

Building Sustainable Communities Through Engaged Learning: A University-Community Partnership for Sustained Change in a Central Pennsylvania Coal Town

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Abstract

University-community partnerships have become more collaborative, decentered, and mutually beneficial in step with changing conceptualizations of knowledge production. However, the implementation of partnerships and projects remains challenging. Models for collaboration are needed in the rural context and for smaller liberal arts universities. This article uses the partnership between Bucknell University and the City of Shamokin to argue for the utility of the sustainable communities framework for conceiving and implementing service-learning. The City of Shamokin previously hosted a prosperous and vibrant downtown district, but the closing of anthracite coal mines and factories has left Shamokin in a decades-long state of economic and population decline. Today, Shamokin faces many challenges brought by this decline: a large elder population, high rates of home and business vacancy, legacies of environmental degradation, and high rates of poverty. In 2014, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development declared Shamokin an Act 47 Distressed City, rendering the city bankrupt. In this complex landscape, Bucknell University and its Coal Region Field Station are partnering with and across various local entities, including the city, the Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area, Northumberland County Planning Department, and the newly formed sustainable development group Anthracite Region for Progress. The sustainable communities framework emphasizes four pillars—economic, social, cultural, and environmental—that serve as a guide for facilitating these ongoing collaborations. These partnerships form the basis of collaborative initiatives developed through community-engaged classroom projects and faculty-led research projects that seek to contribute to partners' visions for a sustainable community.

I've read many books and listened to many lectures on the issues affecting underprivileged communities, but ironically, the fact that I am able to do that is a sign of my privilege and how sheltered and removed I am from these impoverished communities and problems that I study.

—Shepherd Intern Interviewee Two

The City of Shamokin is an anthracite coal town. Its history parallels that of communities across the United States facing environmental and social consequences of industrial decline. As visitors enter the town along Route 61,¹ they see a skyline dominated by the largest culm bank in the world. A quarter mile away, two orange streams carrying

acid drainage from the mines south and east of the town intersect at a community park before flowing on toward the Susquehanna River. The landscape is a glaring reminder of the anthracite coal industry. Its long decline, coupled with the closure of the city's textile mills, has left behind environmental degradation, economic disinvestment, and decades of migration to more promising locales. The environmental, economic, and social legacies of Shamokin are daunting obstacles for a community struggling to become sustainable. Local organizations formed in recent years have worked to spark revitalization, and Bucknell University has proved to be a valuable strategic partner in collaborating on projects that both energize and inform these efforts. The university's work and the city's work complement one another and advance Shamokin incrementally toward revitalization.

¹From Shamokin, Route 61 continues 12 miles through nearby coal towns to Centralia, where a 1-mile section of the highway was rerouted in the 1990s due to surface damage and instability caused by the long-burning Centralia mine fire. The fire began underground in 1962 and is still burning today. The town has long since been dismantled, and all but a handful of residents have relocated.

Bucknell's work in Shamokin is part of a now well-established shift toward collaborative university-community partnerships that seek to both value and expand upon community knowledge and capacity. Much of the precedent for these kinds of relationships, however, has come from larger urban areas and/or larger public institutions (Stoecker & Schmidt, 2017) because universities, which are disproportionately in urban settings, typically partner with their host communities (Hillman, 2016; Laninga et al., 2019). This imbalance is compounded by the historical mandate for outreach that affects public institutions but not private ones (Beckett, 2015; Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999). The Bucknell-Shamokin partnership embodies the unique advantages of community-engaged learning relationships² between liberal arts institutions and small communities. Yet the field of engaged learning still needs to consider how the goals of higher education institutions and community partners can be mutually advanced in rural communities where resources, particularly time and personnel, are comparatively scarce.

This review of a multiyear collaboration between the Bucknell University Coal Region Field Station (CRFS), the Faith Alliance for Revitalization (FAR), and various partners in the City of Shamokin and surrounding Coal Township demonstrates the value of a sustainable communities framework for building an effective university-community partnership in the rural and liberal arts context. We draw upon three wells of empirical understanding. First, we draw from our own experience in fostering a sustainable partnership. We are Shaunna Barnhart, director of Bucknell's Place Studies program, which includes the CRFS; Friar Michael Lasky, a key figure in creating FAR; Kathy Jeremiah, former executive director of FAR; and Vanessa Massaro, a geography professor at Bucknell. We have conducted visioning exercises, held community workshops, and developed an administrative structure for engaged learning and outreach in Shamokin. Second, we review the Bucknell courses taught in the Shamokin area from spring 2015 to summer 2019 and their publicly

available final products. FAR was created during this period. Third, we consult digital interviews conducted with students who participated in studies or internships in Shamokin between spring 2018 and summer 2019.

Our insights are applicable to a range of parallel efforts by universities to engage with postindustrial rural areas (Stoecker et al., 2017). As a liberal arts institution, Bucknell University offers a specific model of engaged learning and community collaboration. Our review of our experiences, course materials, and interviews demonstrates how universities can benefit from a sustainable communities approach, particularly from its emphasis on cultural value. A sustainable communities approach also builds community capacity, making university partners just one of many players in revitalization efforts. A sustainable communities framework is useful for establishing a long-term university-community partnership that emphasizes two important, and generally underemphasized, aspects of such collaborations: (a) building administrative capacity in both the community and the university and (b) designing engaged learning projects that recognize rural communities' cultural distinctiveness, assets, and challenges. We argue that such collaborations are successful when they build communities' capacity to pursue and realize their visions for meeting present needs, permit communities to tell their own histories and stories, and put motions in place for communities to realize new envisioned futures.

A Sustainable Communities Framework in Engaged Learning Models

Engaged Learning

The relationship between universities and their wider communities is notoriously fraught. Academic efforts to escape the "ivory tower," often spearheaded by land-grant institutions with a public-facing mission (Forbes et al., 2008; Stock, 1997), have often failed to acknowledge nonacademic forms of knowledge, usually at the expense of Indigenous and other marginal populations (Breidlid, 2009; Dempsey, 2010; Holmes, 2009; Hoppers, 2002; Sheridan & Jacobi, 2014). By 1999, the Kellogg Commission noted,

²In the field of civic engagement, various terms are used to describe mutually beneficial university-community activity, including service-learning, community-engaged learning, and community-based learning. For this paper, we use the terms community-engaged learning and community-based learning as more descriptive of student engagement and the status of community members as coeducators and collaborators.

“The dynamic between professional experts in universities and citizens in communities led to criticisms that universities were too unaware, dated, and disorganized to address social problems in constructive ways” (quoted in Laninga et al., 2019, p. 2). Much has changed since then (Rubin, 2000). As Bridger and Alter (2006) noted, “In place of traditional forms of extension and outreach, which are dominated by a one-way transfer of knowledge from the university to stakeholders, there is a growing emphasis on the development of interactive and mutually beneficial relationships” (p. 164).

Scholars, driven in part by feminist and critical theory and activism, have challenged universities to decenter the production of knowledge, and these efforts have had analytic and practical effects on university-community partnerships (Crabtree, 2008; Nagar, 2015; Seethaler, 2014; Walker, 2000). These scholars strive to explicitly recognize how universities and students benefit from these partnerships—sometimes more than communities do—and in the process they have demonstrated the importance of longer-term relationships between universities and community partners. Laninga et al. (2019) used the collaborations between the University of Idaho and Intermountain West communities to argue for the necessity of interdisciplinary partnerships. “An interdisciplinary model for outreach and engagement,” they noted, should address three significant challenges of establishing mutually beneficial, sustained community-university partnerships: (a) meeting a diversity of community needs, (b) establishing positive partnerships between and within universities and communities, and (c) matching academic results with community expectations (Laninga et al., 2019, p. 3). In order to function, any collaborative model must have a dedicated administrative infrastructure (Beckett, 2015; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Bridger and Alter (2006) went a step further and explored the effects of partnerships on individuals rather than the larger community, writing, “the engaged university works in partnership with local people to facilitate the broad range of community interaction that fosters individual and social well-being” (p. 170). With such an approach, the university becomes a facilitator and link with and within communities.

Smaller liberal arts institutions, particularly those in rural areas, face their own challenges in working with communities beyond the college town. Transportation and time management can be obstacles to establishing deep, multipronged connections with regional and rural communities (Koch, 2017). In the past 30 years, however, civic engagement has become a hallmark of education at smaller liberal arts institutions. Scaling up those efforts remains difficult and requires expanding the engaged learning model across disciplines as well as building support structures for engaged learning beyond the campus and its host town. In 2016, Campus Compact, “a national coalition of 1,000+ colleges and universities committed to the public purposes of higher education,” issued the 30th Anniversary Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors (Campus Compact, n.d.). Signatories committed to developing a Civic Action Plan within 1 year of signing. The Civic Action Plan library,³ however, contains mostly plans from smaller institutions, liberal arts institutions, and community colleges committed to engaged learning that benefits communities.

Sustainable Communities

The guiding principle of Bucknell University’s relationship with communities in Pennsylvania’s lower anthracite coal region, including Shamokin, is to support local efforts to build sustainable communities. The sustainable communities framework draws on well-established studies and discussions that understand sustainable communities as a fundamental component of sustainable development. The concept of sustainability, though often applied to the natural environment’s capacity to support human life, has necessarily been broadened. We cannot achieve environmental sustainability without fulfilling human needs and building resiliency (Agyeman, 2005; Institute for Sustainable Communities, n.d.; Niesenbaum, 2020). Strategies for building sustainable communities focus on civic engagement and ensuring that residents are included in decision-making and collaboration to achieve a shared future goal. One way to achieve this engagement is to draw on social capital, but as Bridger and Luloff (2001) have argued, “while there clearly is agreement that networks of civic engagement are essential, there is no agreement

³The Civic Action Plan library can be accessed at <https://compact.org/actionstatement/civic-action-plans/>. Last accessed 6/18/2020.

about the types of engagement from which social capital is most likely to emerge” (p. 470). An interactional approach to appraising social capital identifies the social groups within a community, determines who has “agenda setting and decision-making” power, and maps the links between them (Bridger & Luloff, 1999). This approach ensures that the interests of various groups are incorporated and creates a dense network of links and connections to produce a more robust community development process (Bridger & Luloff, 1999).

Over the past 30 years, the idea of community sustainability has both broadened and deepened to include a range of goals. A sustainable community should protect and improve the environment; meet social needs; promote economic success; and facilitate civic engagement that supports leadership, responsibility, and a healthy nonprofit sector (Agyeman, 2005; Institute for Sustainable Communities, n.d.). In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in order to focus global efforts on a range of sustainable development targets (United Nations, 2017). Goal 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, strives to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, 2019, p. 11). With one of its targets being to “Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage” (United Nations, n.d.), this goal recognizes the importance of culture in building sustainable communities. Often overlooked, culture is easily subsumed into the “social” category in a traditional three-pronged (economic, social, environmental) approach to sustainability. Yet cultural heritage and history are essential to community identity and can inform pathways to sustainable communities. We therefore define sustainable communities as ones that thrive environmentally, economically, culturally, and socially (Edwards, 2010).

Culture is the least explored node in this nexus. In her seminal work comparing mining towns in the United States and Chile, Finn (1998) demonstrated the power of “reclaiming the stories of those who have been silenced and dis(re)membered in mining history” (p. 243). Cultural emphasis, Finn found, illuminated the complex material histories of the two towns in her study, facilitating transnational connections, a politics of possibility, and an emphasis on crafting the everyday.

Cultural heritage is also a valuable foundation for building sustainable communities, especially in Pennsylvania’s anthracite coal region. While there is a good deal of theory to build regarding culture and power as they apply to both cultural heritage broadly and coal mining specifically, we have found it useful to regard culture as a separate node in the making of sustainable places. Liberal arts institutions are uniquely positioned to work with communities to develop a cultural node in the sustainability framework.

Sustainability cannot be achieved in isolation or through policy alone. To develop a sustainable community, all sectors—including government, nonprofit, business, and education—must work together. The partnership between the CRFS and FAR offers a window into best practices and strategies for establishing and guiding university-community partnerships. Examining the relationship through coursework and participant observation, we demonstrate the utility of the sustainable communities framework as the primary tool for building a strong engaged learning partnership.

Sustaining Energy in Shamokin by Dreaming Together

Bucknell’s CRFS was established in 2015 in partnership with the Mother Maria Kaupas Center (MMKC) in Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania (Milofsky & Green, 2016). Now administered by the Place Studies program in Bucknell’s Center for Sustainability and the Environment, the work of the CRFS spans eastern Northumberland County and portions of neighboring counties, and the CRFS works with more than 20 community partners. The CRFS’s mission is to

engage Bucknell University students, faculty, and staff with communities in the anthracite coal region by linking together and building upon collaborative projects in community-identified needs for revitalization, explorations of local histories and heritage, and envisioning future possibilities in the common goal of developing sustainable communities. (Bucknell Center for Sustainability and the Environment, n.d.)⁴

The CRFS is part of Bucknell’s broader sustainable communities work. It provides a structure through which the university can collaborate with community

⁴The CRFS mission and vision statements were written by the CRFS Advisory Board, which includes community representation.

partners on various initiatives. The CRFS projects include community-engaged learning through courses, short- and long-term research projects, internships, and volunteering, with an objective of linking projects together over time and offering more robust experiences and outcomes for both students and community partners.

Coal region projects have proliferated; 55 classes have engaged more than 470 students in roughly 70 community-engaged projects from spring 2015 to fall 2020. Shamokin and neighboring Coal Township have hosted 23 of these community-engaged courses, while two of the courses took a regional perspective around Centralia.⁵ To better understand the role that Bucknell plays in seeding sustainable communities, we reviewed materials from the 18 courses that were taught between spring 2015 and summer 2019 and contacted students from 11 of those courses (see Table 1).

Shamokin, located in eastern Northumberland County, was founded during the early development of the anthracite coal mining industry. At its peak in the 1920s, Shamokin had a population of nearly 22,000, and when combined with the surrounding Coal Township, the metro area had a population of over 50,000 (*City of Shamokin*, 2020). Coal mining attracted a wide range of eastern and western European immigrants. The legacies of this diversity are evident today in the local food, social, and religious cultures. Coal mining declined gradually during the interwar period. Meanwhile, the city developed a robust textile industry and even boasted the largest silk mill in the nation. While textiles stabilized the economy, they never fully replaced coal. After World War II, with coal continuing to decline, the GI Bill encouraged emigration away from the area. Although the textile industry held on for a few more decades, by the 1990s the factories were closed (MacGaffey, 2015). Shamokin's population is now around 7,000 people, roughly a third of its peak population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

While coal mining has long been in decline, both its cultural mythology and its environmental impact loom large in Shamokin. The industry left a landscape riddled with the hazards of abandoned mining operations (Gilger, 2019; Grego, 2019).

Within the city, sites that used to house textile factories are now brownfields; the demolition of their derelict buildings left behind vacant lots and, often, contaminated soils. The loss of industry and the resulting exodus left the city with an aging populace, high poverty rates among families with children, and high unemployment. Because of the city's dwindling tax base, Shamokin's government has struggled to meet financial obligations and has been forced to reduce staff and eliminate expenses wherever possible. In 2015, the City of Shamokin was declared an Act 47 Distressed City,⁶ which rendered the municipality bankrupt (Stevens & Lee et al., 2015). Yet despite, or perhaps because of, this history, Marsh's conclusion in his seminal 1987 article, "Continuity and Decline in the Anthracite Towns of Pennsylvania," holds true: The meaning of the place remains even after the means to provide are gone.

Shamokin's acute sense of meaning undergirds the importance of community nodes working together to build cultural sustainability. Despite social and environmental challenges, Shamokin has a strong community of stakeholders who draw motivation, at least in part, from the cultural value of their memories. Their energy and excitement drive economic revitalization initiatives, environmental cleanups, and dynamic partnerships between diverse groups, all with visions of their shared future.

In this enthusiastic culture, the university's part is to recognize the cultural value that ignites that energy, contribute to practical projects, and support a community-based administrative infrastructure for collaboration. With such an infrastructure in place, a town can navigate and benefit from a proliferation of university, nonprofit, government, and even corporate partnerships. We count a partnership successful if Bucknell's work helps to build a community's capacity such that the university is not the central force through which the community realizes its visions and if the community can attend, more or less independently, to its cultural and economic well-being.

The Franciscan Friars Conventual is charged with the care of Catholic churches in Shamokin and Coal Township. Inspired by the work of

⁵To review a selection of projects conducted by students through this partnership, please visit the digital commons repository located at: <https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/coal-region-field-station/>.

⁶Act 47 refers to Pennsylvania's Municipalities Financial Recovery Act, Act of 1987, P.L. 246, No. 47. The state's Department of Community and Economic Development assists Act 47 designated local governments experiencing financial distress. This state intervention is "to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens." See <https://dced.pa.gov/local-government/act-47-financial-distress/>. Last accessed 3/22/2021.

Table 1. List of Courses in Shamokin Area Through the CRFS From Spring 2015–Summer 2019

Semester	Department	Title	Number of students	Project description and community partners
2015, spring	Sociology	Video Ethnography	7	Created documentary on Shamokin Fire History Museum in partnership with Rescue Fire Company
2016, spring	Sociology	Video Ethnography*	3	Created documentary on volunteer firefighting in Shamokin in partnership with local fire companies
2017, spring	Comparative and Digital Humanities	Modernity, Metropolis, Machine*	1	Analyzed the absence of coal mining monuments in Shamokin‡
2017, spring	Geography	Applied GIS	1	Produced the GIS maps and analysis for the Centralia cultural heritage feasibility study
2017, spring	Geography	Thinking Spatially	4	Evaluated feasibility of revitalizing the anthracite coal region by preserving cultural heritage of Centralia in consultation with MMKC
2018, spring	Geography	Applied GIS*^	2	Produced the GIS maps and analysis for the AOAA regional analysis
2018, spring	Geography	Thinking Spatially*^	4	Conducted a regional analysis of tourist traffic and service demand related to the AOAA
2018, spring	Comparative and Digital Humanities	Studies in Autobiography*	6	Conducted oral histories and created “Mining Memories” video archive and interactive website with FAR and local churches
2018, spring	Management	Managing for Sustainability*	5	Developed a strategic plan for the Mother Cabrini Church pierogi fundraiser with FAR
2018, spring	Sociology	Deviance and Identity	8	Class that was offered to both Bucknell students and people incarcerated in SCI Coal Township
2018, summer	Institute for Leadership and Sustainable Technology	Institute for Leadership in Sustainable Technology*	3	Produced a feasibility analysis for renewable energy sites at AOAA

* Denotes courses in which all students were contacted for digital interviews

^ Denotes courses with student respondents

Note. All final products described above are publicly available through the Bucknell Digital Commons (<https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/coal-region-field-station/>) unless denoted with a ‡. The three courses with SCI Coal Township were not selected, as they worked specifically with a prison population rather than the broader Shamokin community.

Table 1 (con't.). List of Courses in Shamokin Area Through the CRFS From Spring 2015–Summer 2019

Semester	Department	Title	Number of students	Project description and community partners
2018, fall	Art and Art History	Graphic Design	14	Creation of a magazine involving interviews of former Centralia residents
2018, fall	Management	Managing for Sustainability I*^	5	Analyzed potential impact of continued exceptions for off-road vehicles riding in downtown Shamokin for downtown development group with FAR‡
2018, fall	Sociology	Experiencing Prison Inside-Out	14	Class that was offered to both Bucknell students and people incarcerated in SCI Coal Township
2019, spring	Mathematics	Solving Industrial Problems*	4	Proposed public transit routes to better connect areas, including Shamokin, to workforce development and health care in support of a United Way grant
2019, spring	Management	Managing for Sustainability*^	3	Developed process to assess impact and success of programs at area libraries, including Shamokin-Coal Township Public Library, for the United Way
2019, spring	Sociology	Deviance and Identity	9	Class that was offered to both Bucknell students and people incarcerated in SCI Coal Township
2019, summer	Geography	Exploring Sustainable Communities*	8	Researched history of public steps in Shamokin and their potential for restoration as collaboration with City of Shamokin, FAR, and Northumberland County Planning Office

* Denotes courses in which all students were contacted for digital interviews

^ Denotes courses with student respondents

Note. All final products described above are publicly available through the Bucknell Digital Commons (<https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/coal-region-field-station/>) unless denoted with a ‡. The three courses with SCI Coal Township were not selected, as they worked specifically with a prison population rather than the broader Shamokin community.

Bucknell students in neighboring Mount Carmel, the friars began a conversation in April 2018 with local stakeholders and with the Franciscan Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office in Washington, D.C. The CRFS's ongoing work throughout the region demonstrated the potential for collaborations between Bucknell and local stakeholders to link projects together across years and thus increase their impact. The friars met with local government officials; police; artists; businesses; nonprofits; members of the faith community; and Bucknell faculty, staff, and students to explore the possibility of developing

long-term relationships built on strong cross-sector partnerships working toward a common goal (see Figure 1). Invited to “Dream With the Franciscans and Bucknell University” (see Figure 2), participants at these meetings envisioned long-term goals, collaborations, and the smaller projects that would support them. Because the groups formed a mutual framework, they were able to design projects that would complement one another and create sustainable community in a way that an isolated service-learning project could not.

These events led to the establishment in early 2019 of the Franciscan Center, whose purpose is to

Figure 1. Timeline of Organizational Interactions That Facilitated the Creation of the FAR-Bucknell Relationship

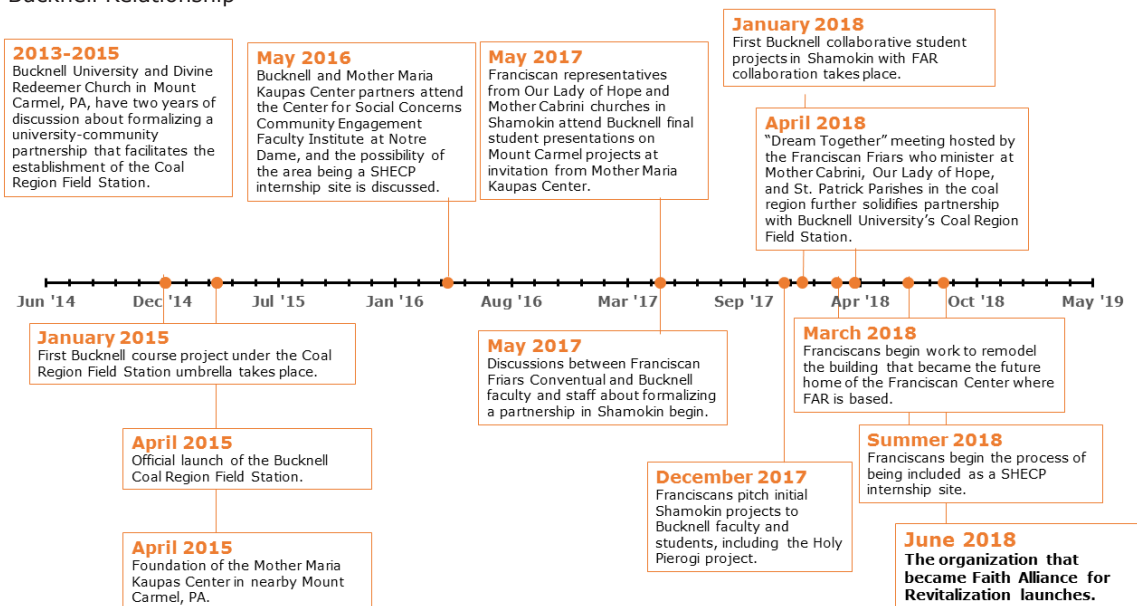


Figure 2. Dream Together

DREAM With the Franciscans & Bucknell

- | | |
|----------|--|
| D | Desire & Decide on a goal |
| R | Research idea & identify Resources |
| E | Eradicate doubt & Expand vision |
| A | Attract Attention in the region |
| M | Manage Multiple relationships |



encourage and strengthen collaboration between faith groups, community organizations, business owners, government, and institutions of higher education in order to create a sustainable and thriving future for the area. To further its mission, the Franciscan Center created FAR, which focuses on the economic and environmental development of the Shamokin area. FAR's ongoing relationship with Bucknell University has produced projects spanning economic and community revitalization, cultural heritage documentation and preservation, and ecotourism. The Franciscan Center has also helped Bucknell University oversee an AmeriCorps VISTA internship that focuses on issues of food security in the area.

Established in 2018, the "Dream Together" framework complements the mission of the CRFS, which is to partner with local groups to further the "common goal of developing sustainable communities." FAR and the CRFS facilitate long-term relationships between community organizations and Bucknell, which allows successive groups of students to participate in projects that are individual links in the chain of a larger, ongoing revitalization process. In the sections that follow, we examine the partnership between Bucknell and Shamokin. First, we look at how this partnership is supporting the sustainable communities model, and then we further identify the success of the partnership in creating community capacity to move beyond Bucknell.

Sustaining Cultural Heritage and Social Needs

Liberal arts universities, like Bucknell, are well positioned to engage with students and communities in a way that values cultural heritage - a pillar of the sustainable communities framework. As FAR solidified and expanded its partnership network, we reviewed community-engaged coursework and engaged in participant observation to determine the strengths of the CRFS. It became clear that the cultural node is important to the partnership between Bucknell and Shamokin. Before the Franciscan "Dream Together" framework, Bucknell projects emphasized the value of the culture and heritage of Shamokin and the wider area, highlighting the cultural value of the place. Sociology professor Carl Milofsky had designed a long-running research project on firefighting and fire history in

Shamokin that included a series of documentaries.⁷ The work of Milofsky and his students built a strong rapport between Bucknell and the people of Shamokin, and bonds of this kind became the foundation for the connection between Bucknell and the Franciscans.

The Shamokin community's renewed attention to cultural heritage, prompted in part by engagement with Bucknell, laid the groundwork for conversations about place and meaning that have strengthened the region's connections and will inform its future course. In 2017, Professor Vanessa Massaro taught a capstone geography course that conducted a feasibility assessment of cultural heritage initiatives in Centralia. The project helped to connect (and deepen the existing connections between) interested parties in the region, including Shamokin. In 2018, students in Professor Eddy Lopez's graphic design course worked with former Centralia residents to create an ethnographic magazine celebrating the town's history and heritage. Their work built on that of students from the previous year (Department of Art and Art History, Bucknell University, 2018). These iterations of engagement demonstrate how the CRFS has helped faculty sustain the university's engagement over a period longer than a single class or degree program. Students' work lends energy and momentum to collaborations among the disparate people who are connected by their investment in Shamokin's heritage. Bucknell's collective and ongoing engagement legitimized a vision of renewal that many had thought to be impracticable. Building such partnerships to accommodate a constant flow of new students has resulted in a deeper emotional investment for stakeholders. Our review finds that Bucknell engagement generates credibility and symbolic value around ideas for the City's renewal.

Projects that reinforce cultural value also bolster the energy and trust needed for future community-university collaborations. This trust was essential in the early days of the relationship between Bucknell's CRFS and what later became FAR, and it increased the community's capacity to accept sustained leadership, development, and collaboration with institutions. The Franciscans and their local partners planned the first of these collaborative projects: the Holy Pierogi project. With church congregations in decline,

⁷These videos are available online: (a) "Shamokin Fire History Museum One Man, One Museum, One Community": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ja62HB-l1Wc&t=4s> and (b) "Shamokin Fire History: Youth on Fire": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4eYwJypuPU&t=141s>

the parish relies increasingly on pierogi sales for income, and octogenarians make most of the pierogis. The Franciscans hoped to make pierogis a more predictable source of income by streamlining production and managing their resources, market, and brand to expand sales beyond existing customers. In 2018, Professors Eric Martin and Neil Boyd assigned seniors in their management capstone course to find ways to address these challenges. At Mother Cabrini and Our Lady of Hope Parishes, the students studied pierogi making and learned the cultural culinary art of pierogi pinching. Students suggested ideas for streamlining the process, including the introduction of a hand-operated pierogi pinching machine that allows older pierogi pinchers with arthritis to continue participating in this time-honored cultural tradition.

By recognizing and honoring the value of such traditions, these projects build the connections necessary for collaborations that address social needs. From 2018 to 2020, a 2-year project funded by Campus Compact of New York and Pennsylvania (CCNYPA) and working through the CRFS brought AmeriCorps VISTA members to work on issues of food insecurity in Mount Carmel and Shamokin. In Shamokin, VISTA members worked with roughly 12 local food assistance organizations to establish quarterly collaboration meetings that resulted in joint advertising for food assistance resources, among other benefits. Additionally, Shamokin has suffered from the opioid crisis, and students, faculty, and community partners in central Pennsylvania have worked together to better understand this crisis from both organizational and individual perspectives. Their efforts have included collaboration with the regional Opioid Coalition to analyze survey data, understand recovery programs, investigate how deaths due to opioids are reported, and conduct ethnographies of recovery.

These cultural heritage and social needs projects not only have symbolic value to the community but also physically bring invested parties together and build the community cohesion needed to underpin future development projects. Bucknell's projects encourage the development of a robust, interactive group of actors who can draw upon a broadening pool of students, stakeholders, and universities in designing their own actions. While facilitating sustainable communities in Shamokin was not Bucknell's main goal, we have found that cultural heritage work contributes to a strong regional social

infrastructure that, in turn, builds momentum for creating sustainable communities.

Sustaining Economic and Environmental Revitalization

Four interdependent pillars support sustainable communities: social, cultural, economic, and environmental. A resilient community, both human and natural, requires the combined support of all four; thus Bucknell also engages with Shamokin at the intersection of economic and environmental dilemmas. Before the CRFS was formed in 2015, faculty had long worked with local environmental groups to address acid mine drainage in the Shamokin area (Cravotta & Kirby, 2004). They had also conducted and supervised thesis research on regional geology (Cush, 2017; Monfort, 2016; Sak et al., 2014) and documented mine land restoration efforts (Martine et al., 2017). Additionally, local interest is growing in renewable energy potential, as evidenced in the City's new revitalization plan, *Go Shamokin*. Adopted in 2020, the plan seeks to establish Shamokin as "The City of Energy" given its history with Thomas Edison and the early development of electricity, its coal mining past, and a possible energy diverse future. Such a vision demonstrates the intersections of culture, environment, and economy working toward sustainable community development.

Engaged Learning with Regional Economic Anchors

The cultural appreciation that built goodwill between Bucknell University and local groups in Shamokin is but one piece of a complex relationship that encourages community sustainability initiatives in Shamokin. The planning and economic development projects pursued by individual classes at Bucknell have benefited from the sustainable communities framework established by the CRFS's administrative infrastructure. The CRFS develops relationships with local groups and helps them to work productively with various faculty, courses, and student projects that reinforce the pillars of sustainable community. Partners like Kathy Jeremiah, first of the Northumberland County Planning Office and then of the Franciscan Center, have funneled student efforts toward extant projects and needs.

The nearby Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area (AOAA) created one such need. The AOAA opened in 2014 and is now an anchor for

regional economic development. It reclaimed 6,500 acres of abandoned mining land and now offers hundreds of miles of trails for full-size off road vehicles, ATVs, and dirt bikes. Each year, the AOAA attracts over 30,000 visitors to the area. The AOAA also does environmental remediation work, such as acid mine reclamation and reforestation. As AOAA surpassed its own projections in terms of both earnings and visitors, it has struggled to spread the tourism dollars it generates into local communities.

In 2018, students in Professor Vanessa Massaro's capstone geography course, *Thinking Space*, spatially analyzed AOAA user data to identify and address concerns related to transportation routes, local accommodations, and the relative lack of economic interaction between AOAA visitors and the City of Shamokin. Using their mapping and data management skills, the students visualized visitors' current travel routes. They built on previous tourism data to compile the map layers needed to propose a site for a much-needed hotel (Tourism Economics, 2015). Their work, in turn, helped Kathy Jeremiah write successful grant applications. The *Thinking Space* project complemented another student-driven project: an assessment of the feasibility of solar arrays to power AOAA's facilities conducted by students from the Institute for Leadership in Sustainable Technology and led by Professors Peter Jansson and Neil Boyd. Another project in fall 2018 focused on connecting AOAA to downtown Shamokin. When AOAA hosted its first *Take It to the Streets* event, students from Professor Ryan Burg's *Managing for Sustainability* class studied the effects of allowing ATVs to travel into town. They ultimately recommended a number of strategies for improvement while also noting the social, environmental, and economic impacts, both negative and positive, of the event.

These projects further sustainable development in the region by engaging in environmental conservation work and supporting social works in the city ("County Housing Authority Receives \$7500," 2020; "HANC Receives Third 'Fight the Blight' Donation," 2020; Mertz, 2020), but one student project does not, in and of itself, solve the problem of connecting AOAA to the city and ensuring a sustainable community. Kathy Jeremiah's shepherding role notably demonstrates the importance of the two-sided administrative infrastructure produced by an adherence to sustainable community principles. Her efforts have helped these projects have a

cumulative effect that sparks enthusiasm, begins conversations, and supports new connections—all of which contribute to sustainable development.

Community Visioning for Revitalization

Deep engagement in sustainable community revitalization means engaging with community and partners in a multitude of ways. In May 2019, partners held the Economic Revitalization in the Lower Anthracite Coal Region Convening. This meeting supported the growing revitalization efforts of the area, and it notably flowed from the first public gathering initiated by the Franciscan Friars in April 2018 (see Figure 2). The May 2019 convening represented a collaboration between universities (Bucknell, Susquehanna, and Bloomsburg), community organizations (MMKC and Anthracite Region for Progress—the precursor to FAR), and businesses (represented by the Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce and Shamokin Area Businesses for Economic Revitalization). The event combined the Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce's third annual Members' Choice Anthracite Economic Summit with a university-community convening made possible through a CCNYPA Regional Consortia Mini-Grant for Community Engagement. The purpose of the Members Choice' Anthracite Economic Summit is to create partnerships for progress. The Campus Compact convening grants are aimed at building higher education's capacity to deepen civic and community engagement and strengthen regional communities. By cohosting this event, attendees started conversations and built cross-sector partnerships with the goal of economically revitalizing downtowns in the lower anthracite coal region.

More than 70 participants attended from local businesses; regional NGOs; faith communities; universities; and local, state, and federal governments, including a representative from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a U.S. senator's representative. Participants focused on developing priorities and partnerships to revitalize eastern Northumberland County. Keynote speakers highlighted revitalization successes in other Pennsylvania towns with similar histories of industrial decline, after which community-university pairs discussed their collaborative projects and their results. In the afternoon, 55 attendees participated in SWOT analysis activities (SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). Four core

focus areas emerged from the activities: economic revitalization, tourism, youth engagement, and regional social asset mapping. The identification of these focus areas and associated action items sparked ongoing conversations and new collaborations. It also strengthened Shamokin's administrative infrastructure. The city hired a revitalization coordinator who enables cross-sectoral collaborations between groups, including Bucknell faculty and students.⁸ This result exemplifies the benefits of ongoing collaboration with a university that focuses on sustainable communities.⁹

Next, the EPA's Offices of Environmental Justice and Community Revitalization worked with local organizations convened by FAR and with state agencies to facilitate a 3-day Rebuilding Our Community workshop in February 2020. More than 140 residents, from high school students to seniors, came to share their ideas for a better Shamokin. Organizers then invited these participants to volunteer for specific activities in support of particular goals. Over the next 2 days, the workshop delved deeper into understanding the available state and federal resources and support structures, identifying and mapping Shamokin's assets, and devising action plans for specific goals, including developing new businesses, creating cultural pride and community engagement, fostering partnerships, and ensuring environmental sustainability. Because of the strong networks that had been built through university-community collaborations, Bucknell staff and faculty were invited to participate, contribute, and discuss prior projects in Shamokin. As these discussions unfolded, many participants were curious about the university's work; they asked about further collaboration opportunities that might support their goals and about what they could learn from earlier projects. After this February 2020 meeting, goal groups were established. These groups hold monthly meetings guided by a comprehensive action plan, including timelines and metrics compiled by the EPA staff, and they are moving forward on the action items identified by workshop participants.¹⁰ Shaunna Barnhart serves

on two committees that focus on environmental sustainability, and green space efforts, connecting university partnerships with the community's needs and supporting grant writers.

These community visioning and action workshops are taking place across a range of sectors. In some cases, university collaborators are invited participants, while in others the university is a key convener. These interactions are necessary for maintaining collaborative relationships; driving community-identified priorities; and opening creative spaces and opportunities for partnerships with university faculty, staff, and students. They create a solid foundation that encourages the community to move toward a sustainable community model. Bucknell's role involves not only facilitating student projects and research but also helping to build momentum and draw attention to particular priorities. The university's engagement helps Shamokin stakeholders keep working toward a holistic, multipronged approach to development and revitalization. No one project or community visioning exercise could achieve the same results alone.

Sustaining Engagement Beyond Bucknell

In order to be a successful partner, a university should seed engagement that continues beyond its own direct influence. University engagement efforts can be deemed successful when the community involved continues to develop and coordinate a wealth of projects without the direct involvement of the university. Engagement programs should promote community administrative infrastructure as well as a willingness within communities to see and seek out universities as productive partners while allowing other partnerships and engagements to flourish (Rubin, 2000). Student engagement is another element of a university's success. Not only does Shamokin continue to benefit from engaged partnerships, but a widening range of students do, too. These students will carry the practices of sustainable communities beyond Bucknell and Shamokin and into their future work.

⁸This 3-year position was created through a partnership between SEDA-Council of Governments, the City of Shamokin, and Shamokin Area Businesses for Economic Revitalization, all of whom had representatives at the convening where a keynote speaker demonstrated the valuable role that such a position can have in revitalization efforts. The creation of the position became an action item after the SWOT analysis. The revitalization coordinator is a SEDA-Council of Governments employee.

⁹Conference proceedings and recordings are available at <https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/bcse-event-materials/1/>

¹⁰The Shamokin Community Rebuilding Action Plan is available on FAR's website at <https://www.franciscancenterpa.org/shamokin-community-rebuilding-action-plan>

Partnerships Beyond Bucknell

Through their partnerships with Bucknell and the broader region and through the efforts of FAR, Shamokin organizations have built an institutional infrastructure that facilitates partnerships with other schools and programs. This structure was inspired in part by the original university-community anchor partnership between the CRFS and MMKC in Mount Carmel. In 2016, just 1 year into the CRFS-MMKC partnership, a team of faculty, staff, and MMKC representatives traveled to a conference at the University of Notre Dame to present the partnership's origin, goals, and initial results. There, Father Martin Moran of the MMKC led discussions at which representatives from the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP) spoke about the possibility of establishing an internship program for the coal region headquartered in a then-vacant Franciscan building in Shamokin.

In 2019, 3 years after the idea was initially conceived at Notre Dame, the Franciscan Center began offering summer housing to locally placed SHECP interns (referred to as Shepherd interns) participating in 8-week summer programs. SHECP pairs students from 26 universities with nonprofit organizations that work to strengthen impoverished communities throughout the country. SHECP considered these internships, developed with local partners by FAR, to be innovative and cutting edge. Interns work in city government reviewing old ordinances and Act 47 information, and they work on issues related to the opioid epidemic with the Shamokin Police Department. Others assist Central Susquehanna Opportunities with marketing and North Penn Legal Services with poverty-related issues, such as custody and evictions.

In March 2019, FAR representatives presented at the National Environmental Justice Conference for Federal Agencies and Partners in Washington, D.C. Their remarks drew the EPA's interest to Shamokin as an at-risk and vulnerable community, and the agency offered the use of its Community Assessment and Planning Tool to help Shamokin develop a common vision for revitalization. The EPA connection also proved vital to FAR's initial and now sustained growth. In June 2019, representatives of five U.S. federal agencies visited the area to explore how they might collaborate with faith leaders and other community organizations to address the concerns of the region's vulnerable and underserved community. These agencies are part of

an ad hoc interagency/interfaith group that assists vulnerable communities. FAR's relationship with the EPA also spurred recent interfaith consideration of ways to reduce energy consumption and opportunities to provide energy job training at the nearby state prison. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has named Shamokin an Environmental Justice Area, and FAR now includes representatives of the DEP who work to bring environmental justice to the region. These diverse connections also produced the February 2020 Rebuilding Our Community workshop.

A healthy community-university partnership emphasizes the cocreation of knowledge, in which partners learn from projects and from one another and then share their knowledge with their networks. Members of FAR have been invited to present their work at regional and national conferences, covering topics from the origins of their partnership with Bucknell to the results of collaborative projects. A year after FAR members presented at the National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program, Kathy Jeremiah and two DEP representatives spoke at the Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference on the subject of Bucknell-partnered projects related to environmental justice and brownfields. That community members are invited to such speaking engagements demonstrates that the impact of university-community collaborations extends far beyond a given semester. These collaborations foster community-centered knowledge creation and empower partners to tell their own stories and experiences of collaboration, spreading the benefits far beyond their own communities.

Student Engagement

Of course, the partnership between the CRFS and FAR incorporates the teaching mission of Bucknell University. Its success is visible not only in Shamokin but also in students' experiences of building sustainable communities through partnership collaboration, projects, and learning opportunities. In order to better understand the effects of community-engaged work in Shamokin on students, students' understanding of the practices of sustainable communities, and the effects of engagement that continued beyond students' community experiences, we conducted digital, long-form interviews with students who took a community-engaged course or participated in the Shepherd internship program

¹¹This project received institutional review board approval (1920-002) from Bucknell University.

in Shamokin.¹¹ We reviewed course materials used from spring 2015 to summer 2019 and sent interview questions to 41 students from 11 courses in humanities, social sciences, management, and mathematics (see Table 1). We sent these students a Google form with 13 open-ended questions that asked them to describe and reflect on their project in Shamokin, the challenges they faced, and how this project contributed to their personal and professional growth. The students had completed their projects between 5 months and 1.5 years before receiving the survey. Six Bucknell students responded: four management students, one engineering student, and one social science student. We also distributed the questionnaire to the six Shepherd interns from summer 2019 after they completed their internships, and three responded. These nine students lent us important insight into their ability to work toward sustainable communities in their professional practice. Their participation constitutes a 19% response rate, which falls at the low end of the expected range for an online survey.

Most of the Bucknell respondents were still students. Most were contacted through their university emails, which may have reduced the response rate, particularly among alumni. We also acknowledge that students who had positive experiences might have been more likely to respond than those who had neutral or negative experiences. Nonetheless, some of the students who did not respond to our survey were interviewed by local newspapers, have been featured in university communications, and responded positively to end-of-class surveys. We therefore do not, from these responses, formulate generalizations about overall student experiences, nor do we infer a rationale for the low response rate. Combined with our assessment of these students' final projects, the responses we received demonstrate that the students built capacity and will carry the skills and experiences they acquired into the communities they will encounter professionally. The knowledge they gained at Bucknell will be of great use to them in the professional world since the challenges of building sustainable communities are not unique to Shamokin. Students will be able to apply what they know in many places, both in the United States and internationally.

As Bucknell student interviewee one put it, "I also think this project helped me understand what it is like to help a community that is in so much need, and not too far geographically from Bucknell and where I live. This helped me open

my eyes to struggling communities within my own community." At first blush, this student and many others believed that they were unfamiliar with places like Shamokin and the challenges these communities face. Later they learned that building sustainable communities is also important in their home regions, past, present, and future. These projects taught students that the story of Shamokin is paralleled in many other places.

A wealth of evidence suggests that students benefit from community-engaged research experiences (Ishiyama, 2002; Lopatto, 2007; Russell et al., 2007). Students who have participated in experiential learning are better prepared both for graduate school and for careers outside the academy. Bucknell's collaboration with Shamokin is ideal for allowing students to gain such benefits. In their work in Shamokin, students can apply what they have begun to learn in the classroom. Bucknell student interviewee two confirmed that the work made them think professionally: "I learned that consulting requires a lot of creativity, patience, brainstorming, and teamwork." Mutual respect between students and community partners and hands-on learning leave students better prepared for their future careers:

I also found a community-based project to be a lot more stressful than a research paper because we had real stakeholders relying on us. Our stakeholders were often emotional during interviews, which made it harder for us to determine a clear focus client (Bucknell student interviewee two).

And emotional engagement goes both ways. Shepherd intern interviewee one wrote, "Working in the community, I have found myself becoming emotionally invested, research papers for me are not as emotional."

Bucknell student interviewee one had initially been concerned that student participants would not be taken seriously, but their experience once the work began proved otherwise. Her group had to navigate a complicated collaboration between two community partners, a challenge that required experiential knowledge to create bridges and move forward. This challenge compelled students to act as mature professionals in a way that term papers simply do not.

Students completed their community-engaged courses having gained a sense of how they could apply their majors and sustainability studies in the real world. Most found the tasks harder than

they were used to but eminently possible. Bucknell student interviewee three was excited by this discovery, writing:

Implementing change to become more socially, economically, or environmentally sustainable is a direct application of my major! I definitely grew from this experience in that it was practice for learning what a stakeholder's issue is and finding specific ways to solve their problems through research and application of the case study's results.

She began to understand the dynamics of having a client and the value of the client's perspective.

Bucknell student interviewee four reflected that her project required a major paradigm shift from paper writing because of its collaborative nature:

Problem solving! A research paper displays your ability to analyze and sift through literature to construct an argument, but it does not involve working with people and navigating constant roadblocks. There is no push back against your ideas—you have the authority to choose the information you want to use and say what you want to say, however in a community-based project, it is not solely YOU and YOUR ideas, rather it is not for YOU at all—there is a balance between your ideas, thoughts, and judgment and that of the clients and your other group members.

Student interviewee four reveals her own growth as a person and a professional by beginning to decenter herself as the primary source of knowledge. The soft skills these students honed (e.g., listening and collaborating) will be essential for their future sustainability work. Every student response mentioned that these projects were significantly harder and more time-consuming than a traditional course project, but these community-engaged projects were ultimately more rewarding.

Interviewees' responses demonstrated that, in the future, they are likely to consult a wider range of stakeholders and are consequently more likely to do sustainability work that increases participation and benefits among a wider community. Beyond honing students' skills and preparing them for life beyond undergraduate coursework, community-engaged learning instills civic-mindedness, stewardship, and a broader commitment to

sustainable development. As Bucknell interviewee three put it:

I was surprised at how invested I became with the success of the Shamokin community, I think my entire group was. I felt that after speaking with and meeting various community members, I had a stake in the revitalization of the community. I was also surprised at the state of the community itself. I knew that Shamokin was a depressed economic area from the coal region collapse, but I didn't understand the extent and the specific problems they faced—including acid mine drainage in their local stream.

Students in each project developed a more nuanced view of stakeholder knowledge. Bucknell student three advised a peer who was planning to work in Shamokin to “really value and listen to community members' perspectives and opinions on the matter. A lot of skeptics to the changes had very valid concerns and were easy to understand once you saw where they were coming from.” This advice reflects the student's newfound appreciation for local knowledge (Massaro, 2019). Indeed, students gain a wealth of benefits from an engaged learning model that communities who facilitate these experiences sometimes do not (Hatcher et al., 2004; Kiely, 2005; Speck & Hoppe, 2004; Stanton et al., 1999; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). In our review of the student interviews, we saw evidence of students carrying what they had learned into sustainable community development elsewhere. We also found when community members exercised administrative control, students were better positioned to directly benefit Shamokin.

The Shepherd interns, who came from universities across the United States and were hosted by the Franciscan Center, also learned lasting lessons and quickly realized that knowledge is not just institutional—flowing solely from them to Shamokin. Instead, they had to incorporate and understand a great deal of experiential knowledge. As Shepherd intern interviewee two so aptly stated, “The real significance to me was not my impact on the community, but rather the community's impact on me and my future.” Having learned to listen and take community knowledge seriously, students will carry those lessons into their future work. The Bucknell student interviewee five noted:

Yes, it was a great experience for me since I got to do something very different than all my other classes. I worked on this project 2 years ago and I've still never taken any class so community oriented and with such a direct impact on people's lives. . . . It was fun.

Students often expressed continued appreciation for stakeholders, collaboration, and local knowledge in their interviews. They reported that the projects had increased their confidence in working collaboratively with their peers and, more importantly, with people from the community.

At the outset, most students did not believe they were equipped to complete the projects in Shamokin required for their coursework. Many, like Bucknell student interviewee three, were "primarily concerned that we didn't have enough understanding [to] provide recommendations and information to an entire community to which we didn't belong and didn't fully understand." Bucknell student interviewee one shared these concerns but was surprised to find that student work was respected and appreciated: "[My group] had low expectations of them taking us seriously, so the fact that we were able to make such an impact was really rewarding." These discoveries made students feel more confident in the utility of mutual respect between outside consultants and community partners. Shepherd interviewee one said, "Sometimes I would be hesitant to speak up on my ideas, however I have learned throughout to be more assertive." Working in Shamokin increased students' self-confidence and professional skills, preparing them to promote sustainable communities in future.

Participants also developed deeply nuanced understandings of privilege and poverty. Shepherd intern interviewee two described how her experience in Shamokin deepened her understanding:

The learning that happens in a classroom does not allow for the humanization and detailed understanding of each and every story. Living in Shamokin and witnessing the different instances and outcomes of poverty is very humbling, and a much, much more humanizing experience.

Shepherd interviewee three expressed similar sentiments about examining her own privilege:

It also exposed me to people in the community who are struggling to meet their basic needs. It helped me grow personally in that I now prioritize helping others who were not born with the privileges I have, and I will view all of my future career opportunities through the lens of helping others.

This more detailed understanding of their own position will inform these students' approach to other groups and communities.

The student benefits of experiential and community-engaged learning are well documented. It is vital, however, that both students and community members benefit from their collaboration, particularly when the latter have been so generous with their time and resources. We found that linking projects into a chain and working to build a strong administrative infrastructure in Shamokin both helped the community benefit from the programs and provided guidance for student interest. Linking courses with permanent and invested staff and faculty through the CRFS has also helped to ensure that the students are not the only beneficiaries. Through its long collaboration with Bucknell, Shamokin has built an impressive capacity to manage the students who learn in and through the community.

Another indication of Shamokin's well-honed capacity to teach and engage student interns is FAR's success in becoming a Shepherd internship site. Shepherd interns, such as interviewee two, noted:

The program highlights "experiential learning" as the key to both understanding poverty and fostering a lifelong commitment to consider impoverished communities and associated problems in our daily lives and careers.

The program offers positions in various fields and locations e.g. business, law, non-profits, law enforcement, healthcare; New York City, Shamokin, Baltimore, Washington D.C., etc.

Shamokin is the only small town she mentions in her list, and in doing so she unwittingly reveals the broader national (mis)understanding of poverty.

Conclusion

By actively seeking out a broad range of groups and stakeholders in Shamokin and

leading them into collaboration, FAR and the CRFS demonstrated their deep connections and common drive to harness their own strength and that of the community to move the needle toward revitalization. While any group of partners is motivated by a range of individual goals, we find that these projects considered together, particularly those rooted in an interactional approach, move toward a vision of a sustainable community (Bridger & Luloff, 1999). Combined with the sustainable communities framework, they offer a blueprint for an effective university role in community partnerships. Liberal arts institutions bring expertise to these collaborations by valuing work at the cultural node. Furthermore, small liberal arts institutions—with their smaller class sizes and potential for more communication and coordination between professors (with appropriate supports and frameworks to cross academic silos, as the CRFS demonstrates)—more readily allow for deeply engaged community work and thus become more legible to nonacademic partners. Another unique component of this community-engaged work is that given the range and breadth of disciplines and courses engaging with the CRFS, there are students who engage with the coal region for more than one course. Finally, liberal arts institutions give more resources to and center the humanities in a way that better positions students and faculty to invigorate the cultural node of sustainable communities. Our review of the course activities that helped build the relationship with FAR reveals the striking importance of a cultural focus. By attending to communities' cultural heritage, universities can help to resituate power in the partnership. The projects' efforts to renew respect and appreciation for cultural heritage helped both to empower community members and to decenter Bucknell. That after several years of ongoing collaboration with the university, stakeholders in Shamokin were able to network with national, state, and local constituencies to establish FAR and become a Shepherd intern program host site is a significant mark of success. Such autonomy demonstrates that a strong administrative structure is needed on both the community side and the higher education side. Successful complementary administrative structures have the potential to enable rich experiences across community and institution types and locations.

The benefits reaped by students and recent graduates who worked in Shamokin are readily evident. Ensuring that the partner communities have benefited is a more complex and far less

certain undertaking that requires more research. Partnerships of this kind risk exacerbating the preexisting imbalance of power between universities and nearby communities (Hoppers 2002; Watson-Verran & Turnbull, 1995). At worst, these partnerships worsen extant inequalities or reinforce dominance structures between stakeholders until even the best dynamics cannot dissolve them. We have found, however, that a partnership that recognizes and respects the wider structures around it and focuses on building community capacity and sustainability can succeed by positioning the community as a teacher that engages students outside the purview of faculty and staff.

Yet the uneven terrain of privilege remains, and even participating students recognized the need for deeper university commitment: “[Bucknell] need[s] to be better. We as a university have 4,000 minds that can be put into positive use across the community, but I don't feel like that is happening” (Bucknell student interviewee six). Students came to recognize the importance of equitable relations between the university and community and felt that the current level of engagement was insufficient once they considered the possibilities. Students expressed a deepened recognition of the moral responsibilities of privilege. While Bucknell's faculty often struggle to fulfill the university's mission to “promote justice in ways sensitive to the moral and ethical dimensions of life” (Bucknell University, n.d.), experiential learning in Shamokin (and elsewhere in the coal region) helps enormously.

This success is best demonstrated in students' critical evaluations of the programs in which they participated. Shepherd intern two described their concerns regarding privilege in the context of Shepherd:

[T]here needs to be a greater focus on educating the [Shepherd] student[s] on HOW they got to be privileged, and HOW the impoverished communities got to where they are. There is too often a myth that one has wealth/privilege because they deserve it, but it seems that 99% of the factors are outside of our control. . . . A university has great potential to make a huge impact on communities around them.

These student responses from both programs reveal the work remaining and the questions we

must answer as we continue these partnerships. We see a need for more research that assesses the connections between community-engaged learning and university curriculum for students. These quotes demonstrate how important it is that students contextualize this work within a wider understanding of poverty, inequality, justice, and privilege. There is also a need to better consider the rural context for community-engaged learning as well as the institutional context of liberal arts institutions. We have made efforts to note both of these contexts, but this paper raises more questions than it answers regarding how this type of collaboration can become the norm instead of the exception. Our example reveals the importance of dual administrative capacity for ensuring that engaged collaborations are centered on community needs and skills rather than on the university, but there is a need to identify other components that contribute to these partnerships' successes.

Both spotlighting cultural heritage and ensuring that community partners have an administrative infrastructure are essential in decentering the university in these partnerships. While these measures do not eliminate structural issues inherent to community-university arrangements, they offer a foundation for navigating them mindfully. It is also important to set clear goals through close consultation between university and community collaborators. What does each partner seek to gain from this engagement? Are those expectations reasonable, and are they being met over time? Partners should reference the sustainable communities framework in negotiating each individual project as well as the partnership as a whole, and the task of maintaining that larger relationship requires a dedicated staff and administration. Although faculty who participate through a given course are not as transient as their individual students, they are still transient. Dedicated administrators, like Dr. Shaunna Barnhart of the Place Studies program, can track and maintain wider goals over an extended period. Because course faculty may be unaware of other course faculty, designating such a position ensures that projects are linked appropriately and grounds the partnership.

The mission of the CRFS is to advance the "common goal of developing sustainable communities," and an important part of its vision is to empower partner organizations "to enact their visions for thriving, prosperous communities" (Bucknell Center for Sustainability and the Environment, n.d.). Yet students and faculty who

choose to create projects in the coal region may not be driven by this broader goal of seeding sustainable communities, nor are all community partner organizations entering into collaborations with that in mind. Until now, this frame has implicitly guided Bucknell's partnership with Shamokin. But in the future, it could become a valuable guide, expressed explicitly to all collaborators, for ongoing partnerships between university and community. It is a framework that can holistically guide university projects and volunteerism to build the capacity of a community in myriad ways. A sustainable communities lens asks more of community-engaged learning and begins to define the parameters of community benefits. The framework also supports meaningful guidelines and goals in a university-community partnership. Through it, we can continue to build the capacity of both students and communities in ways that become part of the community and are carried along by students as they move into their careers.

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