating such situations. This is a significant strength in the learning system.

Flexibility of collaborative projects

An overview of the trajectory of projects completed between partners is presented in Table 1. A key feature of the projects is that there was never a “repeat” of what had previously been done. Different approaches and foci were warranted and this was embraced and resulted in a highly flexible collaboration. Beginning with a simple program exemplar to be used at a workshop, this addressed a short-term need to deliver a highly relevant and hands-on workshop. This was followed by an undergraduate course-based project, which came at the right moment for both the academic researcher and the community partner. The academic researcher was embarking on a research program examining community-engaged learning and teaching and its impact on post-secondary students. The community partner was preparing to embark on the accreditation process and this provided a ripe opportunity for staff to gain training in program evaluation, as well as some road maps for evaluating the Contacts Program. Finally, with the accreditation process in full swing, and momentum and interest for community-based research within a graduate student, meant the opportunity to showcase a complete evaluation on the effectiveness of a newly designed program was an ideal case study to include in the accreditation documentation.

Evaluation of the Essential Family Care Program

With funding from the Canadian Psychology Association, Education Grant-Clinical Section, the academic lead developed a one-day workshop on program evaluation, which was delivered at no-cost to both graduate students and local community partners. A student volunteer for the workshop suggested Renascent as a community partner who would be able to provide a program example, upon which to base the practice component of the workshop. At the time, the collaboration was viewed as limited to the workshop; presenting a 30-minute program description to workshop participants. However, other student volunteers expressed an interest and willingness to undertake an evaluation of the program and the academic lead and community lead

met and formalized a partnership.

Over a two-year period, with support from three volunteer research assistants and a statistician colleague, the academic and community leads undertook an outcome evaluation of the Essential Family Care program. The project culminated in a community report, co-authored by the academic lead and students, which was presented to the community lead and associated staff. As well, a joint presentation at the Canadian Psychology Convention in 2013 was undertaken by the community lead and a student researcher. The presentation provided results from the study, as well as a reflection on the partnership. In brief, the evaluation resulted in significant enhancement to clinical service delivery, as well as identification of areas requiring further exploration (detailed in a forthcoming manuscript).

Community-University Program Evaluation Collaboration

The unexpected, although not entirely unsurprising, outcome of the first evaluation was the recognition of the value and impact of evaluation for the community partner. In light of this, it was clear to both the community partner and the researcher that efforts to support the organization's capacity to conduct program evaluations should be maximized. In this next project, a service-learning framework was employed and delivered in a collaborative manner. Service learning is considered a form of experiential learning and involves students drawing on their experiences to reflect, test, and create new ideas (Kolb, 1984). It is regarded as an approach that integrates service within the community with the educational learning activities (Canadian Alliance for Service Learning, n.d.). Research has found that service learning strengthens students' connections to the surrounding community and can help promote an institution's values and mission within the community (Goomas & Weston, 2012; Wittmer, 2004). Successful outcomes with respect to learning enhancements have been found in SL projects involving provision of a service by students such as volunteering (e.g., Lundy, 2007; Whitbourne, Collins, & Skultety, 2001), as well as project-based service learning activities (e.g., Casile, Hoover, & O'Neil, 2011).

In this project, the service learning students provided the development of a logic model and compiled a list of critically appraised potential outcomes measures for Renascent. To facilitate this service learning project, Renascent delivered a presentation on their organization and program and attended a stakeholder consultation session with students to address any remaining questions pertaining to the Contacts program. To address the program evaluation capacity, staff from Renascent were invited (and attended) two program evaluation lectures delivered as part of the course curriculum.

No formal evaluation of the community capacity was undertaken and this remains a limitation to be addressed in subsequent work. However, results on the impact on students found that those students who completed this community-engaged assignment option (as opposed to the theoretical course components only) expressed a greater interest in program evaluation as a field (McShane, Katona, Leroux, & Tandon, 2015). No measurable differences were noted in terms of civic engagement

(Katona, McShane, Leroux, & Tandon, 2013). Interestingly, research has demonstrated that even in classes where students do not select the service learning project (e.g., those who opt-out of the service learning project), improvements in key outcomes have been demonstrated (Goomas & Weston, 2012). Thus, it may be the case that students who did not elect to complete the project in partnership with Renascent still received the benefits of a community stakeholder presentation, presence of the community partners during the program evaluation lectures, and the discussion about the assignment with respect to the community partner's program. In summary, this serving project supported further training in program evaluation for Renascent staff, and provided undergraduate students with a meaningful way to contribute to the community.

Community-based Research Dissertation

The community-university program evaluation collaboration project stopped short of conducting an evaluation, largely due to the capacity of undergraduate students to provide a rigorous product given the parameters of the service learning project. However, it certainly provided staff with a greater understanding of how evaluation could benefit their specific programs directly, thereby reinforcing the lessons learned from the first project. Renascent had a long-term strategic goal of exporting program models and disseminating evidence-based practice to the broader addiction treatment community. They had initially received support from a governmental agency to develop a logic model for their innovative program—The Children's Program—for children living with substance abusing parents (COSAPs). However, jurisdictional boundaries related to the program's content (e.g., not exclusive child- or adolescent-focused but addiction focused) resulted in the withdrawal of governmental support for collaborating on this work. Renascent decided to contact the academic lead to explore how this project could be undertaken. Through consultation, the partnership was envisioned as a community-based research project and was developed to meet the needs of the community partner and fulfill the requirements of a doctoral dissertation. A community-based research project is defined as a collaborative and participatory approach to research involving community organizations as partners to produce knowledge that addresses challenges (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). To support such a goal, Renascent indicated that both a literature review and pilot evaluation of their Children's Program would be ideal. Through consultation, the project was therefore conceived in two parts, so as to best meet the needs of the community partner as well as fulfill the academic requirements of a doctoral thesis: 1) a systematic review of existing family-based COSAP programs in the form of a realist synthesis, and 2) a collaborative program evaluation of the Renascent Children's Program. As well, provision of program evaluation training and evidence-based service delivery was also identified in order to increase the capacity and willingness of staff to engage in the evaluation.

A realist review was selected because it is particularly well suited to a community

context for several reasons (Pawson, 2002). First, it recognizes that social programs operate within multiple contexts and may be implemented differently depending on the unique features of the populations being served. Second, it views stakeholder engagement as integral to the review process where it is often used as a tool to inform policy on social program implementation within communities (Roycroft-Malone, et al., 2012). Realist synthesis emphasizes the need for a two-way dialogue between researcher and stakeholder in identifying the review questions (Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, & Walshe, 2005). Finally, realist synthesis allows for the inclusion of grey literature as a data source, in addition to published scholarly literature. This is key for CBR because it reflects the reality of how community organizations document their program outcomes and implementation strategies. Moreover, as interest in community-engaged scholarship increases within academia, so too do the number of publications adhering to realist methodology for such purposes. This includes practice guidelines and standards for publication (e.g. Wong, Greenhalgh, Westhorp, Buckingham, & Pawson, 2013; Wong, Westhorp, Pawson, & Greenhalgh, 2013), scholarly papers, and graduate theses.

For the dissertation project, the realist synthesis was purposefully undertaken so as to uphold principles of community engagement and methodological rigour. Multiple dialogues were held among stakeholders (graduate student, graduate advisor, and Renascent staff members at the frontline and management level) in order to frame and shape the direction of the realist synthesis. The specifics of the review question were decided upon in a collaborative fashion such that all parties' interests were adequately addressed. While the responsibility for literature identification, abstraction, and synthesis of evidence was assumed by the graduate student and advisor, these discussions served to elicit important information that guided the review process. Therefore, not only did realist synthesis meet the needs of the community partner, but it also meets academic standards in terms of rigour and theoretical approach.

The second project involved an evaluation of the effectiveness of Renascent's unique COSAP program. Since the evaluation of the Children's Program was coming on the heels of the accreditation process, there was a certain degree of both trepidation and excitement present throughout. An embedded, participatory model of program evaluation was adopted in order to support this goal, as well as maintain the collaborative engagement between university and community partner. Participatory evaluation is an ideal approach to community-engaged scholarship as it by definition involves collaboration between researchers and community stakeholders (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Patton, 2008). In this case Renascent staff, including frontline program facilitators and management, and a Ryerson graduate student and supervisor were engaged in multiple discussions about how best to devise and implement the program evaluation study. Data collection was integrated into the program curriculum so as to reinforce and support program content. Patton (2008) refers to this process as *intervention-oriented evaluation*, which is described as building "a program delivery model that logically and meaningfully interjects data collection in

ways that enhance achievement of program outcomes, while also meeting evaluation information needs” (p. 166). The result of this decision was that outcome evaluation measures were directly inserted into the program content at appropriate points in the curriculum so as to minimize additional burden on program staff and program participants. This embedded approach was highly satisfactory to all collaborators as it reflected the reality of Renascent’s organizational capacity for evaluation, as well as serving the participatory goals of the Ryerson graduate student.

Finally, a workshop was developed to support staff’s evaluation capacity in order to increase the success in implementing the evaluation of the Children’s Program. In consultation with administration, a set of learning objectives was identified and the graduate student and advisor developed and delivered a one-day workshop entitled, *Program evaluation applied to addiction treatment*. A successful application was made to the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation to have the workshop qualify for 6 Continuing Education Units. A total of 16 front-line staff attended the workshop and provided excellent feedback on the content and overall presentation.

Culture Change within Renascent

For this collaboration, culture change is one of the unexpected outcomes that was not explicitly measured or accounted for. As a preliminary step in outcome harvesting, consultations between administration and frontline staff were held and pinpointed that a culture change was noted and staff were able to provide clarification on it. Outcome harvesting is a utilization-focused, participatory tool that can be used to clarify outcomes that were influenced when the cause-effect chains are not documented (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2013).

Administration and staff term this change as moving from “this is the way we’ve always done it” to “count it and find out.” Staff reported that the workshop indicated that it helped many staff overcome the fear that evaluation was going to be boring or irrelevant to their work with clients. The net result of this workshop was that these staff embraced an approach to solving problems; meaning that decisions were made based on evidence, instead of a tendency to accept the status quo. These staff are now more attuned to checking the evidence that already exists to inform next steps. Finally, in the cases where there isn’t already established evidence, staff are then empowered to start collecting their own in-house evidence to inform decisions.

The other culture change pertains to the renewed sense of trust in academic partnerships. One lead administrator indicated he was highly sceptical of partnering with an academic institution because in his previous role academics did not follow a model of mutual benefit, and instead were focused solely on benefit to their academic careers. Each partner’s area of expertise (academic and community) was respected and each individual involved in the design and implementation had a legitimate voice. Counsellors were assured that they had the power of final approval of evaluation tools (i.e. they could exclude evaluation tools that did not work therapeutically or structurally for the program), and thus nowhere in the process of design and implementation did

Renascent staff feel compelled to take on a measurement tool or a process that did not feel consistent with practice delivery. As well, the academic partners were keenly aware of how stretched frontline counsellors are in meeting caseload demands. As a result, the embedded evaluation model was just one example of how innovative solutions were sought so as to accommodate the burden of counselling work while enhancing the opportunity for clients to self-reflect and connect within the session. Additional stories from the frontlines, or specific harvested outcomes, are listed in Table 3. These have been through substantiation, including review from the front line staff and at least two administrators.

We recognize that these reports are not derived from empirical sources as might exist within other evaluations; however, they are noteworthy and relevant to the community partner and are included as evidence of the application of an outcome harvesting tool. Using an outcome harvesting approach (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2013), we have begun to identify outcomes and substantiate these within the organization through consultation with management and frontline staff.

Conclusions

This evolving partnership between Ryerson University and Renascent has seen a number of changes and foci, but has retained a collaborative approach to evaluation. Although collaboration was limited to three specific programs, the impact on cultural change within Renascent has emerged through outcome harvesting.

The post-secondary landscape is changing, and a greater focus on career-relevant skills and community engagement is present. The inclusion and partnership with a graduate student for the community-based research project supported enhanced capacity building, as well as the provision of real-world experiences and tangible skills. It also served to highlight the existing learning infrastructure at Ryerson University. In order to encourage the reframing of traditional scholarship as community-engaged scholarship, systemic changes are needed such that faculty and students who engage and excel in such activities are recognized and rewarded. By consequence, this would suggest an adjustment to the traditional academic tenure-granting model so as to embed community-engaged scholarship values into higher education scholarship. Culture change around community-engaged scholarship will require adjustments in how faculty are rewarded for these efforts including increased community engaged scholars as role models for junior faculty and aspiring academics. This would also require modifications around expected timelines on the part of university, as community-based research must respond to changing community needs and landscape with flexibility. Further, as community-based research becomes more widely undertaken, this necessarily means a shift away from traditional lab-based settings when conducting research. The partnership between Ryerson and Renascent described here is but one example of how students and faculty can successfully transition research from tightly controlled laboratory environments to the community.

Community organizations are presented with fiscal challenges and the ever

growing demand on clinical and social services. Flexible community-university partnerships offer much to both address the bottom line and offer evidence-based care. In the current example, with the increasing focus on accreditation and increased evaluation capacity, projects became larger in scope and emphasized specific ways to support evidence-based service delivery. This was in response to changing needs of the community partner and a parallel responsiveness on the part of the university researchers. This suggests that reframing scholarly activities such as CES is not solely accomplished on the part of academia, but that changes can be made by academics and community partners alike. For example, undertaking systematic reviews on topics relevant to community partners is valuable to both academic scholarship and the community. Systematic reviews can provide much-needed information on best practices in order to support evidence informed decision-making. This makes for a natural partnership with academia and students, as community agencies rarely have access to academic library databases. However, in order for these suggestions to be implemented, academic leadership on the part of administrators must be present in order for appropriate methods to be valued, implemented, and disseminated within these partnerships.

Table 1. Timeline and projects between partners

Timeline	Description	CES Activity	Student Involvement
April 2011	Introduction Case Study for Workshop	N/A	4 undergrad volunteers organized workshop
Summer 2011 to Summer 2013	Evaluation of the Essential Family Care Program	Community-engaged research (small scale)	3 undergrad volunteer Research Assistant 1 volunteer research assistant
Fall 2014	Community-University Program Evaluation Collaboration	Service learning	1 Undergrad hired as Research Assistant
Fall 2012 to Summer 2015	Community-engaged research project	Community-engaged research (large scale)	1 graduate student hired as a Research Assistant

Table 2. Feedback on program evaluation workshop

Item	Mean
Increased my knowledge of program evaluation	4.4
Content seemed current	4.7
Content was interesting	4.4
Appropriate level of difficulty	4.3
Presenters' style	4.8
Presenters seemed knowledgeable	4.6
Concepts were clearly explained	4.8

Note. Rating scale ranged from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

Table 3. Outcomes as represented through consultation with administration

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call volumes and metrics are now being analyzed to guide scheduling, hiring and protocols around intake and assessment. With this knowledge comes the ability to better manage occupancy across three treatment houses and support clients waiting for admission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence allowed a women's centre counsellor to challenge a longstanding readmission policy and to reframe procedures in a more trauma-informed manner.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The volunteer manager consults case studies and research to help frame job descriptions aimed at achieving specific goals, such as reducing no-show rates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff working group will review aggregated client feedback surveys to better understand issues and to develop a baseline for further investigation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After quitting smoking and being intrigued with research that indicates enhanced treatment results for clients who quit all substances, a counsellor is leading a voluntary nicotine replacement therapy pilot program at the men's centre.

About the Authors

Kelly E. McShane is a community-engaged researcher passionate about evidence-based service delivery in community settings; realist syntheses; and community-engaged learning and teaching, with a focus on addictions, mental health, and social innovation. She is currently the Treasurer of the Community Psychology section of the Canadian Psychology Association and Chair of the Consortium of Universities for Evaluation Education. Email: kmcshane@psych.ryerson.ca

Amelia M. Usher received her doctoral degree in Psychology from Ryerson University. Her dissertation comprised of a community-based research project on interventions for children of substance abusing parents in collaboration with Renascent. Her research interests follow a community-based approach and include addiction, mental health, marginalized populations, and program evaluation.

Joanne Steel is currently the Senior Manager of Major Gifts and Communications at Renascent, although has previously held positions related to front-line supervision and fundraising. She has worked at Renascent for over 15 years and is passionate about education and training in addictions.

Reena Tandon is a community-engaged scholar, who brings an inter-disciplinary lens and diverse professional experience to her current role of developing the Community Engaged Learning and Teaching initiative at Ryerson University.

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