Theoretical Views on Student Engagement
SERU Perspective

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Improving the Student Experience in Research Universities

TEACHING – RESEARCH – PUBLIC SERVICE

Turning to the student side of the Equation

SERU Portrait of Student Engagement – 3 Pillars:

- Teaching and Learning
- Research Engagement
- Public Service and the Whole Student

Improving the Student Experience in Research Universities

Why?

At HSE?

At Hunan?

At Unicamp?

At Berkeley and UMN?

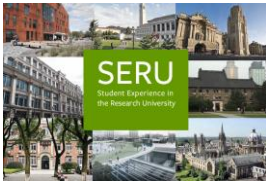# Improving the Student Experience in Research Universities

Why?

At HSE?

At Hunan?

At Unicamp?

At Berkeley and UMN?

SERU Members have similar goals – while at different points of a trajectory

SERU – Theoretical Roots

- **The European University Meets the English College Meets the American University**
  - Humboldt – Community of scholars
  - Cardinal Newman – We learn from each other
  - Land-Grant Ideal – all with talent may enter here; link learning with socioeconomic mobility and economic development – first theories of human capital
  - SERU meets Vogotsky

- **"Student Subcultures" - Burton Clark and Martin Trow (CSHE) – a View from the 60s – First US surveys of students and faculty**
  - Vocational – part-time, getting a job
  - Academic – series, cerebral, life of the mind
  - Collegiate – social scene is the point
  - Non-Conformists – intellectual but alienated

- **"Quality of effort" - C.S. Pace 1980**
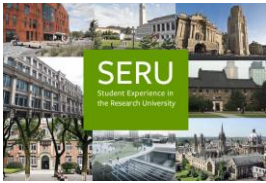
SERU – Theoretical Roots

- **Theory of "Involvement" – Sandy Astin 1984**

- **"Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" - Chickering & Gamson, 1987**
  - student–faculty contact
  - active learning
  - prompt feedback
  - time on task
  - high expectations
  - respect for diverse learning styles
  - cooperation among students.

- **Boyer Report (1998) – Summary "Making Research-Based Learning the Standard"**
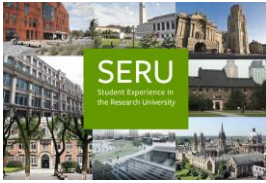
Engagement– Student Scholarship

- Collaborative and participatory.

- Draws on many sources of distributed knowledge.

- Based on partnerships – among students/among students and faculty.

- Is shaped by multiple perspectives and expectations.

- Deals with difficult, intractable and evolving questions; these complex issues may constantly shift.

- Long term, in both effort and impact, often with episodic bursts of progress.

- Requires diverse strategies and approaches.

- Crosses disciplinary lines – a challenge for institutions organized around disciplines.
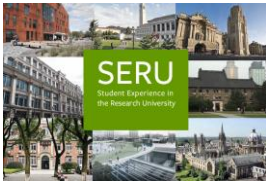
Engagement – Civic Learning

- Increases retention, particularly among first-generation college students.

- Increases diversity of local enrollment as a form of outreach.

- Enhances achievement of core learning goals and has an effect on progress to degree.

- Makes learning more relevant to students, helping them clarify their talents and interests at an early stage of their academic career; it often impacts choice of major selection and eventual career.

- Develops students' social, civic, and leadership skills.

- Strengthens undergraduate research skills and capabilities.

- Encourages students to be productive participants in the community by connecting them to their surroundings.

The SERU Content

Core Module • Theme Modules • National/Regional Module • Institution Module
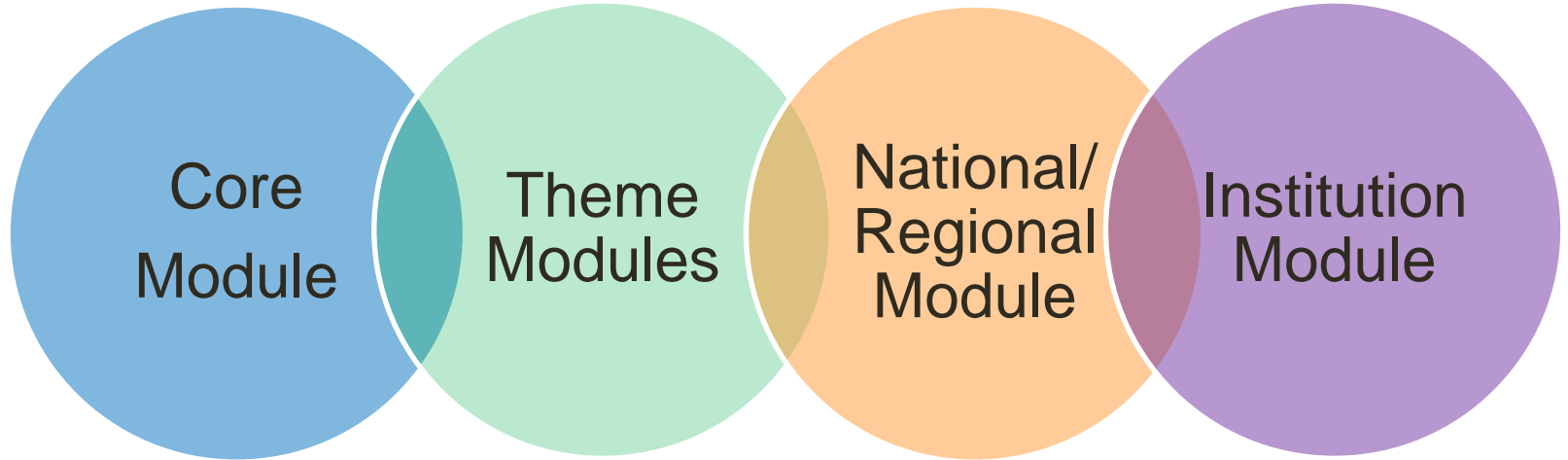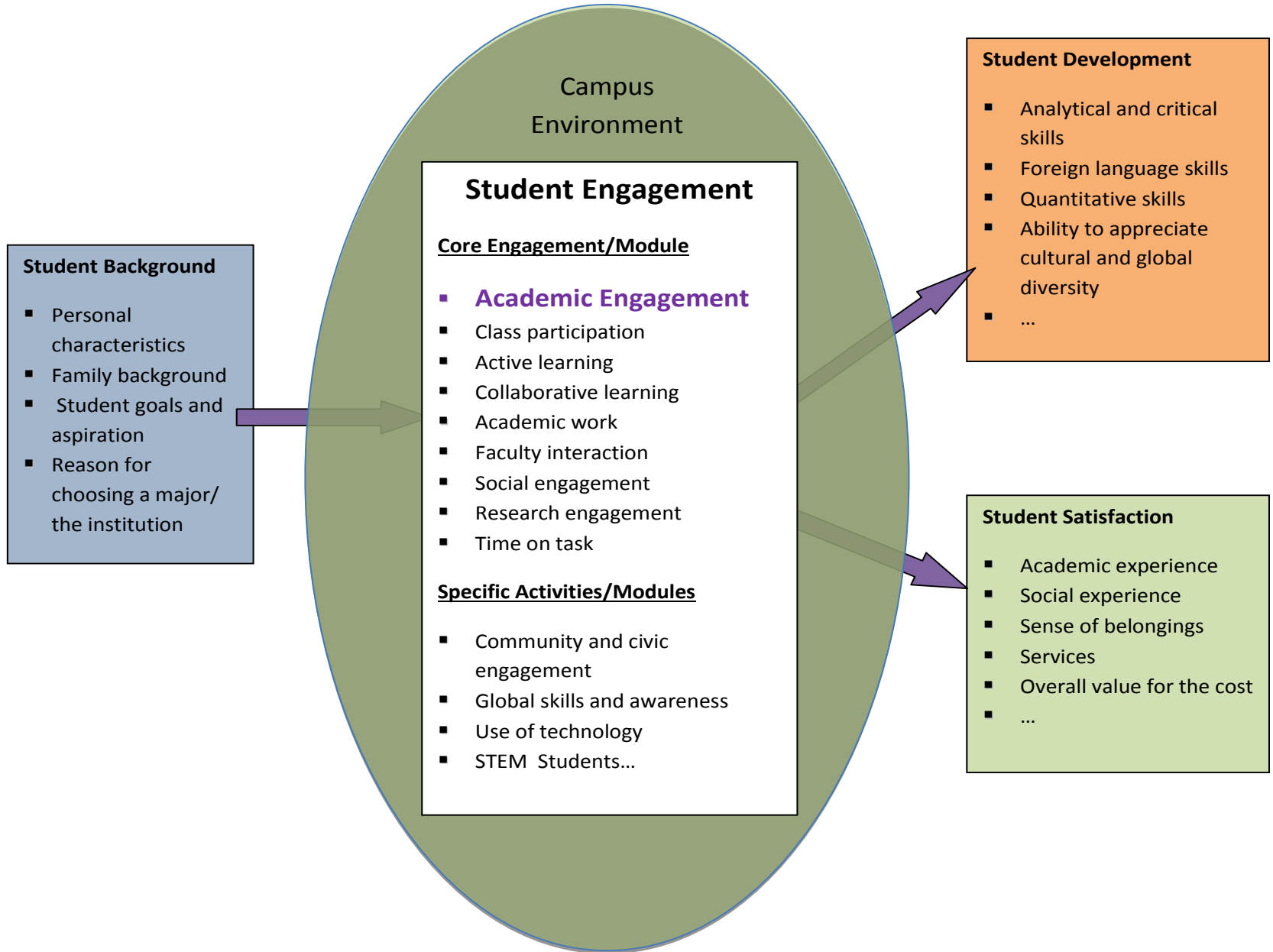
Conceptual Framework

- **Based on**

  Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

- **Focus on**
  - **Inputs**,
  - **Environment**, and
  - **Outcomes**

SERU Survey Concept Map

Campus Environment

Student Background

- Personal characteristics
- Family background
- Student goals and aspiration
- Reason for choosing a major/ the institution

Student Engagement

Core Engagement/Module

- **Academic Engagement**
- Class participation
- Active learning
- Collaborative learning
- Academic work
- Faculty interaction
- Social engagement
- Research engagement
- Time on task

Specific Activities/Modules

- Community and civic engagement
- Global skills and awareness
- Use of technology
- STEM Students…

Student Development

- Analytical and critical skills
- Foreign language skills
- Quantitative skills
- Ability to appreciate cultural and global diversity
- …

Student Satisfaction

- Academic experience
- Social experience
- Sense of belongings
- Services
- Overall value for the cost
- …

Core SERU Items: "Academic Engagement"

Item Type	2013 Item Stem
often/frequently	Contributed to a class discussion
often/frequently	Brought up ideas or concepts from different courses during class discussions
often/frequently	Asked an insightful question in class
often/frequently	Found a course so interesting that you did more work than was required
often/frequently	Chosen challenging courses, when possible, even though you might lower your GPA
often/frequently	Made a class presentation
often/frequently	Turned in a course assignment late
often/frequently	Gone to class without completing assigned reading
often/frequently	Gone to class unprepared
often/frequently	Skipped class
often/frequently	Raised your standard for acceptable effort due to the high standards of a faculty member
often/frequently	Extensively revised a paper before submitting it to be graded
often/frequently	Sought academic help from instructor or tutor when needed
often/frequently	Worked on class projects or studied as a group with classmates outside of class
often/frequently	Helped a classmate better understand the course material when studying together
time spent	How much of your assigned course reading have you completed this academic year?
time spent	Attending classes, discussion sections or labs
time spent	Studying and other academic activities outside of class

Mapping SERU Items to Astin's (1993) Conceptual Model

- We mapped each SERU item as an INPUT, ENVIRONMENT, or OUTCOME variable based on
  - Astin's definitions of the categories
  - Similarities between Astin's measures and our measures

- Why Astin (1993)?
  - Provides guidance as to how to comb out college impact, after controlling for other influences.
  - Emphasis on environmental measures that can indicate high impact educational experiences and institutional outcomes and
  - Captures the complexities involved with understanding the student experience
  - Focuses on environmental experiences that can be changed by university constituents.
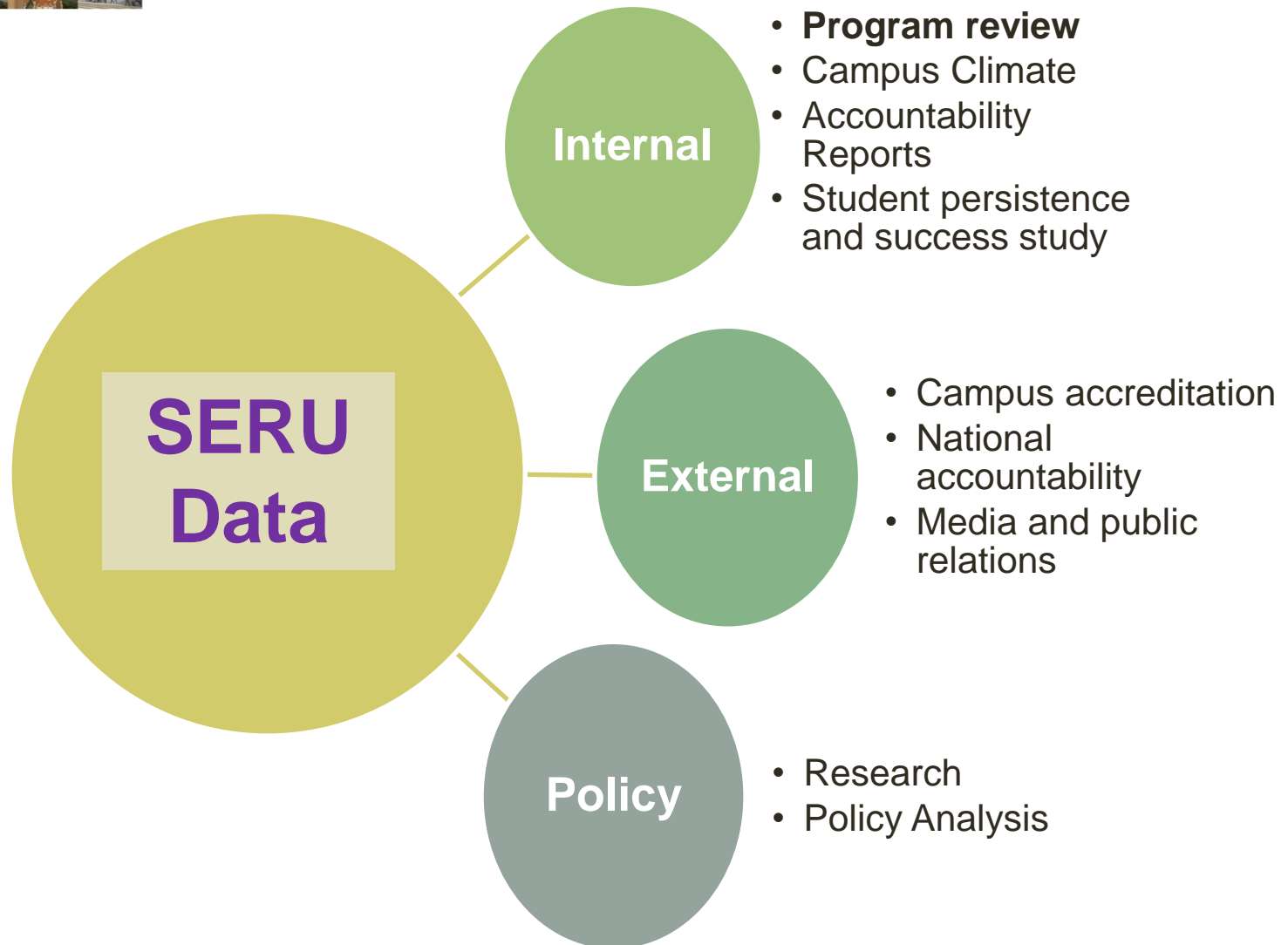
Benefits of Using a Conceptual Model

- **Break down large survey into component parts**

  - **Easy to identify research questions and appropriate controls given the multitude of items**
  - **Evaluate the adequacy of survey coverage (proportion of items that measure inputs, environment, and outcomes)**
  - **Identify survey emphasis on behavior, attitudes, etc.**

- **Can prompt the exploration of other sources of information that can illuminate survey findings**

  - **Examine multiple sources of evidence to fully understand the student experience (triangulation)**

Uses of SERU Data

SERU Data

Internal
- **Program review**
- Campus Climate
- Accountability Reports
- Student persistence and success study

External
- Campus accreditation
- National accountability
- Media and public relations

Policy
- Research
- Policy Analysis

Position Globally, Act Locally