Its About Engagement Annual Report
AY 2020
Institutional Analysis

Context:

KSU's implementation of the QEP approved by SACSCOC began August 15th, 2019. Initial analysis of pilot data for many IAE activities indicated a need for adjustments that began in earnest late that year and continued into the Spring of 2020. While formally the first year of the QEP project, this analysis should be considered as a baseline position for future improvement, rather than used as an evaluation of improvements made to date. In addition, the data from Fall 2019 needed considerable updating after work done in the Spring semester. While important for baseline setting, care should be taken in over-analyzing changes from fall to spring in this data set or setting future goals based solely on the fall numbers. In addition, the following analysis covers only those engagement opportunities that meet IAE definitions (https://engagement.kennesaw.edu/definitions.php) and should not be taken as an evaluation of all engagement programs happening across all the colleges at KSU.

Goal 1:

KSU's IAE program will increase the number of opportunities for students to engage in internships, undergraduate research/creative activity, and service-learning in undergraduate degree programs in each of the academic colleges and for the university as a whole.

In AY 20, there were 395 sections of IAE courses on offer across the 11 colleges supporting the program (Figures 1). The largest number of opportunities were in research/creative activity (43%) and Internships (39%; Figure 2). The opportunities were distributed across the colleges as appropriate to their various development plans (Figures 3 & 4), sizes, and levels of early IAE activity.

Goal 2:

KSU's IAE program will increase the number of students engaging in internships, undergraduate research/creative activity, and service-learning opportunities in undergraduate degree programs in each of the academic colleges and for the university as a whole.

In AY 20, there were 11,087 engagements by students in IAE courses across the 11 colleges (Figure 5). We are specifically tracking engagements, not students, because students may engage with IAE activities more than once and, in addition to increasing the number of total students engaging, that can be an appropriate increase depending on the plan for the academic units and the particular engagement activity involved. While the largest number of opportunities for students was seen in the research/creative activity arena, more student engagements occurred in the internship space (48%) than in the research/creative activity space (37%) or the service-learning space (21%; Figure 6). The distribution of student engagements across the colleges can differ importantly from the distribution of opportunities (Figures 7 and 8).

If we look at the students who are engaging with our IAE activities, their cumulative GPA of 3.3 suggests that these students are largely from the higher-performing segments of the university (Figure 9). The cumulative GPAs of students in research/creative activity (3.4) and internship (3.4) are higher than those

in our service learning programs (3.2; Figure 10). Given the selective nature of research/creative activity and internships and the curriculum embedding of the service learning, this may not be surprising, but does point to one area of growth potential, finding a way to engage students at all levels of academic achievement. In addition, 66% of engagements are by women and 36% are by students from traditionally underserved backgrounds (Figure 11). Given KSU's current gender make-up, it appears more women than men are engaging with IAE activities and may indicate a meaningful point for strategies to increase. In addition, a slightly lower percentage of engagements for students from traditionally underserved populations suggests that more opportunities for inclusion could be an important strategy for improvement. Interestingly, the distribution of students across the various types of engagement opportunities, indicates some important differences that could be focal points for future improvements (Figures 12 & 13).

The average credits accumulated by students at the time they engage in IAE activities (90 credits), suggests that our activities are largely focused on late-Junior and Senior students (Figure 14). The lower accumulated credits for the curriculum-embedded activities in our service-learning opportunities (74 credits), suggests that curriculum-embedded activities can be a successful strategy for engaging students in IAE activities earlier in their degree programs. Finally, it appears that engaging in IAE activities is not necessarily associated with accumulating enough credits to graduate in 4 years. On average, students in our IAE activities are accumulating 13 credits in their engagement semester (Figure 15). If we assume a summer enrollment and engagement across multiple semesters, then students in our IAE activities may be accumulating over 30 credits for the entire year, though the data we have here cannot be used to support that.

Goal 3:

KSU's IAE program will increase the number of students engaging in research/creative activity, service learning, or internships…
> *-who can cite meaningful and valuable connections of their HIP experiences to their overall educational preparation. (Educational Value)*
> *-who gain new insights on the connectedness and integration of the academic preparation of their disciplines of study to the applied setting of their HIP experiences. (Connectedness Insights)*
> *-who build upon prior knowledge and experiences to respond effectively to the new and challenging demands of their HIP settings. (Integrated Problem-Solving)*
> *-who demonstrate growth in professional and personal core values and sense of self as a result of their HIP experiences. (Values Growth)*

In AY 20, this goal was measured by using the IAE-designed rubric to score a sub-sample (295) of the 821 total reflections submitted during the Spring 20 semester. While a reasonable sample size, on the whole, recognize that this is based on only the 13% of IAE coded courses that submitted reflections and excludes entire colleges where no reflections were available and any activity from Fall 2019 or Summer 2020. On average, students in our IAE activities scored less than half (46%) of the total points available and attained no more than half of the points available on any given criterion (Table 1). In many respects, this outcome is not surprising. While much work was done to align process coding

Table 1. Average rubric scores for IAE criteria from 295 student reflections.

Educational Value (max 5)	2.5
Connectedness Insights (max 5)	2.1
Integrated Problem Solving (max 5)	2.1
Values Growth (max 5)	2.5
Total (max 20)	**9.2**

to IAE definitions in the spring, its clear that not all of the important information reached the level of the faculty teaching the courses (see section on process below) and most of the reflections that were submitted had clearly not been aligned to IAE expectations. Coupled with the dramatic shift in activities accompanying the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the alignment process lagged and it shows in the outcomes. That being said, this is a clear and dramatic area for improvement.

Process Improvement:

This component of the IAE assessment program is centered on a series of focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders across the institution. For this initial assessment period the data was collected from 12 faculty, 8 Deans, 8 members of the QEP Steering Committee, and 1 student. The low sample size for students necessitated the exclusion of that group from this analysis. In addition, the sample of faculty and Deans is not broad enough to allow for college-specific analysis. We will attempt to highlight key findings from this component here, but it is worth reading the entire report, included as *Appendix 1* (prepared by Ann M. Bennett, Ph.D., QEP Assessment Coordinator), as there are details that may be important for individual college implementation programs. The key findings fall into 4 themes:

Perspectives and Experiences of Engaged Learning and the QEP

➢ Most of the key stakeholders found the IAE activities to be important opportunities for students because of their skill application and the value they provide for future student goals. They also recognized the numerous positive aspects that IAE activities had for student retention, progression, and graduation across all demographic groups. Finally, there was recognition that the IAE structures were useful for the university to get a handle on all of the activities occurring around engagement on campus.

➢ There were concerns raised about the current fit of IAE activities into reward structures for faculty including annual reviews and promotion and tenure guidelines. Time commitments for IAE activities may be significantly higher and need to be recognized as such. Also there was considerable challenge with the culture of IAE activities in various colleges and how faculty tied their own activity to the IAE definitions.

Goals of the QEP

➢ There was an indication that quite a lot of opportunities for IAE programs already existed and that the quality of these interactions was high. The variability in college-level implementation plans allowed for a diverse IAE ecosystem that seems to support growth in strategic ways for each college. Interestingly, some colleges are farther along than others, but all seem to see some room to improve throughout.

➢ Challenges certainly still persisted. The concerns about faculty reward structures and promotion and tenure guidelines once again became a topic of focus, but also issues around training on managing teams and managing community and industry partners were prevalent here. Finally, the issue of student incentives was a key challenge. Challenges of the pandemic were certainly evident, but also simply the challenges of having students engaged in meaningful, time-intensive activities for no or only a single credit came to the front of the discussion.

Student Learning Outcomes of the QEP

➢ This is an interesting analysis because it was not able to include the student voice, which would be particularly important. However, faculty generally felt like the IAE activities on offer were strong venues for learning and would be powerful experiences for student growth. The ability of these IAE activities to help students apply their classroom learning was particularly evident.

➢ It was not clear to the stakeholders in this analysis whether the IAE activities would necessarily lead to the values growth envisioned by the IAE rubric. In addition, there were difficulties dealing with students who changed career goals because of IAE activities. When linked to the late nature of many of these activities as outlined above, this may be a particular area of interest for future strategies.

Objectives of the QEP

➢ As the key focus for this part of the assessment program, there was much more here than in other aspects, so this summary will capture even fewer of the details and it is recommended that you read the actual report (*Appendix 1*) for more details.

    o The structure of the QEP such that the Provost is in charge, but allowing individual colleges to focus on their own strategic initiatives was viewed as a powerful tool for implementation and was being applied to the departments within a college as well.

    o Resource allocation has been supportive of IAE activity growth and administrative support seems to be apparent.

    o The supporting units for the QEP: Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Career Planning and Development, Office of Undergraduate Research, and Student Leadership and Service all were lauded as providing important training and support for the various IAE programs across colleges.

➢ The challenges…

    o Communication was one of the primary challenges outlined. While there was indication that administrative structures were informed and communicating about IAE activity, that communication stream appeared fractured at the level of faculty who had little interaction with the IAE work. Worse, that communication problem was more dramatic with students who appeared to know next to nothing about KSU's IAE program.

    o As part of that communication challenge, there was considerable confusion about the definitions of the various IAE activities and how to align already existing work to the expectations of high impact practices as nationally recognized. The coding process may have been improved, but individual faculty may not know their courses were coded as IAE courses or when they did, may not have known about all of the elements of a HIP course in the IAE context. There was some confusion about where the definitions (and taxonomies) came from, again caused by communication gaps, that resulted in consternation.

    o One of the more regular concerns in that alignment phase was with the reflective element. Because communication about HIPs has been less than robust, stakeholders at all levels did not realize the importance of reflection in the HIP literature and thus viewed it as an add-on aspect, not a core feature. The disjointed nature of the communication also meant that some folk were only being informed of the reflective expectations at the tail-end of their course offerings and didn't have time to align course practices even when they accepted them as important.
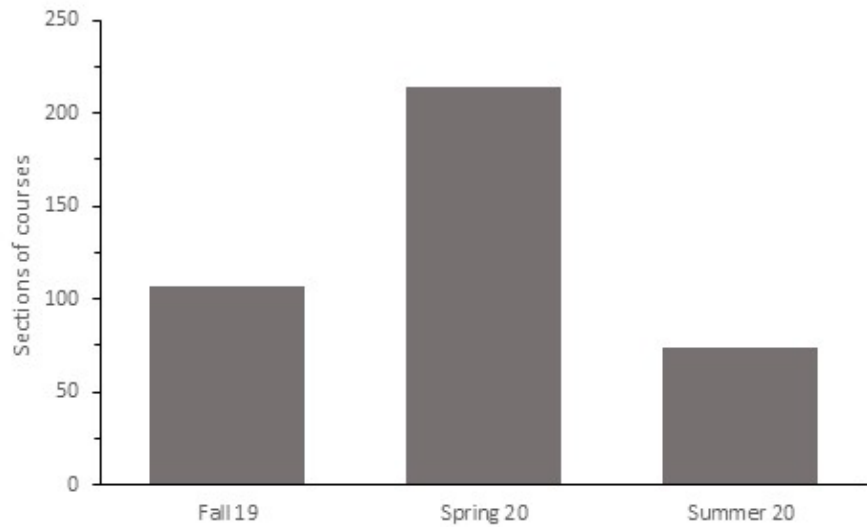
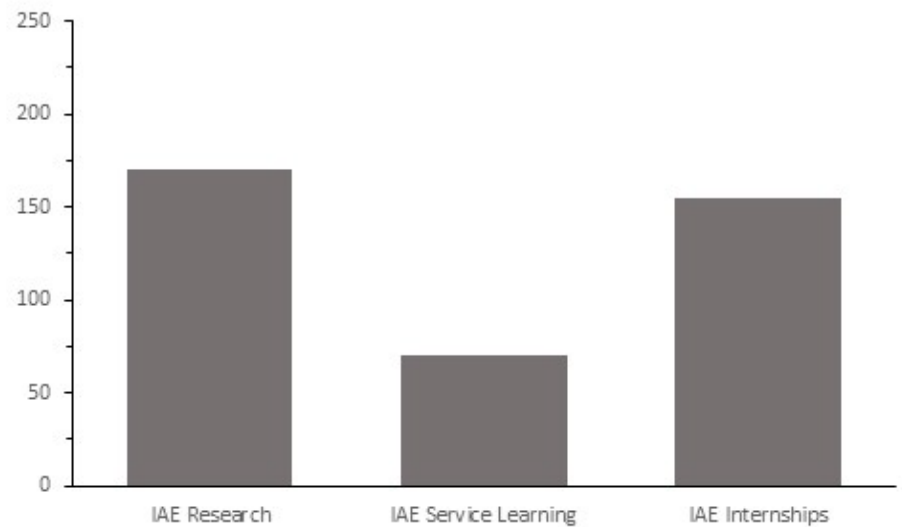Figure 1. Number of IAE-coded sections across all colleges in AY 20.

Figure 2. Number of IAE-coded sections across all colleges within each engagement type in AY 20.
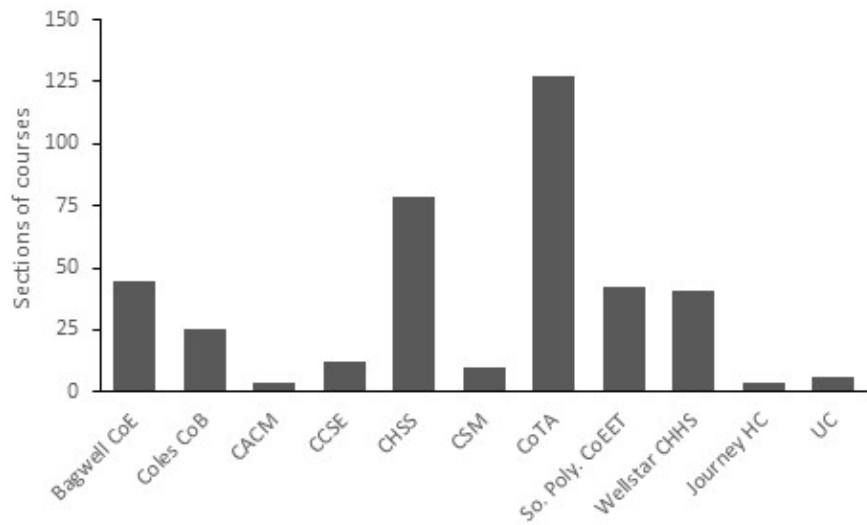

Figure 3. Number of IAE-coded sections within each college in AY 20.
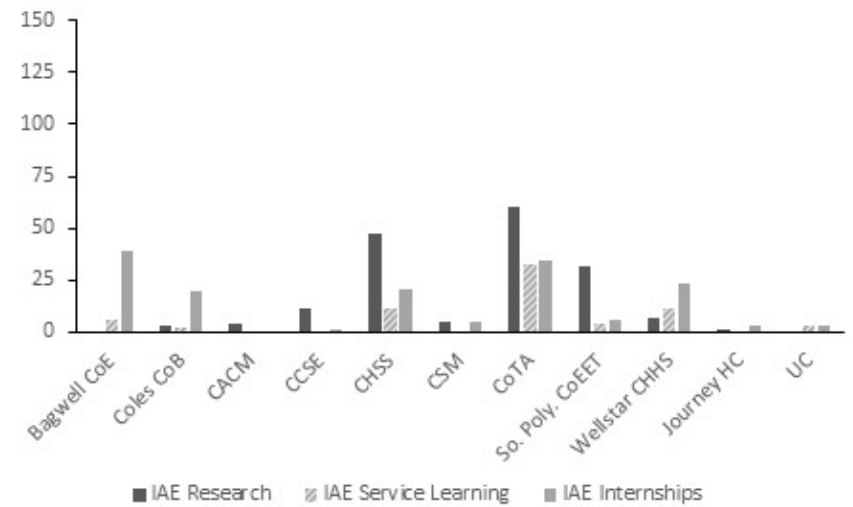

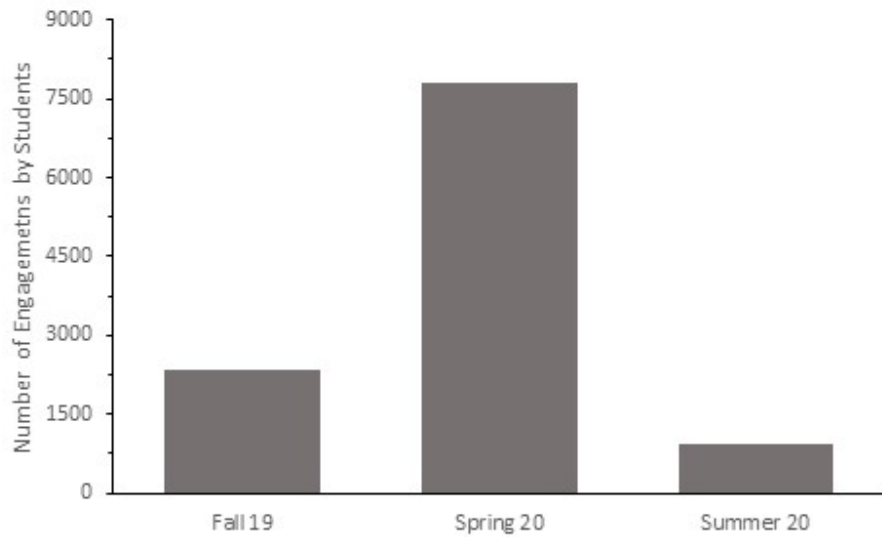Figure 4. Number of IAE-coded sections within each college and engagement type in AY 20.

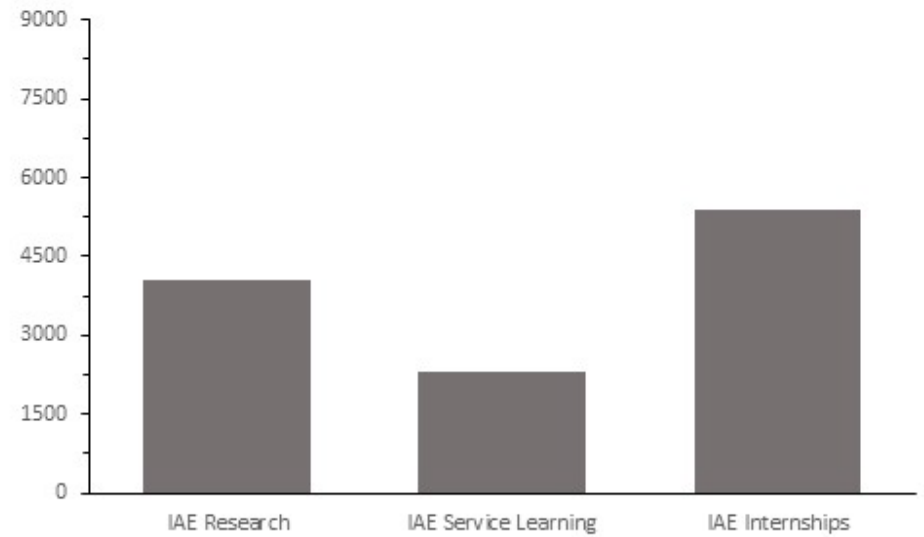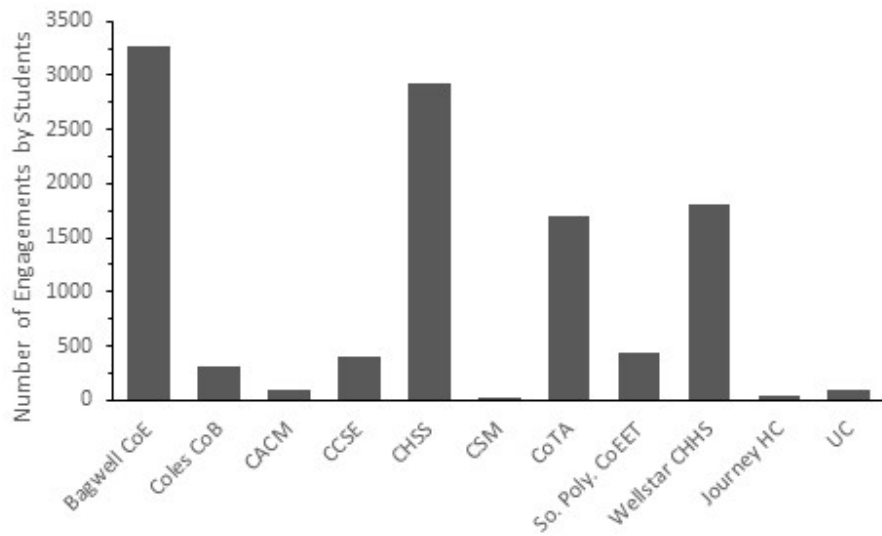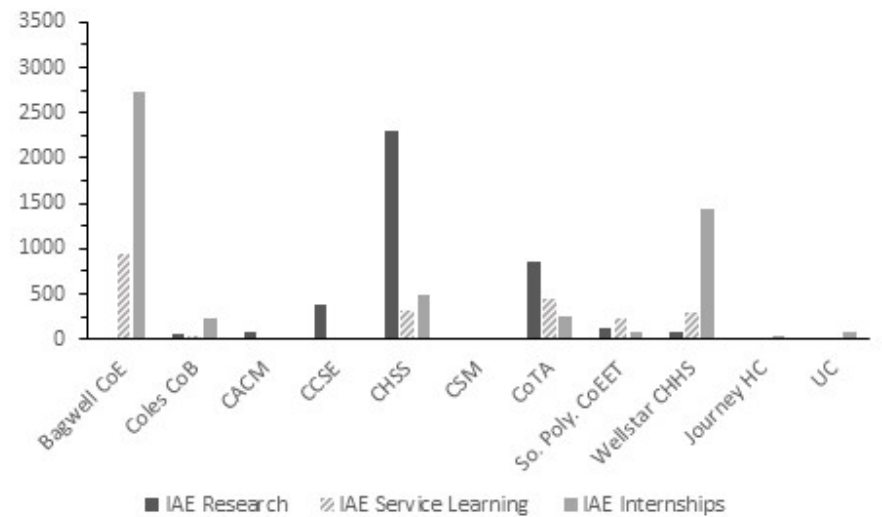Figure 5. Number of IAE student engagements across all colleges in AY 20.

Figure 6. Number of IAE student engagements across all colleges within each engagement type in AY 20.

Figure 7. Number of IAE student engagements within each college in AY 20.

Figure 8. Number of IAE student engagements within each college and engagement type in AY 20.
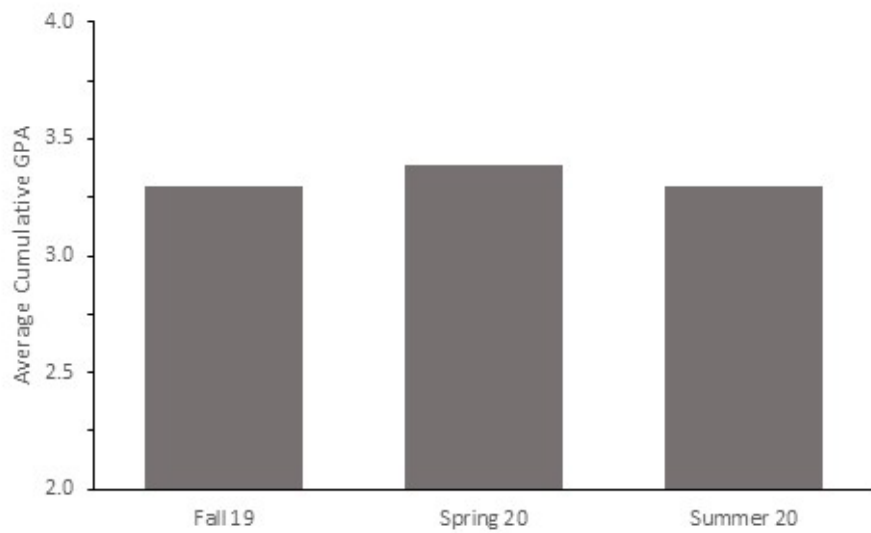
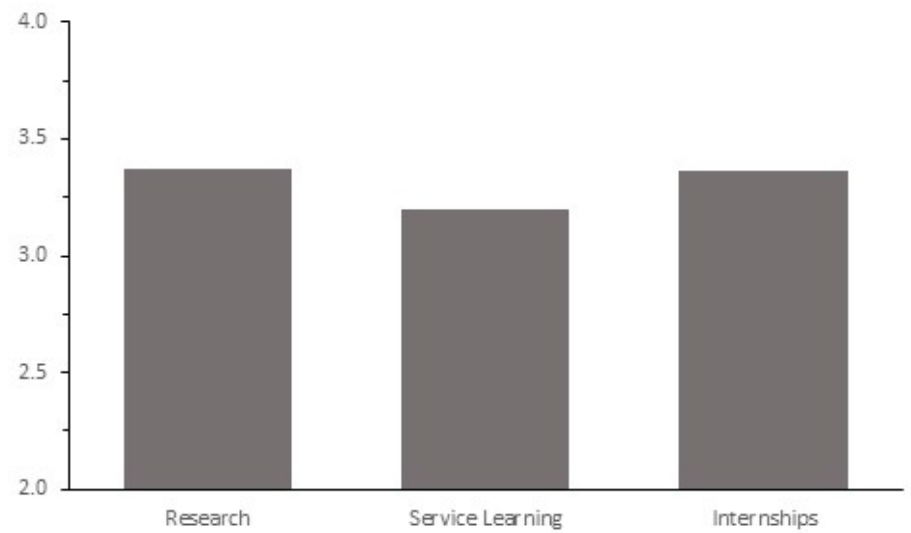Figure 9. Average cumulative GPA for students in IAE activities across all colleges in AY 20.

Figure 10. Average cumulative GPA for students in IAE activities across all colleges within each engagement type in AY 20.

■ Engagements by Women ■ Engagements by URM
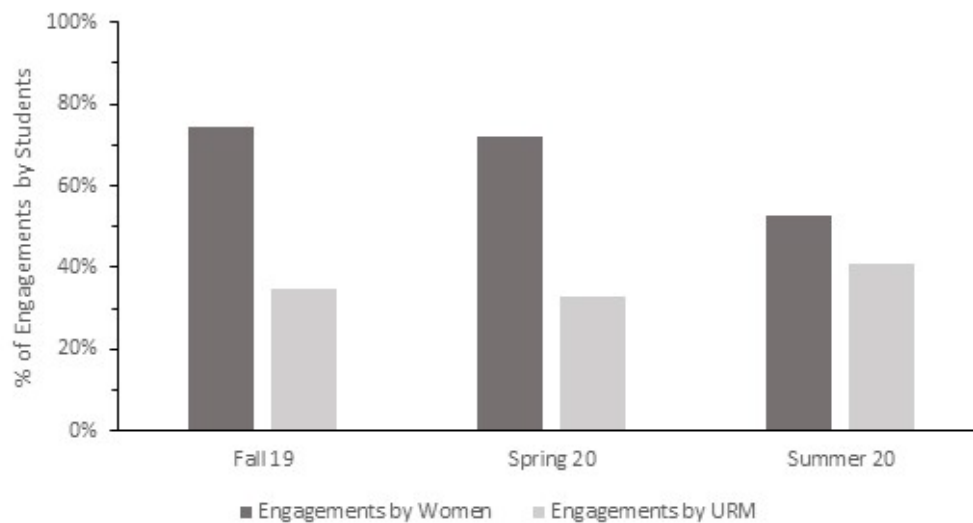
Figure 11. Percentage of student engagements that are by women or by students from traditionally underserved backgrounds (URM) across all colleges in AY 20.
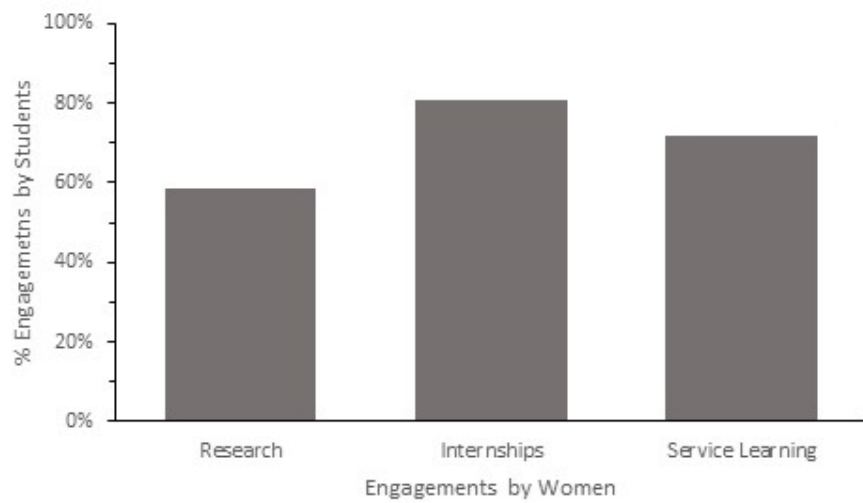
Figure 12. Percentage of student engagements by women across all colleges within each engagement type in AY 20.
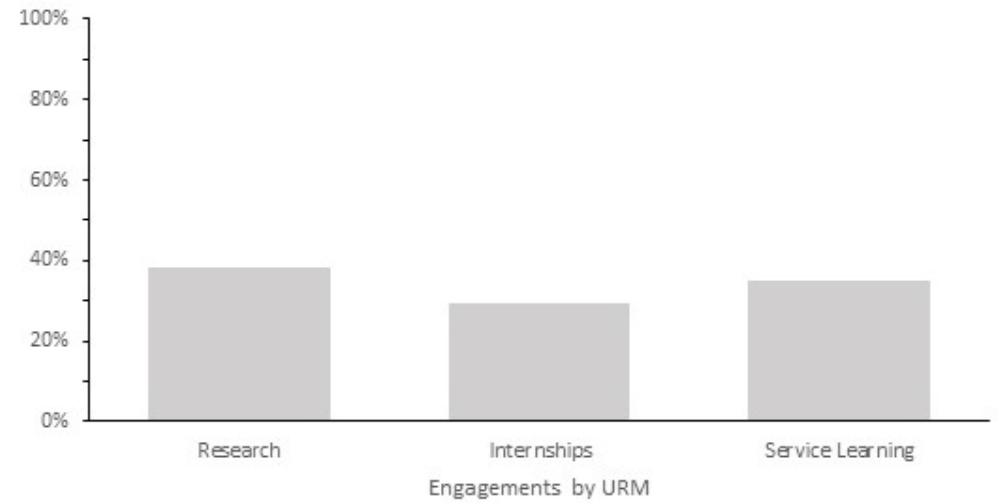

Figure 13. Percentage of student engagements by students from traditionally underserved populations (URM) across all colleges within each engagement type in AY 20.
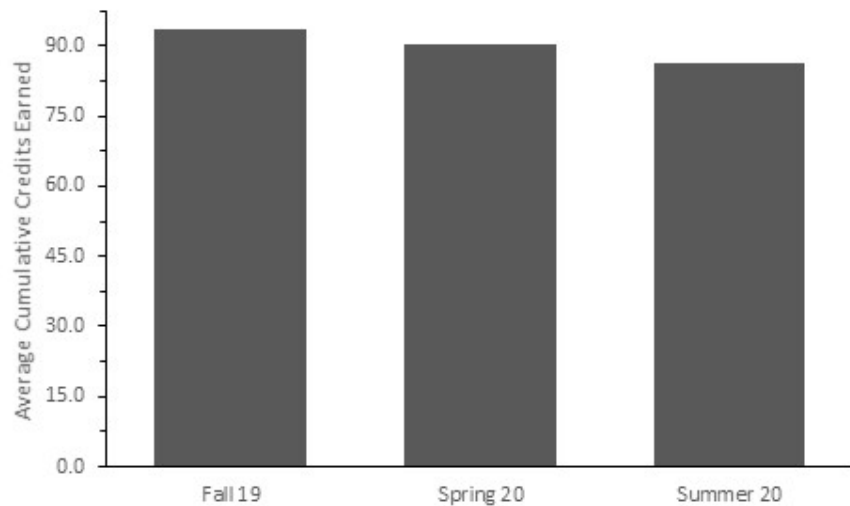

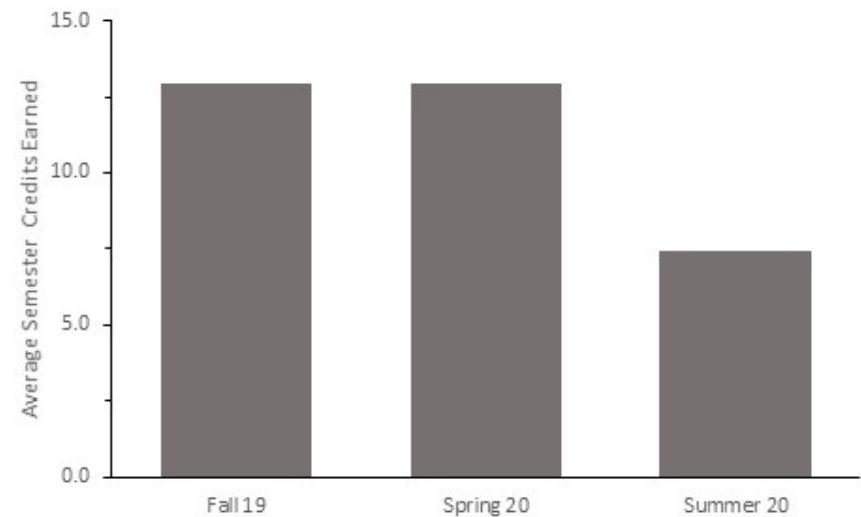Figure 14. Average total credits accumulated by students engaged in IAE activities in AY 20.

Figure 15. Average semester credits accumulated by students engaged in IAE activities in AY 20.