



Original Research Article

Kitchen wizards: Community-engaged learning at The Wolfville Farmers' Market

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Abstract

This article tells the story of an introductory, undergraduate required course with a significant community service-learning project developed in partnership between the School of Nutrition and Dietetics at Acadia University and the Wolfville Farmers' Market. This partnership began in 2009, with the vision of putting food and community at the centre of the School's pedagogy. After two years of developing a trusting relationship between the partners with the integration of focused assignments, a community-service learning initiative called Kitchen Wizards was created. Kitchen Wizards, now in its 10th year, engages 50 to 80 first-year School of Nutrition and Dietetics' students with the community each fall semester through a Food Commodities course. The initiative introduces 6 to 12-year-old children to in-season local vegetables through a taste-testing experience centered around a simple, healthy recipe made from local produce at the Farmer's Market, which gives the children purchasing power to buy a vegetable with a three-dollar voucher after participating in the tasting. This Kitchen Wizard's story was developed from an action research case study, grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which explored the community-valued outcomes of this program over a three-year period, as well as the student and institutional benefits. This study was conducted by a team that included the Wolfville Farmers' Market Coordinator and the Director of the School of Nutrition and Dietetics who teaches the Food Commodities course.

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Through observation, dialogue and in-depth interviews conducted with students, teaching assistants, community members, Market staff, faculty, and university administration, insights were derived that illuminate community engaged learning as a key strategy for teaching about local food systems that puts both food and community at the centre.

Keywords: Community service-learning; undergraduate food studies; sustainable food systems education; community-university partnerships

Introduction

There is growing interest in integrating community service-learning (CSL) into undergraduate food studies programs, which puts food and community at the centre of learning experiences (Andrée et al., 2014; Galt et al., 2012). At the same time, local food initiatives for consumers, such as farmers' markets, are becoming staples in both rural and urban communities across Canada (McIntyre & Rondeau, 2011), providing an ideal location for sustainable food systems education. These trends support food studies programs to value food in a holistic and interdisciplinary sense, connect students to where their food comes from, and engage students in their community using food as a vehicle.

Despite recent advances in understanding how community-engaged scholars can effectively undertake food systems education with community partners, more research is needed on effective CSL initiatives to advance our practices and deepen our learning as community-engaged scholar-practitioners (Andrée et al., 2014; Levkoe, et al., 2019). This paper focuses on the role that CSL can play in educating students and community about local food systems and tells the story of Kitchen Wizards (KW). This was a community service-learning initiative in a first-year, fall semester, required course in the School of Nutrition and Dietetics at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, which was developed in partnership with the Wolfville Farmers' Market. The purpose of this action research case study was to explore the multiple perspectives and intersections of KW to advance our understanding of KW specifically, and the potential of CSL initiatives as a pedagogical approach to advance food system knowledge and enhance the wellbeing of our communities. As a team of scholar-practitioners, we engaged in this work to learn about our community engagement practices as educators, community leaders, and environmental/social advocates. We believe that what we learned through this partnership and its processes can be valuable to others in developing CSL initiatives where students are educated on local food systems and learn about collaborative practices, while contributing to a community organization's vision and practice.

We present our analysis of the KW CSL initiative and its lessons as follows. First, relevant community service-learning literature is reviewed, which is followed by the methods section. The methods section details the interviews, observations and document analysis that were conducted during this three-year action research case study. Next, we provide the story of

KW, a vignette which describes the essence and practice of the CSL initiative from different perspectives. This is followed by a discussion comparing post-secondary community engagement literature to two key interconnected conditions of the KW CSL initiative that were identified in the analysis as significantly contributing to student community engagement and learning, as well as to the vision and programming of the Wolfville Farmers' Market. A relationship-driven partnership is the first condition and the foundation for the CSL initiative. This partnership is built on reciprocity and commitment, and each of these are explored as subthemes. The second major condition is the implementation of a scaffolded, experiential learning environment. The article concludes with implications for future research and practice.

Community service-learning in food systems education

This literature review begins with an overview of community service-learning as a pedagogical approach in post-secondary institutions, followed by a brief review of the tenets that make for effective CSL in general, and specifically in the field of food studies.

Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (2018), defines CSL as “a form of education in which students learn through the act of community service” (para.1). Chambers, (2009) further explains that within the context of post-secondary institutions, CSL programs typically integrate the academic subject matter with an applied experience in the community, creating opportunities for students to critically reflect on the applied experience. Briggs (2018) expands on this definition, describing the CSL approach as “an educational philosophy which believes in experiential learning that contributes to society as a whole and acknowledges that everyone should be able to contribute, everyone should benefit, and everyone has something to learn and to teach” (p. 228). Chupp and Joseph (2010) identify benefits for the community, explaining that through engaging in experiential activities in the community, CSL programs provide an avenue for students to not only learn about, but also to address complex community issues. A central tenet of CSL, therefore, is that both students and the community should benefit from the experience (Briggs, 2018; Gazley et al., 2013; Sweatman & Warner, 2020). It is well established that students and universities prosper from community engagement scholarship, including CSL initiatives (Astin et al., 2000; Chupp & Joseph, 2010; Kearney, 2013). Student participation in CSL opportunities has a positive effect on student learning and academic performance, as well as helps students to gain leadership, critical thinking, and other important skills (Astin et al., 2000; Chupp & Joseph, 2010; Kearney, 2013). More recently, a focus has been on the benefits of CSL initiatives to community partners, such as increasing their access to university resources (Fullerton, 2015), and strengthening community pride and empowerment (Pillard Reynolds, 2014).

Janke and Clayton (2012) identify that community engagement must be grounded in reciprocal processes, where all partners work towards “recognizing, respecting, and valuing the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration among

partners” (p. 3). Additionally, Janke and Clayton (2012) highlight the importance of public purposes when engaging with the community, meaning that “the capacity of each of the individuals, groups, and organizations involved [is built] to understand and collaboratively address issues of public concern” (p. 3). Therefore, the focus of community engagement for authentic student learning should focus on processes and purposes, and not activities and outcomes (Janke & Clayton, 2012). Community engagement that is grounded in reciprocity and public purpose relates to the concept of democratic community engagement defined by asset-based, collaborative relationships that co-create knowledge for community change (Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

When implemented effectively, CSL projects relate to a variety of topics, including sustainable food systems, which can benefit students, the community, and the local food system (Andrée et al., 2014; Levkoe et al., 2019). CSL can enhance students’ learning about food systems by integrating theoretical concepts taught in class with practical action in working with community partners, allowing students to gain a deeper, more enhanced learning experience (Levkoe et al., 2019; Self et al., 2012). CSL opportunities provide students with the opportunity to work directly with those who are actively involved with food systems, therefore learning “from the perspective of those who work in them and are nourished by them” (Andrée et al., 2016, p. 140). Self et al. (2016) reported that students who participated in a food system related CSL initiative found that the experiences encouraged them to think critically about the complexities and challenges surrounding food systems.

Not only do food systems CSL initiatives have a beneficial effect on student learning, but as Levkoe et al. (2019) explain, “collaborations among students, faculty, and community practitioners provide an important leverage point for building healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems” (p. 72), including that these collaborations have the potential to help food movements grow and thrive in social, ecological, and economic contexts. Self et al. (2012) add that similar collaborations have “[expanded students’] body of knowledge relating to local food systems [and helped] support the development of a healthier, more sustainable food environment” (p. 126). Additionally, students who participate in food systems related CSL initiatives often report that they have undertaken related volunteer or paid work in this field because of their involvement with the CSL initiative, and that these experiences contribute to “empowering students to be informed and engaged citizens” (Self et al., 2016, p. 124).

Although research is limited on specific CSL initiatives related to food studies, there is evidence that integrating the benefits of food systems in a CSL initiative enhances student learning and skill development, benefitting both the community and food system (Andrée et al., 2014; Levkoe et al., 2019). However, the CSL initiative must be grounded in reciprocal processes and public purposes for these benefits to be realized (Janke & Clayton, 2012; Sweatman & Warner, 2020). There is a need to continue to study effective CSL initiatives involving food and food studies in order to provide additional examples of creating a deeper learning experience for students, while helping community food systems to thrive (Levkoe et al., 2019; Self et al., 2012). Considering this, the purpose of this current case study is to examine a

CSL initiative embedded in a community-university partnership involving community food systems from multiple angles. It tells the story as a piece of research, and then compares the story to relevant community engagement literature to identify conditions of CSL initiatives involving local food systems that may facilitate success for others working in the field.

Methodology and story development

Using a constructivist paradigm (Lauckner et al., 2012; Merriam, 2007; Stake, 1995), the focus of this study was both on describing the KW program and illustrating the significant components of the partnership between the Wolfville Farmers' Market and the School of Nutrition and Dietetics that could be helpful in developing other CSL initiatives. This case study was part of a larger action research case study on the community-valued outcomes of CSL initiatives embedded in long-term community-university partnerships (Sweatman & Warner, 2020). Using action research case study as a methodological framework allows for an action-oriented approach incorporating both academic rigour and practical relevance (McManners, 2016; Merriam, 2007; Stake, 1995). It is a collaborative methodology, bringing researchers and members of organizations together as scholar-practitioners in order to learn, improve, and refine systems and practices (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

This study took place over a three-year period and involved an in-depth interview process among three of the authors of this article: Mary Sweatman (MS) as the interviewer and lead researcher; Kelly Marie Redcliffe (KMR) as the Wolfville Farmers' Market Manager (the community partner); and Barb Anderson (BA) as the Director of the School of Nutrition and Dietetics and professor of the introductory food-learning course that includes KW (the academic partner). This process involved interviewing the principal partners separately and then together, with each interview lasting approximately two hours. The principal partners were given the opportunity to review a summary of their individual interview as well as their partner's interview, which enriched the group dialogue that followed. In addition to this in-depth interview process between the partners, thirteen interviews that inform this story were held with the Market Volunteer Coordinator, three families whose children participated in KW, one staff member from the local after-school program whose children attended KW, two parents of children in the after-school program, four participating students in the undergraduate nutrition program, two teaching assistants (TAs) for the course, and three senior administrators at the University. Data analysis also included observations at the Market, and a review of course materials and student evaluations for the initiative.

To extract meaning from the interviews, ATLAS-ti's software was used to group codes together under themes, making word clusters (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Merriam, 2007). The researcher and partners also engaged in a story writing process, which aligns with action research case study and collaborative writing processes (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Wyatt et al., 2018). This involved listening to and reading the interview transcripts, while writing a detailed account of the

development, processes, and outcomes of the CSL. The story was written by MS using the raw data collected, and then cross-referenced with the codes that emerged from the coding process, reflecting a narrative approach. BA and KMR provided multiple rounds of feedback on their story and approved the final version, which increased the study's validity (Merriam, 1990). Collaboration through storying increases the catalytic validity of the study, allowing for deep problematizing of personal and professional experience (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Although narrative is a methodology of its own, using stories to create a vicarious experience for the reader is an important outcome of case study and action research, leading to personal understanding, internal conviction, and action (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Stake, 2006). Below is the story of KW, generated through the research process, including the community-university partners' experience, the student experience, and finally, the community experience.

The story of KW

KW engages between 50 and 80 first-year School of Nutrition and Dietetics' students in a fall semester food commodities course. The initiative is a CSL component of this course, worth 30% of the total grade. The goals of KW are to 1) offer children a positive and welcoming experience at the Market, 2) give students the opportunity to effectively communicate messages about food commodities to the public, 3) increase university student participation at the Market, and 4) provide students with the opportunity to be connected to food systems and engaged in the community in their first year so as to frame the degree as one that is experiential and community-focused. These co-created goals are mutually beneficial: the first goal relates to KM and BA's commitment to the Market's vision to contribute to the health and vibrance of the community; the second relates directly to a course objective; the third relates to the Market's need to increase market consumers by engaging the relatively untapped Acadia student population; and the fourth addresses the broader objectives of the School of Nutrition and Dietetics. The first goal is achieved by introducing children to in-season local fruits and vegetables through a taste-testing experience and giving them the purchasing power to buy a local fruit or vegetable with a three-dollar voucher after participating in the tasting. The second and third goals are achieved through the interaction and sense of ownership the Acadia students develop with the Market through creating an original taste-testing recipe that includes Market ingredients, making 100 to 200 samples from their taste-testing recipe, and offering this to Market-goers either at the Wednesday evening or Saturday morning Market. Part of handing out the taste-testers is communicating to the public the importance of eating healthy, local foods. By the end of the semester, students have visited the Market two or three times, and have spent a minimum of 12 hours on this project. The fourth goal is achieved by engaging the students in a scaffolded learning experience that is based on an experiential learning model of engagement in this first-year course.

The partners' experience

This community food systems CSL project has required a long-term partnership between KMR and BA. Both believe that the key characteristics of their partnership are respect, trust, and passion for sustainable food systems and community health. Nimbleness has also been key, which they referred to as being in a rhythm that is open, with a willingness to change as the dynamic of the partnership evolves. This nimbleness also requires a balance between process and action, action and reflection, and theory and practice; being open to change also requires being open to learning. Both KMR and BA see themselves as lifelong learners, and express characteristics such as humility and gratitude in their positions and within their partnership.

This partnership started in 2009 when BA began her appointment at Acadia as the Director of the School of Nutrition and Dietetics. She brought an asset-based community development philosophy, working with the faculty in her unit to create a new vision for the school that put food and community at the centre of its pedagogy. Early on she learned that the relationship between the School and the Market had been negligible. In fact, the Market had reached out to the School on multiple occasions with little response. BA prioritized building this relationship and went to the Market seeking a conversation about potential partnership opportunities between the two organizations. BA knew KMR, the Market Manager, as they had met 15 years previously at an asset-based community development workshop that BA had co-facilitated in a prior work role. Although both were in different positions now, their commitment to the wellbeing of their community remained, and they quickly became allies. After two years of developing a trusting and reciprocal relationship through initiatives that included student engagement at the Market, KW was created.

This is a long-term, sustainable partnership that will continue to develop and evolve, as long as the main partners remain in their roles. Sustaining the partnership without them in their leadership roles is a concern for both of them and raises questions around the need to formalize the partnership between their organizations. For example, when BA was on sabbatical in 2016, KW did not run, as it was too much to ask another faculty member teaching the course to take over this complex CSL component. The Market's Board of Directors and the School of Nutrition and Dietetics have been supportive of KW. KMR is given a great deal of autonomy and trust by her board, which supports the vision of the initiative, and BA has the trust and support of her School, which has a lot of respect for her as the Director and sees the Market as a key partner. Despite this, KMR and BA recognize the need to deepen the conversation with their organizations and each other to determine if and how to formalize the partnership, perhaps through a memorandum of understanding so that the School is accountable to the non-profit, regardless of who is in the leadership positions.

In addition to board and faculty support, this complex project requires a network of supporters. In the development stage, KMR had a co-op student work on the program development with her team and had their graphic designer develop required materials, which cost

the Market \$500. BA recognized from the beginning that this initiative would require teaching assistants (TAs), and was able to secure two positions, each at six hours per week, a significant opportunity for senior students. The TAs take on major responsibilities, including liaising with students, the Market staff, and volunteers in the taste-testing preparation phase and the program days. The Market staff also work with KW and directly communicate with the TAs and vendors to purchase food supplies, which requires flexibility and organization. The Market staff and volunteers believe deeply in the Market's values, are committed to contributing to a healthy and vibrant community and increasing revenue for vendors. The staff recognize that the KW's outcomes are appreciated by the community and the initiative is in line with the Market's goals. However, working with the KW students on Market days can add stress to their work at times. This stress has been minimized over the years by ensuring the TAs are there to support students and act as liaisons between the students and staff. When an issue does arise, BA and KMR quickly circle up with those involved and work towards a solution. For example, on one Saturday near Halloween, students encouraged kids to spend their \$3 KW voucher on prepared candy apples from a food vendor, instead of fresh fruits and vegetables from farm vendors. In this case, a long-term solution for this issue was to have signs on the tables of vendors that accept KW vouchers and a poster on the KW table reminding everyone that the voucher is for fresh fruit and vegetables, and to look for the KW signs on vendor tables.

The student experience

From the students' perspective, the KW project has been identified as a challenging and rewarding scaffolded experiential learning project, which has been carefully designed to guide the student through the development, preparation, delivery, and reflection processes. The scaffolding begins with three introductory experiences: 1) a visit to the Market before their group's tasting is held, which involves getting a signature from the Market information booth volunteer and completing a small focused reflection assignment; 2) participating in a team-building workshop to encourage cohesion among each small working group (4 to 6 students), including the writing of a Team Accord (Brady et al., n.d); and 3) attending a class with a presentation by KMR that sets up the project from the Market's perspective. The next stage of the project is recipe development, which involves each small group creating or adapting a simple, healthy recipe, meeting with the TAs, selecting a taste-testing date, and handing in a project proposal that includes the recipe and its ingredients. The Market covers both the cost of the food obtained from the Market and the three-dollar vouchers for the participating children, usually totaling \$100 per week, and approximately \$1000 per program year. Those ingredients supplied by the Market are gathered by the TAs, aided by the Market staff. The other food costs, as well as the TA salaries, are covered by the School of Nutrition and Dietetics in the instructional supply budget.

Food preparation starts the day before or the morning of the taste-testing in the School of Nutrition and Dietetics Food Lab, supervised by a TA to ensure adherence to food safety

practice. On the day of the tasting, a TA helps the student group set up and takedown, and if required will stay for the duration of the tasting. Following a schedule submitted with their KW proposal, the group of four to five students take turns handing out samples and recipe cards during the Market. At the end of the semester, each team presents reflections and insights on their food commodity and their overall KW experience to the class and compiles a final group report. Each team member also writes an individual reflection on the entire project. It is significant that this initiative is designed for first-year students, and that they are given this level of responsibility and exposed to this type of learning in the first semester of their first year. Students often share in their reflections that the initiative was meaningful for them, as it gave them an opportunity to learn about the town, gain interpersonal and professional skills from interacting with the community, and immediately begin practicing their food skills in a practical setting. One student wrote in their reflection:

The KW program bridges the gap between our classroom learning objectives and how we can apply these to real world situations. A great way to put our learning into action. Through participation in this program, I was able to network with community members and convey nutritional information in an easy-to-understand way.

The course is demanding and working in a large group can be challenging. For some, the hardest part of the project was donning a wizard costume and engaging with the community at the Market. Students often wrote in their reflections about how anxious they were about interacting with the public before their tasting day, and then how interacting with the public was the most rewarding, yet still challenging, part of the experience. Despite these challenges, the students appreciated the opportunity to take this initiative on in their first year and reported developing significant teamwork and leadership skills, plus an appreciation for local food systems. One student reflected, “This project helped me understand the importance of promoting local foods and supporting local farmers, a concept that benefits everyone involved.”

After the course, the students often find themselves back at the Market as customers and/or volunteers for another popular Wolfville Farmer’s Market event, the Wednesday Night Community Supper, which is run by upper year School of Nutrition and Dietetics student volunteers. The students also revisit their KW experience and learnings in their third year, in a Community Nutrition course that BA teaches. She has students reflect on their KW experience and how it connects to community food systems and the social determinants of health. Students believe the program is having an impact on the children and families that participate. One student noted, “It is exciting to see the kids try something new. There was one kid who bought sprouts with his money, and he was so excited, and we were so excited, he loved them!”

The students appreciated being involved in the Wolfville community, as it gave them the opportunity to get off campus and out of the ‘Acadia Bubble.’ One TA believed that the experience also enriched the students’ connection to local food systems:

We always encourage the students to talk to the farmer that produced the vegetable that they used (in their recipe), so they can say I know the farmer that grew my food, and they learn how it was grown and they get to experience serving that food to the community, and see people enjoy their product. It is pretty powerful for students to experience this.

Students felt positive about engaging with the community and believed their participation contributed to the vision of the Market and the health and vibrancy of the community. A limitation of KW could be the limited time that each student spends at the Market, affecting their ability to form relationships with community members and the community organization. In other CSL literature, the duration and intensity of the CSL are significant factors for student development (Kiely 2005; Ngai 2009). What is apparent, however, is that students from the KW program frequently volunteer at the WFM, and KMR has identified that the majority of volunteers are from Acadia's School of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The community experience

The families that participate in the program think it is a fun and educational way to engage children with local foods. Parents view the opportunity for their child to have the decision-making power to purchase three dollars' worth of produce as enlightening, as it usually results in the child interacting with a local farmer, which connects them directly to their food. One parent stated, "It is great to have this weekly interaction with a student for my kids, it connects them to the Market and gets them to try new foods...they look forward to it, especially the three dollars to buy veggies."

This interaction is an impactful moment for the farm vendor as well, as they enjoy engaging in conversation with the children and discussing all aspects of their produce. The relationship between farmer and consumer is enhanced by having the same children and their families come back every week to learn about new fruits and vegetables. When a parent is committed to their child's participation in the program on a weekly basis, they can clearly articulate the benefits and the joy of eating in-season foods from their community. Families who do participate weekly are more likely to have already committed to local, sustainable food options; the challenge is reaching families who cannot commit to a weekly Market visit. BA and KMR recognized that this initiative would need an enhanced approach to address local systemic food security issues. One relationship that supports a move in this direction is a partnership formed between KW and a local non-profit childcare centre, in a planned approach to bring in more children whose families are not generally Market-goers.

During the Wednesday Market, the childcare centre's after-school program brings up to 12 school-aged children from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to the Market to participate in the KW program. The children's reaction to tasting the samples together is very positive and they take their decision-making about their food purchases very seriously. The leaders have observed the children becoming accustomed to the taste-testing process, which has

impacted the children's willingness to try new things at the after-school program and at home. The leaders have also learned more about the children by watching what they purchase with their three dollars. For example, a couple of children who they thought were picky eaters, purchased onions and garlic for their favourite curries at home. This initiated a conversation with parents and consequently diversified food options for the children at the after-school program. It is a challenge for some of the parents to know how to prepare the produce that is brought home, but it is appreciated, and the kids are excited to eat it. This was expressed by one single mom with two kids in the program when she said:

I used to go to the Market but I haven't gone in a while, because of time, energy and money. Sometimes I felt segregated or watched, like a spectacle when kids complained or because of being a single parent, or the pressure to buy. But I appreciated the veggies that the kids brought home on Wednesdays. Most of the time the food was used, and the kids were more excited to try the food. Sometimes they would bring home a different variety, which was exciting, like purple carrots. I would often do the same thing with them, boil the carrots or roast the potatoes for example. For some things I had no idea how to cook them.

More could be done to strengthen this aspect of the program and both the School of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Wolfville Farmers' Market are open to considering opportunities. However, both partners are involved in other food security initiatives and recognize that focusing more on this aspect would introduce significant challenges and a reframing of the initiative's goals and processes. KW takes place in a first-year course, and the main objectives relate to exposing students to the Market and developing a relationship so they can step into other pieces of work as the degree program continues. This experience supports iterative learning by building to broader knowledge in upper-level courses where students are able to expand their ability to work with the community to address food insecurity.

Discussion

The KW story describes a CSL initiative that connects students to their local community while contributing to a sustainable food environment. It is embedded in a long-term partnership, which is committed to contributing to the vision of the Farmers' Market and engaging students with local food systems. Two themes arose from the case study analysis as key contributors to effective CSL initiatives: 1) a relationship-driven partnership, with reciprocity and commitment as key sub-themes; and 2) a scaffolded experiential learning environment for students that involves guided instruction. These themes are discussed in terms of their significance to KW and their relevance to the post-secondary community-engagement literature.

Relationship-driven partnerships

KMR and BA both agree that the success of the KW CSL initiative is rooted in their relationship-driven partnership. Community-university partnerships that are relationship-driven will naturally engage in the co-creation of initiatives because the focus is on processes and purposes, and not activities and outcomes (Janke & Clayton, 2012; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Sweatman & Warner, 2020). In the community-engagement literature, the most prominent condition for a successful CSL initiative was developing a community-university partnership (Davidson et al., 2010; Kreulen et al., 2008; Oberg De La Garza & Moreno Kuri, 2014; Rosing & Hofman, 2010). Bringle et al. (2009) define successful partnerships within CSL initiatives as relationships in which the interactions possess closeness, equity, and integrity. KMR and BA spent two years working together and organizing less complex student experiences before they co-created this enhanced and sustainable student experience. They both attest to this time as a significant factor in the KW's success, as they developed trust and respect that could withstand challenges that arose from the CSL initiative. The value of dedicating time to building a community-university partnership that focuses on equity and trust is also supported by Austin (2010) and Oberg De La Garza & Morno Kuri (2014). Research indicates that planning must happen together, and must incorporate the missions, goals, and capacities of both organizations, recognizing the potential differences in priorities between the university and the community-based organization (Gazley et al., 2013; Kreulen et al., 2008). This aligns with KMR and BA's relationship and process.

It is essential that the partners reflect on their positionality, maintaining a constant vigilance regarding power dynamics through ongoing dialogue and respect for diverse views (Hlalele et al., 2015). KMR and BA spoke about their awareness of how power imbalances can impact partnerships, and each felt confident that their relationship was equitable because of the trust cultivated between them over the years. In their individual interviews, they both discussed the practical application of their commitment, which involved staying connected throughout the fall semester by touching base in-person weekly when BA visits the Market to check in with the students and pick up her produce. They troubleshoot over email and share information on a shared drive. Most importantly, they both spoke about making time for connection over coffee or lunch throughout the year to care for their partnership. This commitment to relationship comes from BA's strong background in asset-based community development (ABCD), which guides her engagement and her partnership with KMR, the Market, and her students. ABCD is an approach to community development that focuses on discovering and mobilizing the assets, gifts, and resources that are already present in a community for the development and benefit of that community (Green et al., 2011). KMR's leadership model also reflects an asset-based approach, as she is dedicated to relationship building and generating connections between individuals and community associations, organizations, and institutions to mobilize existing assets in the community. KMR saw one of BA's roles as leading the initiative through a collaborative and

reflective practice, and her own role as one of balancing process and action. This type of co-created process honours “local community knowledge and academic knowledge, which leads to collaborative knowledge construction” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009, p. 9). This dedication to the relationship models community engagement principles for the students, in particular the teaching assistants who are tasked with the day-to-day engagement that is required with market volunteers, employees and vendors. One TA interviewed noted, that “the (KW) experience solidifies the importance of the Market to our program, and many of us go on to volunteer at the Market suppers throughout our degree, I know it did for me.”

The TAs contribute to the continued success of the relationship between the Market and the university. BA dedicates a lot of time to mentoring the TAs for this role, which is considered a coveted TA position by the Nutrition and Dietetic students. The TAs are carefully selected, as BA understands the importance of this role within the community-university partnership and the success of the Kitchen Wizards program.

Reciprocity in the relationship

KMR and BA spoke extensively about the benefits and reciprocity that the KW CSL initiative affords their organizations, and the organizations’ beneficiaries, including students and Market customers. Mutual benefit, a condition of successful CSL initiatives, as defined by Janke (2013) as “a win-win relationship, [that] suggests equity – that partners achieve the outcomes that are just and meaningful to them” (p. 4) is pervasive in the literature (Andrée et al., 2014; Gazley et al., 2013; Kreulen et al., 2008; Marullo et al., 2009; Oberg De La Garza & Moreno Kuri, 2014; Valaitis et al., 2016). If the CSL initiative is based on a community-university partnership that cultivates mutual benefit, there is more potential for this pedagogical method to foster social transformation (Chupp & Joseph, 2010; Davidson et al., 2010; Maistry, 2014; Rutherford et al., 2011). Most of the evidence links mutually beneficial outcomes with a reciprocal process, which is “the recognition, respect, and valuing of the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration” (Janke & Clayton, 2012, p. 3). Reciprocity goes beyond mutual benefit as it repositions power based on more equitable relationships. It “is grounded in explicitly democratic values of sharing previously academic tasks with non-academics and encouraging the participation of non-academics in ways that enhance and enable broader engagement and deliberation about major social issues inside and outside the university” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009, p. 9).

Philosophically, KMR and BA are oriented towards reciprocal processes, which is particularly shown through their nimbleness, collaborative decision-making, and mutual problem-solving. This partnership is about reciprocity, not charity, as it goes beyond the CSL initiative. KW has become one of many ways that KMR and BA, and their organizations work together. For example, BA co-chaired the Market’s Good Food Hub Advisory Committee and KMR often employs Nutrition students in various student positions, both paid and volunteer. As

a direct result of their involvement in KW, Nutrition students also run a weekly initiative, Wednesday Night Market Suppers, which has increased the customer base for Market vendors. In general, KRM has seen an increase in students both as volunteers and customers at the Market as a result of KW. BA has written letters in support of funding for Market projects and KMR writes reference letters for students. These examples of reciprocity are fundamental components of a CSL initiative embedded in a relationship-driven partnership (Sweatman & Warner, 2020). KMR and BA model a reciprocal process to the teaching assistants, students, Market staff, and volunteers by demonstrating their commitment to the initiative and each other, which leads into the second core aspect of a relationship-driven process.

Commitment to the Relationship

Commitment in the context of a relationship-driven CSL initiative is multi-faceted. For KMR and BA, their partnership began with their mutual commitment to a healthy, vibrant community within a sustainable food system context. This led first to a commitment to each other as individual community leaders and to each other's organization, and finally to their commitment to the co-created KW program, including student learning. The commitment to a public purpose, such as the health and vibrancy of the local community, is described by Gazley et al. (2012), who express this commitment as partners' being accountable for improving community welfare. Similarly, Rutherford et al. (2011) describe their partners as having a shared vision for social justice, and Wills et al. (2010) describe it as a shared commitment to addressing poor nutrition in the partners' shared community. Andrée et al. (2014) call for relationships to be established around a shared vision, and finally, Sweatman & Warner (2020) describe a societal commitment to a shared domain, which is the common concern or passion that brings the partnership together, guiding learning and giving meaning to actions (Wenger, 1998).

In this case study, commitment to the relationship is demonstrated by KMR and BA by open, honest, clear, ongoing, and objective communication, which nurtures the partnership. Such communication comes easily to both KMR and BA because they are passionate about the issues, genuinely enjoy each other's company, and are invested in each other's wellbeing outside of their working relationship. Their commitment to communication involves stressing the importance of reflective dialogue with each other, their community, the Market, and the students. Reflection is prioritized and is a natural part of BA and KMR's process and commitment to learning. They allow time for personal reflection and group debriefing, both with each other and their leadership teams, and make time throughout the semester to catch up with each other and check in about the program. These are casual, but intentional and reflective discussions. KMR engages in a reflective process with her team throughout the semester during staff meetings, which involves asking for feedback and insights on how the program is being managed and how Market customers and vendors are perceiving the program. BA engages in a semester-long

reflective process with the TAs and students as a component of the scaffolded, experiential learning assignments designed to complement the KW experience.

Finally, the commitment to the initiative by both the community-based organization and the faculty/institution is a key indicator of success (Kreulen et al., 2008). KMR and BA demonstrate this commitment through their dedication of time and organizational resources. Beyond these particular individuals, a relationship-driven process faces significant challenges in the face of academic pressures for faculty researchers to push out publications rapidly. In turn, Farmers Markets do not necessarily see a short-term boost in usage or sales by working with students. Relationship development takes time, and this means that the partner organizations need to provide their leaders with the ability to engage in these processes.

There is evidence in the literature that reflects the importance of organizational commitment from partners to an initiative. For example, resources should not just flow one-way; true partnerships require a mutual sharing of physical and human resources (Austin, 2010; Marullo et al., 2009; Naidoo & Devnarain, 2009). Examples of how the institution can show its endorsement of CSL initiatives include allowing time for scholars to develop a well-functioning team, preferably across disciplines and sectors (Lambert-Pennington et al., 2011; Porter et al., 2008; Rosing & Hofman, 2010); tenure and promotional policies that reflect community service (Naidoo & Devarain, 2009); an investment in training, screening, and preparation of faculty and students (Gazley et al., 2013); and reorganization of course schedules to enable sustained faculty and student involvement (Lambert-Pennington et al., 2011).

In the case study context, both BA and KMR have decision-making roles that allow them to commit organizational resources to the endeavor based on their positional authority. Every university partner in a CSL initiative is not necessarily a program director or department head, and every community partner is not necessarily the manager of the organization. Both BA and KMR see the merit of more formal organization links beyond their relationship, but it is challenging and time-consuming work to get broader commitments from higher level executives or boards of directors who do not necessarily share the leaders' passions. However, a long term, sustainable partnership should outlive the two individual founders, and this requires a broader commitment in organizational cultures.

Although there is more literature on the importance of a university's commitment to the partnership, all partners need to be accountable for improving community welfare (Gazley et al., 2013), and have a long-term vision that includes sustainable commitments among partners (Carney et al., 2011; Klein et al., 2011).

Scaffolded experiential learning environment

Embedded within the CSL initiative that was co-created from the relationship-driven partnership is a scaffolded experiential learning environment that involves guidance and mentorship throughout the semester-long project. Practically, this is a significant component for the success

of KW, as students play a significant role in delivering the program, and they must be well prepared for this role, especially given they are first year students and most often have limited experience. This component is also significant as it a distinguishing factor of whether the CSL experience will have transformative potential for student and community learning.

A scaffolded learning model increases the students' engagement and ownership of the project as they move through the assignments, cultivating self-regulation and motivation (Wilkinson & Jones, 2017). This process is broadly based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model involving four distinct phases: concrete experience, reflection and observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. "Concrete experiences form the basis of observation and reflection; in turn, these observations are used to develop one's ideas, including generalizations and theories, and from this development of ideas, new implications for action can be discerned" (Chambers, 2009, p. 81). In the KW initiative, the scaffolded experiential learning environment involves a five-part assignment with multiple touchpoints with BA and the teaching assistants for feedback and critical reflection. Many students reflected on significant learning and the activities around team building and leadership. For example:

It helped me grow and become a better team member by showing me the challenges you may face in a team and how to overcome them (Student reflection)

I learnt how important communication is while working in a team and being sure everyone is aware and clear about what their tasks are. It made the project go much more smoothly (Student reflection)

These experiences allow students to compare theory and practice, and reflect on their roles as both a team member and an engaged citizen in the community and local food system. The following quote captures one student's new understanding of the KW initiative, facilitated through the scaffolded assignments:

Everything I've done this semester, every part I've finished has taught me something and each is very different than the others. During this project I learnt how important the Farmers' Market is to the people and the local businesses. The Farmers Market draws people in from all over town and the outlying region. It creates a big sense of community in a small town and promotes healthy living and eating. Especially with the local produce and businesses, you really feel like you're giving back to the community when you support locals and not commercially made products. It's like a big circle, helping the community thrive and give back to itself.

The design of and commitment to a scaffolded process that benefits students and community is challenging and time consuming. Insufficient student training and and/or skill development to engage in community settings are often cited as barriers to effective CSL (Sandy & Holland, 2006), as is lack of faculty commitment or communication to the community partner

and the initiative (Schaffer et al., 2015; Shalabi, 2013). Faculty cannot expect the experience in the community to be the learning in and of itself, and must be committed to the experiential learning cycle (Felten & Clayton, 2011). KMR did not speak of these types of acute issues with BA or students; however, she and BA discussed their ‘evolution of processes’ that referred to the iterative learning that they go through, and modified processes as a result. A simple example is a checklist that was developed by the teaching assistants for the student teams. Each year, there are minor tweaks added by the TAs and Market staff to make each Market day with new student teams smoother and more effective for Market staff, vendors, and customers. Often, these modifications came from issues that arose from student behaviour or misunderstandings about their role at the market, such as being on their phone during their shift or arriving late.

By focusing on a scaffolded process and devoting a tremendous amount of time to preparing students, BA has curtailed student issues that could overburden KMR or the Market staff. Although KMR is dedicated to student growth and is a mentor to many Acadia student volunteers, both BA and KMR agree it is not her responsibility to take on the direct supervision or education of the students. KMR does take the time to co-teach a class with BA at the beginning of the semester and is involved with the debriefing at the end of the term, as she feels this is beneficial to her learning and process, and she enjoys this time with the students. Inviting community leaders into the classroom allows for the exchange of ideas, relationship building, and the integration of community members into the university setting, which can enable more equitable relationships among community partners, faculty, and students (Martinez et al., 2012; Valaitis et al., 2016). There is a balance to be struck; faculty cannot expect the community partner to take on the role of educator or mentor unless that is explicitly agreed to as a value-added component for the community partner organization (Clayton et al., 2010; Sandy & Holland, 2006).

KMR and BA both feel a tremendous amount of gratitude toward the other and speak passionately about the Wolfville Farmers’ Market being a hub for experiential food education for students and community. The scaffolded experiential learning environment that they created was fueled by their commitment and reciprocal processes within a relationship-driven community-university partnership.

Conclusion

It is challenging to identify a list of general conditions that foster successful CSL initiatives in food studies, given the complexity and idiosyncrasies of each initiative. The conditions that work best for one initiative may be counterintuitive for another. Regardless, through analyzing the KW CSL initiative and comparing it to relevant post-secondary community engagement literature, we derive two significant factors. The first factor is that CSL initiatives should be embedded in a relationship-driven partnership built and sustained on reciprocity and commitment. The second factor requires the CSL initiative to guide students through a scaffolded, experiential learning

environment that has many touch points with faculty and teaching assistants. Although these themes are discussed separately above, they are interconnected, as the scaffolded, experiential learning environment is developed from a co-created CSL initiative that is embedded in a committed and reciprocal relationship-driven partnership. These themes and their interconnections could be explored further by studying similar CSL initiatives. It would also be beneficial to explore in more depth the institutional, organizational, and societal impacts on CSL initiatives and the partnerships which house them, in order to discern external key conditions that foster successful CSL initiatives in food studies.

Another important aspect of this study that can be transferable is the use of an action research case study. This research process has not only taught us about the KW's initiative, it has also created a community of practice¹ among us (the authors) and others on campus, who are invested in experiential food education. This resulted in the development of another on-going CSL initiative between the Farmers' Market and the Department of Community Development that reflects the KW process and key components, but focuses on environmental education. This method of inquiry has been enriching for us as a research team of community-engagement scholar-practitioners. It would be valuable to explore other CSL initiatives within local food initiatives, and food related community-campus engagement communities of practices, using action research case study.

In summary, effective CSL initiatives, including those related to food systems, should be driven by relationships, not merely by institutional or organizational agendas. They require reciprocity, commitment, thoughtful student engagement, and a significant amount of time, but they are also incredibly rewarding and even fun, as KMR so eloquently said about her partnership with BA:

You need to care about the person that you are connecting with, so you are willing to work through things...If you are willing to give a lot, you will get a lot back. While respecting our work responsibilities, we collaborate under an umbrella that fits into the vision of vibrant, healthy communities, and working with someone that you like, well this work can be a lot of fun!

¹ A community of practice “is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 1998, p. 1). The principles of a community of practice are a commitment to a shared domain, regular and long-term interactions with one another and a commitment to learning and developing together to better serve their community.

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