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Service-Learning Community Partner Collaboration Prediction Model & Tool

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Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing community partner collaboration in service-learning projects through a predictive model based on student competencies and project outcomes. Data was collected from 183 community organizations (80.62% response rate) partnering with a large public university in the Intermountain West. The research assessed 13 student professional competencies and 2 project value metrics across 16 service-learning course sections involving 565 students and 12 faculty members from six departments. Using Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis, the study investigated how student professional competencies and project quality influence community partners' likelihood to engage in future collaborations. The findings aim to enhance understanding of successful service-learning partnerships and provide insights for improving program design and implementation. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on effective service-learning practices and community engagement in higher education.

Keywords: Service-Learning, Community Partnerships, Student Competencies, Community Engagement, Predictive Modelling, Program Assessment, Experiential Learning, Institutional Collaboration, Gen Z Students, Organizational Partnerships, Project-Based Learning, Community Impact Assessment, Educational Outcomes

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The following represents an interactive predictive model and tool, available on the journal website, which includes the methodological note and model details.

See the online tool at: https://www.innovativehumancapital.com/interactive-tools-and-resources.

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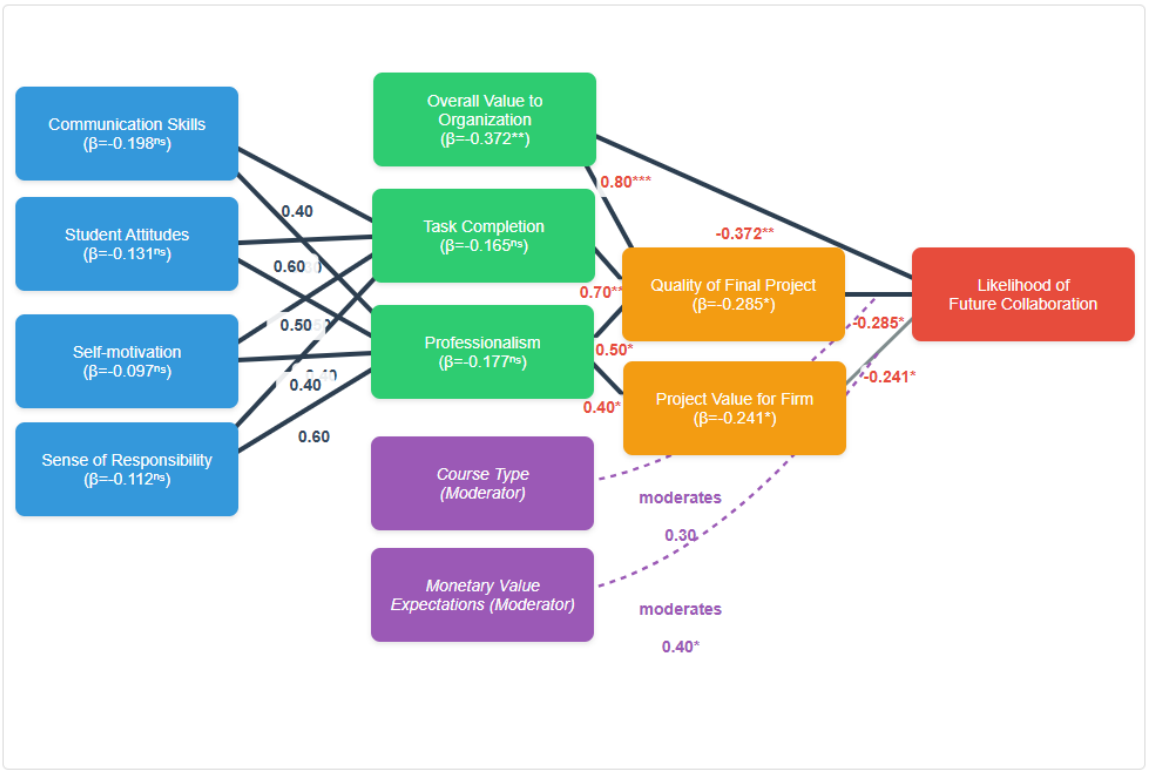
by Jonathan H. Westover, PhD

Drag the elements to rearrange the diagram as needed

Reset Diagram



Strong Effect (β > 0.25) | Medium Effect (0.15 < β < 0.25) | Weak Effect (β < 0.15) | Moderating Effect

Student Skills & Attributes | Mediating Variables | Project Outcomes | Final Outcome | Moderating Variables

*Significance levels: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001, ns = not significant (p > 0.05)*

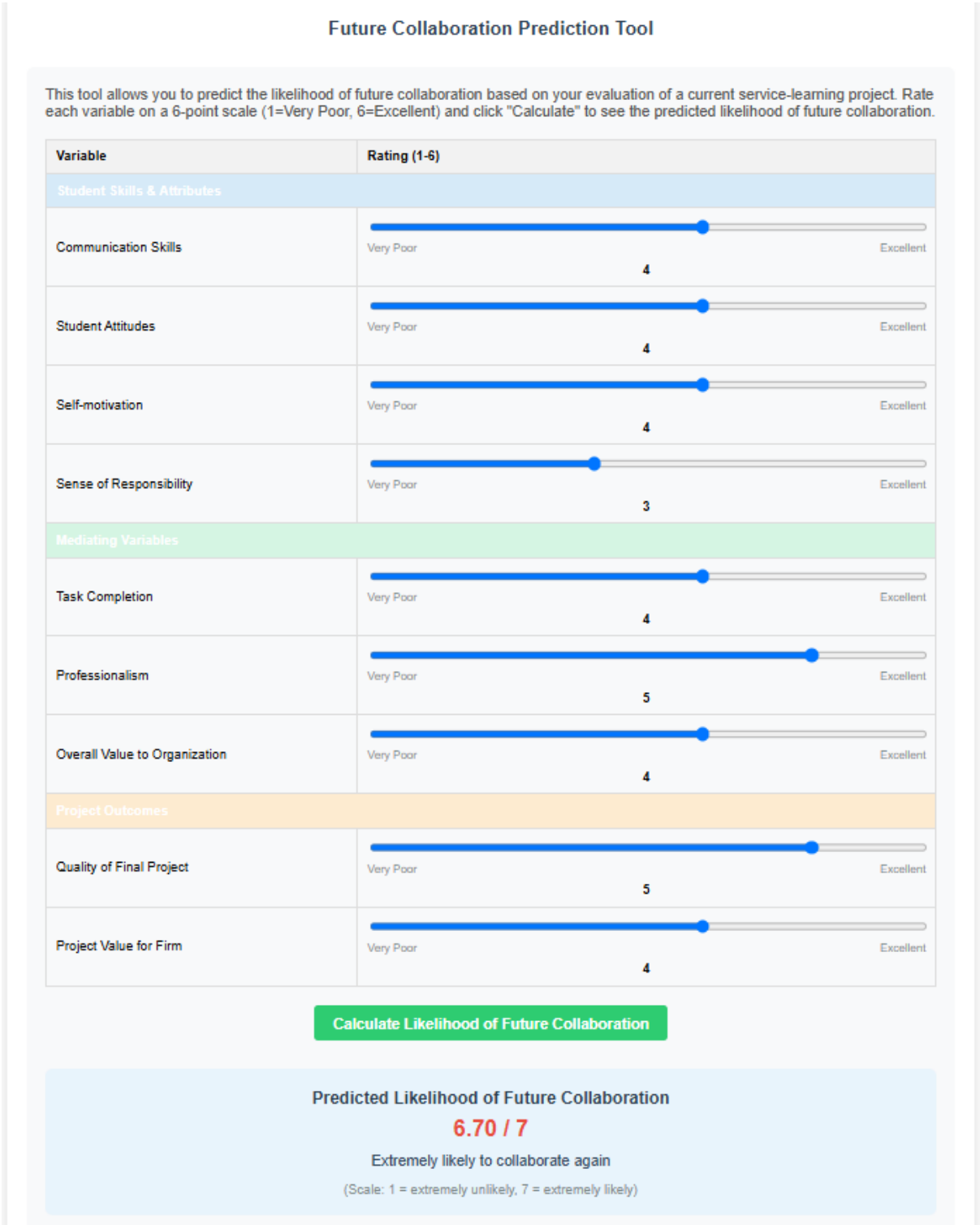
Final Regression Equation:

$$Y = 8.764 - 0.372X_1^{**} - 0.285X_2^{*} - 0.241X_3^{*} - 0.198X_4^{ks} - 0.177X_5^{ks} - 0.165X_6^{ks} - 0.131X_7^{ks} - 0.112X_8^{ks} - 0.097X_9^{ks}$$

Where: Y = Likelihood of Future Collaboration, X_1 = Overall Value, X_2 = Project Quality, X_3 = Project Value, X_4 = Communication, X_5 = Professionalism, X_6 = Task Completion, X_7 = Student Attitudes, X_8 = Responsibility, X_9 = Self-motivation

Model Statistics: $R^2 = 0.572$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.483$, $F(9,38) = 6.417$, $p < 0.001$

Note: Standardized beta coefficients (β) shown on paths and in the regression equation. Lower values on the dependent variable indicate higher likelihood of future collaboration.



Future Collaboration Prediction Tool

This tool allows you to predict the likelihood of future collaboration based on your evaluation of a current service-learning project. Rate each variable on a 6-point scale (1=Very Poor, 6=Excellent) and click "Calculate" to see the predicted likelihood of future collaboration.

Variable	Rating (1-6)
Student Skills & Attributes	
Communication Skills	Very Poor — Excellent: 4
Student Attitudes	Very Poor — Excellent: 4
Self-motivation	Very Poor — Excellent: 4
Sense of Responsibility	Very Poor — Excellent: 3
Mediating Variables	
Task Completion	Very Poor — Excellent: 4
Professionalism	Very Poor — Excellent: 5
Overall Value to Organization	Very Poor — Excellent: 4
Project Outcomes	
Quality of Final Project	Very Poor — Excellent: 5
Project Value for Firm	Very Poor — Excellent: 4

Calculate Likelihood of Future Collaboration

Predicted Likelihood of Future Collaboration

6.70 / 7

Extremely likely to collaborate again

(Scale: 1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely)

Methodological Note

The community partner survey for this study reflects the essential learning outcomes identified by employers (Hart Research Associates 2015) as well as program and course objectives. In addition to seeking employer views of students' professional competencies, the survey also invited feedback regarding the value of the students' work to the organization and suggestions for improving the structure of assignments (see Appendix).

Institutional Context and Sample

The site for the study was a large, regional, public university in the Intermountain West. The institution has elective Carnegie classification for community engagement. As such, service-learning is a key strategy. The University has a robust service-learning program that provides students with opportunities to participate in designated service-learning courses. Students partner with a community organization to complete projects requiring application of the academic knowledge and skills they are learning in their coursework. Community partners benefit by receiving additional employees to conduct research, offer fresh insights, experiment with new ideas and approaches, and contribute to a variety of partner-identified goals.

At the end of the semester, representatives from 183 out of 227 community organizations connected with class projects (for an 80.62% response rate) completed an assessment of students' projects (some for group projects, some for individual projects). The participating organizations represented a wide range of community partner organizations, including local government agencies, local K-12 schools, local nonprofits (education, environmental, health, etc.), hospitals, local small businesses connected with the local Small Business Development Center, and other for-profit local businesses involved in the public good. The projects were connected to 16 service-learning designated course sections, including introduction to business, business presentations, statistics, organizational behavior, marketing, student leadership and success, writing, and psychology. The courses, with a total enrollment of 565 students, were taught by 12 faculty members in six departments and three colleges and schools. The faculty members (and corresponding classes involved in this study) had all completed the same six-week Service-Learning Faculty Fellowship training, consisting of weekly one-hour workshops accompanied by online modules and assignments. As the culminating project, faculty redesigned a course to meet service-learning criteria under the mentorship of an experienced service-learning faculty member.

Operationalization of Study Variables

As shown in Table 1, the community partner assessment incorporated 13 competency items to measure the perceived student professional competencies, each rated on a 6-point Likert scale. Additionally, there were 2 project value-related evaluation items on the same 6-point Likert scale.

The assessment also included one question asking how likely the organization would be to work with the university students again in the future, on a 7-point Likert scale. Finally, five open-ended questions were asked regarding various aspects of the community partner experience with the student(s), including elements that could help the organization develop/grow, intent to implement recommendations, ways the project could be improved, overall experience interactions, and potential for future collaborative projects (see Appendix for survey instrument). Due to space limitations, the qualitative data collected will not be addressed in this paper.

Statistical Methodology

First, we performed a descriptive statistical analysis of the community partner

assessment data on student professional competencies and project quality and value. These bivariate and multivariate analyses include correlations, ANOVA and ANCOVA procedures, and cross-tabulations. Second, we utilized Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to examine the impact of Gen Z student professional competencies and project quality on the community partner's perceived likelihood to work on future projects with students. This tool specifically looks at the regression analysis.

Table 1: Student Competencies and Project Value

Understanding of the specific problem/question your company posed
Attitudes
Self-motivation
Project planning
Organizational skills
Communications skills
Leadership skills
Sense of responsibility
Emotional maturity
Time management
Teamwork
Task completion
Professional approach/professionalism
Quality of final project
Value of this project for your firm

Author Bio:

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