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# Changing the World from Classrooms to Communities: Designing and Disseminating a Service-Learning Curriculum for Teaching in a Formal Education Setting

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CHANGING THE WORLD FROM CLASSROOMS TO COMMUNITIES:  
DESIGNING AND DISSEMINATING A SERVICE-LEARNING CURRICULUM FOR  
TEACHING IN A FORMAL EDUCATION SETTING

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree Bachelor of Arts with  
Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By  
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\* \* \* \* \*

Western Kentucky University  
2012

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## ABSTRACT

To change the world is a growing desire among many of today's student populations, portrayed increasingly across the spectrum of media, social trends and career pursuits. While the demand grows among students for community-oriented and socially-responsible opportunities, the offerings in educational institutions must respond to these emerging requests with new and innovative academic programs. This text emphasizes the role of the developing discipline of service-learning in channeling these energies and providing students with deep and meaningful academic experiences. Its content seeks to combat misconceptions of service-learning as simply an extra-curricular activity and provide tangible methods for incorporating its concepts into various levels of formal education. The teaching methodology of The \$100 Solution™ is utilized as a prime model for disseminating service-learning curricula to students of various disciplines, in domestic and study abroad courses, and at both the university and high school levels.

Keywords: Service-Learning, Education, Interdisciplinary, International, Community Development

Dedicated to Dr. S, who brings learning to life

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## PUBLICATIONS

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*The Courier-Journal*. 25 Dec. 2011. Web. <<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/201112260300/OPINION02/312260016>>.

## FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Political Science

Minor Field: American Humanics (Non-Profit Administration)

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Many students want to change the world; large or small, they seek to make a difference. Several enroll in universities in pursuit of finding answers to global problems, some enhancing these college experiences through internships and study abroad opportunities. These students are seeking more elevated experiences that will bear positive impact on others; as these desires exist, the world persists with no shortage of challenges. It follows that the growing academic discipline of service-learning provides the tools and methodologies to bridge the gap between the goodwill desires of students and the needs of communities in the world at large. This thesis details the ability of service-learning as taught by The \$100 Solution™ to facilitate these energies and offers methodologies for teaching and incorporating its content into university and high school programs.

On one end of the spectrum are communities and individuals in need. From developing countries to our own backyards, social problems exist in all corners of the globe. From hunger and homelessness to literacy rates and child mortality, the challenges of the world are worsened by difficult economic times and strained by exponentially-increasing population.

On the opposing end are people who are thinkers and dreamers; they are askers and doers. They have a vision to create social change and they act on it through partnerships and teamwork. They can network, manage, and grow their vision to one larger than they had themselves. Even more, they lead and inspire others to do the same.

This is the very type of person that today's academic institutions should strive to create. Research conducted by Harvard University's Institute of Politics indicated in 2006 that students enrolled in high school, college, and graduate school were more likely to be active volunteers than individuals not enrolled in school (Executive Summary). With these student populations volunteering time as an extra-curricular activity, their efforts still have not been maximized and the institutions that exist struggle to nurture their full potential. By tapping into the field of service-learning and embedding its theories and concepts into a diversity of academic courses, educators can provide students with the practical skills and confidence needed to change the world. Furthermore, by training educators to teach students to change the world through service-learning and principles of The \$100 Solution™, we can not only change our system of education, but we can radiate change throughout the world.

## CHAPTER 2

### SERVICE-LEARNING AND ITS TEACHING PARADIGM

In its simplest form, service-learning is a method of teaching, learning and reflecting. From this base it expands and transforms to become a comprehensive tool for community development and educational enrichment. It involves structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development, enhance critical thinking skills, and address the root causes of social problems (Jacoby). In most cases, service-learning is a course in which students conduct service alongside members of the community and reflect on their experiences in a facilitated team environment. Few universities currently offer major fields of study in service-learning, while some are beginning to recognize the demand for this emerging discipline.

Service-learning is often closely compared to volunteerism, although service-learning occurs predominately in an academic setting while volunteerism exists as an extra-curricular activity. This integration into academics requires a formal commitment from students and faculty, enhancing the sustainability of the community projects established and accountability to produce results. The major distinction cited between volunteering and service-learning is the incorporation of the reflective process. In service-learning courses, all class interactions and field work are reflected upon, answering the underlying questions of what was learned, what feelings emerged, and how the insight gained can be applied to future endeavors.

## **History of the Service-Learning Movement**

Service-learning first grew out of the goal to integrate volunteerism into an organized academic setting. Around 1905, John Dewey and William James developed, studied and understood the importance of reflection and the intellectual foundations to service-based learning (Historical Timeline). This was a concept that, when employed along with traditional volunteer work, founded the basis of what is now the discipline of service-learning. As the concept began to gain recognition in the realm of academia, the development of large-scale service programs grew into prominence. Although world crises occasionally stymied the development of such programs, other developments such as the civil rights movement, creation of the Peace Corps, and national programs aimed at increasing educational opportunities while improving the nation further developed the discipline of service-learning (Historical Timeline). By the late 1960s, the effort had become defined by scholars and acknowledged by some educational institutions, leading to some of the first documented projects in Tennessee involving a partnership between university students and faculty and local development organizations (Historical Timeline). Although still faced with challenges of acceptance and recognition within education, service-learning has continued to grow as a discipline, acquire noteworthy research in the field, and gain support of government in expanding its efforts.

## **Benefits to Students**

Service-learning offers significantly more experiential learning than the typical university course, taking students from theoretical concepts of the classroom to practical applications in the community. It is an enhanced form of learning, relying on greater faculty and student engagement for success. Many past students of service-learning cite it

as one of their greatest educational experiences, learning about the discipline, the community, and themselves in one cohesive academic environment.

One of the most observable benefits for students is the greater interaction with faculty that the discipline promotes. As students become active in the community and begin forming development projects with community partners, instructors facilitate the learning process and guide students through the steps of project implementation. Since these tasks require students and faculty alike to open their minds to discussion and learning, greater relationships are established between the two. This is especially beneficial in a university setting when students may begin to envision themselves working alongside faculty members as opposed to under them. Universities may use this mutually-beneficial dynamic to promote faculty and student teams, research, conference presentations, and other collaborative professional endeavors.

For many students, service-learning offers the first feelings of empowerment in their academic careers. Since the discipline is engaging and rewarding as students witness their community projects come to fruition, there is a greater likelihood that students feel in charge of their own learning. Personal feelings of empowerment often result as students feel responsibility over their personal and educational development. Leading to this sense of empowerment is the characteristic of the discipline to allow for mistakes, successes, and various levels of participation. Students begin to recognize that their effort and performance directly impact the success of their community projects, encouraging them to hold themselves accountable to higher standards of academic work.

One of the most notable benefits to students is the development of skills that can be applicable to outside areas of work and study. The suggested form of service-learning

involves a core curriculum and a supplemental curriculum, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, both enhancing student learning by teaching skills applicable to various aspects of work and study. Through these curricula, students are integrated from multiple disciplines and skill-sets to create interdisciplinary teams in which they learn and work together. By teaching knowledge of service-learning's core concepts, coupled with the soft skills related to teambuilding, leadership, communication, and more, the discipline works to develop stronger students both inside and outside of the classroom.

This enhanced form of teaching can also benefit students in the long-run as they face a crucial time of career pursuits. With an increasingly-competitive job market awaiting students upon graduation, it should be the responsibility of educational institutions to provide career development and prepare students to be successful in the work environment. Service-learning directly fulfills this goal by teaching skills that create innovative thinkers and active team leaders ready to serve in any chosen field of study.

### **International Service-Learning**

Service-learning is relevant to both domestic and study-abroad courses, with International Service-Learning emphasizing the approach of community development from a global perspective. In this approach, students and faculty work with community members abroad to identify critical problems, then work together to solve them through inventive and sustainable solutions. These solutions occur through the teaching and implementation of the series of academic concepts discussed in the following chapters.

The internationality of service-learning allows the discipline to enhance community projects both at home and abroad. By bringing an international perspective to

local projects, students are able to witness service-learning amongst diverse populations and cultures, addressing challenges with a rounded and comprehensive approach. As one example, students may witness how the issues of poverty or literacy rates are present in their own community and in the world at large. Addressing these universal problems by learning the root causes of their presence in communities near and far allow for more complete solutions and more optimal learning.

Another challenge universities face that may be mitigated by implementing service-learning is the integration of students returning to campus from a semester or year abroad. These students now seek deeper and more meaningful experiences, often becoming apathetic about learning when their experiences in a campus classroom do not parallel their experiences abroad. The energy brought to education by these students must be channeled and harbored, creating a bridge between the study abroad experience and their return to the home university. Service-learning allows these students to recognize how their knowledge gained while studying abroad can be utilized to improve their own communities, applying international experience in the domestic arena.

### **Misconceptions Surrounding Service-Learning**

While service-learning is gaining a stronger presence in educational settings, it is also one of the most highly-criticized disciplines and struggles to make its way into core curricula. At the forefront of its critiques are misconceptions regarding its role and importance. Many critics believe that service-learning allows students to earn academic credit for volunteering in the community; a task which should be done on individual time

and for personal satisfaction. These critics cite that service-learning does not meet academic standards as a discipline as it easily grants college credit.

In response to these critics, service-learning has risen to become a highly researched and theory-based discipline that utilizes classroom learning to enhance field experiences. It is more than simply volunteering in the community, but recognizes the importance of volunteerism and supplements it with more educationally-impactful opportunities. Further research within the discipline continues to propel its legitimacy, while supporters of service-learning recognize and address its common misconceptions in an effort to change the terms of acceptance in academia.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE \$100 SOLUTION AS A TEACHING METHODOLOGY

At the forefront of the service-learning discipline is The \$100 Solution™, an international non-profit organization that utilizes the preceding teaching methodology to transform student learning. By partnering with educational institutions domestically and abroad, The \$100 Solution™ teaches students how to turn \$100 into a world of change by meeting community-determined needs. Its model relies on the core values of partnership, reciprocity, capacity building, sustainability, and reflection to encourage global citizenship through civic and community engagement ([the100dollarsolution.org](http://the100dollarsolution.org)). By blending theoretical knowledge in the classroom with practical application in the community, solidified by a set of core teaching principles, its approach challenges traditional volunteerism and encourages participants to address local and global problems with innovation. Students at the university, high school, and recently elementary school levels engage with partners across the globe to create meaningful and sustainable projects that enhance the quality of life in the respective communities.

Designed and developed by Dr. Bernie Strenecky, The \$100 Solution™ evolved as its creator witnessed the distinct potentials of students to implement positive impacts in their communities at home and abroad. A scholar in the field of education himself, Dr. Strenecky outlined the core components necessary in a service-learning program and

began to study their impacts on students in practice. The methodologies of Dr. Strenecky's teaching as developed through his university classes and global community development initiatives transformed to create the organization known today as The \$100 Solution™.

Different from other organizations of its kind, The \$100 Solution™ takes community service to new heights and promotes service-learning in formal academic curricula. Its methodical approach to service allows for student and faculty learning that is able to be implemented with measurable outcomes. In courses and projects associated with The \$100 Solution™, the reflective process is not an option but a required practice to be implemented by all individuals and groups involved. The importance of interdisciplinary problem solving is also acknowledged and promoted in all service-learning settings. Additionally, the presence of the Board of Directors governing body that is associated with yet outside of academic institutions allows for the development and monitoring of standard practices. The organization, by partnering with academic institutions, has the ability to create linkages between service-learning applications globally and serves as a link between service-learning and its presence in various academic and community settings.

Since its founding in 2005, The \$100 Solution™ has been a catalyst for change in 13 countries with over 100 projects conducted worldwide. It was first pioneered by Dr. Strenecky as a project of the Prospect-Goshen Rotary Club of Louisville, Kentucky, and more recently established its headquarters at Western Kentucky University. With an Advisory Board and Associate Board as strong pillars of support, the organization prides itself in being run by a Board of Directors all under the age of 25. It expands its reach by

partnering with universities and study abroad programs around the world to create sustainable community and educational projects. With current partnerships in over six universities and study-abroad programs such as Semester at Sea, as well as two high schools, The \$100 Solution™ continues to lead the way in service-learning opportunities and teach students and educators how to exude positive development throughout the world.

## CHAPTER 4

### COMPONENTS OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

The five principles by which projects of The \$100 Solution™ abide, formed by Founder Dr. Strenecky, are critical to optimal teaching of service-learning. The following chapter details the suggested core curriculum for service-learning programs, including the concepts of partnership, sustainability, capacity building, reciprocity, and reflection. These concepts, when taught in unison, contribute to greater student understanding of service-learning and enhanced community development projects. It is important that all concepts be discussed in the classroom setting and implemented in the corresponding community projects. Conducting service-learning based upon these five principles creates a sound, theoretical practice that leads to better student, faculty, and community development that is both intentional and measurable.

#### **Partnership**

The skill of creating and maintaining partnerships is one that can be learned through service-learning yet applied to additional areas of study. Closely associated with collaborations, partnerships are defined as “mutually-beneficial and well-defined relationships that include a commitment to: a definition of mutual goals, a jointly-developed structure and shared responsibility, mutual authority and accountability for

success, and sharing not only of responsibility but also of the rewards” (Jacoby).

Partnerships stand at the core of service-learning projects and sustain these projects beyond the semester in which they are conducted. It is important that students develop the ability to initiate and sustain partnerships through both classroom discussions and community implementation. These partnerships link students directly to the community and add a personal degree that enhances service-learning experiences.

There are defined steps to building a partnership that must be taught and practiced for strong and efficient interactions. Firstly, *initiation* establishes relationships and involves students and community members agreeing to work as partners. This begins collaboration between the two parties, allowing them to know who they are apart from each other and what they individually bring to the partnership. The initiation process involves knowing each partner’s rules, goals, and motives.

Secondly, partners must *work towards mutuality* to ensure that every person and entity has ownership of the project. In this stage, partners lay the foundation for feedback processes, deciding how they will communicate and work together to produce a shared result. Clear expectations must be established between both sides of the partnership, keeping in mind the common goal towards which the partners are working.

In one example, the concept of partnership was experienced when a group of study-abroad students arrived in the port city of Accra, Ghana (Global Nomads Group). This group initiated a partnership with members of Rotary International, including student Rotaractors, in the hopes of developing a relationship focused on enhancing the quality of life in Accra. The established goal involved the partners beginning a project through The \$100 Solution™ that could be continued each time the study-abroad

program returned to Ghana with new students. After presentations on current projects being conducted, lunch table discussions, gift giving, and the development of a plan of action for how the project would be implemented, a prospering partnership was established between the two parties. They not only set the groundwork for a community project, but made lasting relationships as they became partners in service.

### **Sustainability**

Meaning “the capacity to endure”, sustainability is an essential element of each orchestration of service-learning. When applied to The \$100 Solution™ and its teaching methodology, this core value seeks long-term solutions for global problems. It encourages students to think past their physical time at a project site and envision the community in both the short and long term, developing solutions that will carry lasting impacts.

The development of sustainability is especially challenging when applied to international service-learning. Many times, students are only at a project site for a short amount of time and there may not always be plans to return. With this reality in mind, students must work with communities to develop the infrastructure of a project that will be sustainable by design. The most important facet of sustainable projects in regards to service-learning is the teaching element that encourages students to think critically about sustainability and brainstorm permanent solutions.

In discussions of sustainability, students must consider the future needs and resources of the community. Is the determined community need one that is ongoing, or will other foreseeable problems take priority in the future? Are the resources used in the

solution ones that are plentiful and able to contribute to the future of the project? Will dedicated community partners and local leaders succeed in carrying on the project?

To combat the lack of sustainability that is sometimes resulting from projects of traditional volunteerism, service-learning builds the teaching of sustainability into the core curriculum before it is implemented in the field. Students learn the importance of sustainability and methods for achieving a lasting impact by evaluating project examples in the classroom. This learning may exist in the form of case studies provided by instructors; many such examples are realistic situations that formed the basis of previous projects through The \$100 Solution™.

With knowledge of sustainability and its theoretical components learned in the classroom, students are next required to address sustainability in the group-oriented community project. These projects must address all components of the core curriculum, keeping sustainability at the forefront. The student groups, once partnered with community organizations or individuals, work with the community at hand to determine methods for implementing sustainability. A detailed plan of action should result that outlines future needs and resources to sustain the project, minimizing potential feelings of abandonment in the community and addressing possible financial constraints.

### **Capacity Building**

The discipline of service-learning emphasizes that it is not enough to simply improve a school, a village, or a society. One of the five guiding principles of The \$100 Solution™ is capacity building, which ensures that a project extends beyond the time in which the conductors of service are present. Capacity building helps members of the

community develop their own abilities until they eventually no longer need outside assistance for the specific problem being addressed.

Capacity building is often simply described as “helping others to help themselves”. Just as it is important for service-learning participants to develop projects, it is important to create a situation in which the student group is no longer needed. In order to do so, capacity must be built within the community that is being served. By helping the community to help themselves, participants are ensuring that the community has the means of improving on their own after the project is completed.

There are many ways in which capacity can be built; generally, students are taught to assist a community in taking advantage of the resources available to them. They can find these resources and play on them for the overall prosperity of the community’s future, acting as consultants to the community partners by presenting potential solutions to the community-determined needs. Participants can teach the community how to utilize the resources that they already have to improve the problems that have been identified.

A common story can be told about a village and the peoples’ need for food. One way to help that village would be to provide the people with fish which they may consume. As a familiar saying goes, “Give a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime”. When service-learning principles are employed, this saying can be taken even a step further. If a student team is able to work with the community and utilize the resources present, such as close proximity to fish populations and availability of materials to make fishing supplies, that same man can learn how to grow a fishing business that will feed the people and bring revenue to the community.



## **Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit (Jacoby). This plays a large role in service-learning, as it is necessary to ensure that all parties are benefiting from the service project.

Reciprocity underlines the notion that it is human nature that people want to give back. Just as students participating in The \$100 Solution™ may be giving to an individual or a community, there must be a reciprocal process of this deed. This can be a material good in exchange for a service, an experience that the student group is given as a result of the service, or something as simple as a knowledge and educational growth. The result of reciprocity varies in different service-learning situations and is to be determined by the parties involved in the service. The essential goal of any project related to service-learning is personal and educational development. All parties in service-learning are learners and help determine what is to be learned; both the servers and those served teach, and both learn (Jacoby).

It is important to establish from the beginning where reciprocity will play a role in each project. Having this mutual goal by both sides of a partnership will facilitate cooperation and give each group a feeling of ownership over the project. Teaching reciprocity as a classroom concept will help students develop the skill of establishing reciprocity and translate this project requirement to community partners.

## **Reflection**

Reflection differentiates service learning from volunteerism, in that its primary focus is learning. A reflection is the practice of documenting the learning process, articulating and reviewing the progression and the lengths at which one has come in his

or her learning. It is concentrated thought in written or oral form; thought triggered by free yet directed writing or speaking. Reflection involves thinking back on an event and considering its meaning to service-learning, often resulting in realization and revelation. The practice of reflection asks students of service-learning to answer the following questions:

*“What did I learn? How do I feel about this? How can I use this in my future?”*

### **Methods of Reflection**

Reflection can happen in both written and oral forms, individually or in a group. Its product is not a summary or a report, but a documented connection between events and learning. After a community project, it is common for participants to gather in a circle and discuss what was learned. This open environment encourages students, community partners, and instructors to express their personal growth and learn from each other in an ongoing discussion. Utilizing all forms of reflection, including written, oral, individual, and group reflections, helps students of service-learning become well-rounded and gain the most optimal outcomes from their experiences.

Written reflections are generally turned into a professor after every class meeting when service-learning is used in a university setting. The sole guidelines are that they must be at least one full page and address the above questions of what was learned, what feelings surfaced, and how this learning will be utilized in future endeavors. Often, written reflections turn into multiple pages as students re-immense themselves in the experience and ask themselves more questions than the ones originally addressed. After submitting the reflections, they are returned with insightful feedback from the instructor.

In service-learning settings where students reflect frequently in both oral and written forms, it is also encouraged that instructors occasionally assign guided reflections that will address the general questions with an added degree of consideration. An additional question given by the instructor can ask students to reflect on the progress of their coursework, the effectiveness of their team, or their interactions with a community partner. These strategic prompts bring greater diversity to the reflective pieces and cultivate a comprehensive learning process.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Student Reflections**

By observing examples in which service-learning has not been successful in a university setting, it can be hypothesized that one of the primary reasons for the lack of success was the deficiency of effective reflective practices. In order for reflections to be successful in an academic setting, instructors must first create a learning environment in which students feel safe and supported. Students recognize that the instructors will be reading the personal thoughts of their reflections and must feel comfortable with this dynamic before opening their minds to insightful reflective pieces. It is also important for students to understand the expectations of the instructor from the start of each course, making their reflective times more direct and less reliant on worrying if they are doing reflections in the proper manner. This worry can be dismissed by having in-class, oral reflections directed by the instructor who also reflects on the current day's class. Providing this example of how to reflect, facilitated by the instructor who encourages students to look deeper into their service-learning experiences, can help grow more developed written reflections outside of class.

## **Benefits of Implementing Reflective Writing Practices**

More than simply journaling or describing an experience, reflections offer many academically-tangible benefits to its students. With written reflections as an integral part of professional portfolios, a class requirement discussed in Chapter 6, students can determine their growth throughout the course and analyze personal achievements in relation to their class and community projects. This can also enhance growth in general writing and reflecting as students gain practice in this diverse style of writing and receive feedback on their work each week.

In each orchestration of service-learning, reflections offer the opportunity to evaluate what went well and what could have been improved. By developing a clearer understanding of what was accomplished in class or through a community project, students can more visibly see how their goals were reached. Students are then encouraged to contemplate strategies that can be applied to future projects and outside learning endeavors. Ultimately, reflections aid in creating more active and engaged students that are able to witness their academic progress and take responsibility for their own learning.

## **Instructors' Role in the Reflective Process**

Beneficial to both students and educators, reflections provide needed feedback to instructors detailing the status of learning in his or her class. Instructors can witness concepts that may need more classroom attention, and others that students have latched onto as integral elements of their learning. Reflections often become personal as students relate past experiences to those currently occurring in the course, giving instructors greater insight into students' backgrounds and learning styles. The benefits that

reflections offer to instructors ultimately allow the instructors to better develop their courses and be more optimal teachers of service-learning.

With this enhanced form of learning also comes greater responsibility from instructors to nurture the reflections and forthcoming ideas of students. Once engaged in the reflective process, students become more willing to share thoughts and past experiences in their writing. Many times, students even relate the learning that is occurring through the course to their professional and academic pursuits, sharing optimism and worries regarding future careers. Instructors must encourage this process of self-actualization and personal growth by responding to each reflective piece with positive editing and encouraging critique.

## CHAPTER 5

### COMPONENTS OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL CURRICULUM

The proposed supplemental curriculum of service-learning augments the learning process and teaches the soft skills necessary for personal and educational enrichment.

The supplemental curriculum is designed to be used in addition to the core curriculum as a method for enhancing student learning and academic development. The importance of the supplemental curriculum lies in the need to teach the skills associated with fulfilling the previously mentioned five core curriculum components. Moving through topics including interdisciplinary problem solving, teamwork, ethics, and more, the following text recommends components of the supplemental curriculum that can be adapted by service-learning professors to best fit the core learning model.

#### **Global Citizenship**

The need for international education is essential in our increasingly-globalized world, making global citizenship an imperative factor of the supplemental curriculum. More than ever, students pursuing higher education are demanding international experiences and opportunities to engage in global learning environments. With the world's economies developing exponential connections and globalization transpiring to enable the transfer of trade, cultures, and ideas, students today have greater responsibility to learn about the world that surrounds them. Global citizenship requires that students

become knowledgeable about world affairs and engaged in causes of global concern. Whether human rights, climate change, or foreign policy, students of service-learning are encouraged to become educated on global matters and promote practices of citizenship both domestically and abroad. By nurturing these demands from students and society for global programs and initiatives, educational institutions can become a hub for international studies and prepare students for the competitive interconnectedness that permeates global society.

### **Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement is defined as working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference (Putnam). It involves promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. Robert Putnam, through his popular works *Bowling Alone* and *Making Democracy Work*, has been instrumental in bringing awareness to the decline in civic engagement across the United States and the corresponding need to increase awareness of civic engagement for the health of our democracy and society. Putnam uses the decline in league bowling participation to indicate the overarching decline in civic participation. He raises concern for the lack of community interaction, which previously existed in the form of animal clubs such as the Lions and the Elks, and sporting events such as bowling and community softball. This deficiency of community interaction as observed in Putnam's research correlates to an overall decline in civic engagement. With fewer community-organized activities gaining participation from citizens being one of the leading factors in declined civic engagement,

it can be hypothesized that the health of our civic society is at risk.

The importance of this recognized decline in civic engagement is the implications that it has on our political institutions. A lack of civic engagement strongly correlates with a lack of participation, leading to lower voter turnout during elections, fewer activists and lobbyists rallying Congress, and decreases in other activities linked to a strong democracy representative of the public. The detriment noted is in regards to the performance of political institutions which cannot function at capacity with a lack of constituent participation. The topic of civic engagement directly links the performance of political institutions with the character of civic life and seeks to educate the public on the need for civic participation by embedding its awareness into formal education.

### **Cross-Cultural Understanding and Communication**

In both domestic service-learning and service-learning abroad, students may be required to communicate across cultures which demands understanding of the cultures at hand. It is important for instructors to address the cross-cultural context of service-learning before students are put into a community and required to implement projects that meet the expectations of the core curriculum while maintaining respect and ethical standards for the community.

Cultural diversity exists in every community in which students are asked to work, making its understanding and recognition imperative when attempting to create interactions within a community. With the primary goal of cross-cultural understanding being the creation of mutual respect, students are challenged to learn the limitations of this respect while maintaining their own personal values. With the need to create



respectful partnerships between all parties involved, cross-cultural understanding not only involves learning the culture of the community at hand, but being able to articulate one's own culture.

With cultures as an important staple of service-learning, it is recommended that each service-learning course designate class time to discussing the culture of the community in which the student groups will be working. Each student group may be assigned a portion of the cultural components below to research and present to the class at large, or instructors may relay their experience with the culture through the following topics:

- **Language:** In communities where the language spoken is different from the students' native language(s), it may be necessary to discuss common words and phrases. Understanding language also offers insight into the culture's background and history, including how the country or community was formed and the cultural groups that populate its land.
- **Religion:** As some cultures base their society around religion, understanding its importance to the community and the significance of its spiritual practices can enhance interactions between students and the given community.
- **Customs and taboos**
- **Geography**
- **History:** To understand the vast history of a culture, it may be helpful for students to research the top five events that have brought the country or community to its current condition. This will aid in understanding the current dynamic, also providing conversation topics for interactions with local community members.
- **Government**

- Current events
- Attire: With first impressions an important factor of relationships, students should research appropriate attire for the community in which they are entering, remaining respectful of local cultures and beliefs.
- Food and dining: Since many impactful conversations and ideas result from the discussions around a meal, students must research the proper dining etiquette of the culture to prevent embarrassment and disrespect during mealtimes.

While it is important to research these topics before entering the given community, it is also important to observe the practices of the people upon immersion in the culture. Observing is often the best guide to understanding a culture and should be practiced by students of service-learning in an effort to enhance knowledge and ensure respect for the service partners.

### **Community-Determined Needs**

Service-learning as taught by The \$100 Solution™ emphasizes that community problems are best observed when determined by members of the community themselves. The term *community*, when used in service-learning, refers to local neighborhoods, the state, the national, and the global community (Jacoby). The human and community needs that service-learning addresses are those needs defined by the community (Jacoby). Different from volunteerism, which often involves volunteers making charitable contributions of resources or labor of their choosing to those deemed as less fortunate, service-learning involves working *with* the community instead of *for* the community.

Problems seeking solutions are determined by those living in the community and solutions are designed in the partnership of service-learning students and community members. When using The \$100 Solution™ as the core learning methodology, students pose the following question to the community to accomplish this goal:

*“With this \$100 bill, what can we do to enhance the quality of life in your community?”*

While it is common for students to become beset by the myriad of problems that they witness in developing regions or local communities, true learning occurs when these students can surpass their personal motives and recognize problems identified by the community itself. It is then that deeper community understanding develops and truly mutual partnerships emerge.

### **Interdisciplinary Problem Solving**

Many people see the world through the eye of their college major or area of expertise. The disciplines they study combined with their life experiences determine how they solve a problem. This is a beneficial quality when intertwined with a service-learning group. Group members with different educational background and experiences are able to see problems in different ways, leading to the overall effectiveness of the group in addressing a community problem.

In community-based problem solving, one of three approaches may be utilized to reach an end goal. By examining the methods of mono-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and inter-disciplinary problem solving, instructors of service-learning may see the benefits of creating an inter-disciplinary environment while teaching students the methods of all approaches to solving any problem at hand.

As a one-dimensional approach, mono-disciplinary problem solving involves one or more individuals independently addressing an issue. In the example of constructing a house, a mono-disciplinary approach may include only a plumber addressing a problem of plumbing. This person would not consider the construction of the house, availability of water resources, or other external factors that may result in a plumbing problem. One dimension further is multi-disciplinary problem solving which involves a group of people looking at the same problem, but with limited interactions among them. The plumber may address a problem from his or her discipline, while an electrician separately addresses electrical problems, without interaction between the two to address an overall problem of the house. Lastly, inter-disciplinary problem solving involves a group of individuals working together, across disciplines, to solve a problem. This approach may enhance some situations while others may only require a multi-disciplinary approach. Learning all three methods of problem solving will help students determine which will be most effective for the community-identified problem they seek to address.

To determine which model to use, students should examine three aspects of the community need: the problem itself, the individuals working to solve the problem, and the disciplines associated with the individuals and the problem. By looking at the problem itself, students can decide which approach could serve to be most effective, understanding that all problems have specific needs and while an inter-disciplinary approach may enhance most, some can be solved with simply a mono-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary outlook.

Secondly, the method through which a student group solves a problem will depend on the expertise represented within the group. While many service-learning

courses are taught with students of various majors and backgrounds, some may be concentrated in a specific department and include students all studying similar subject matters. This relates to the third aspect which involves an understanding of the disciplines that are represented by the individuals and others needed to solve the problem. Sometimes, outside consultation may be needed if working to solve a problem with which student group members have little experience.

While interdisciplinary problem solving is an asset to many service-learning teams as it provides a webbed approach to addressing a common problem, there are aspects of a team dynamic that must be present for this approach to be successful. One component of this is the communication that occurs within the group. Since each discipline has its own language, or set of vocabulary and knowledge that is understood by all in the discipline, each group member brings a diverse language to the team that may not be understood by those of other disciplines. For success in this setting, these languages must be merged and understood by others in the group. The result of this group process is the subconscious formation of a group language that develops when the group interacts and fuses their individual languages into one used by all.

Another aspect shaping a team dynamic in solving a problem is the experiences, histories, and traditions of each group member. These background traits determine how each member approaches the problem as an individual, and ultimately how they approach the problem as a team. As individuals learn about each other and intermingle their experiences and skills to work together as a cohesive unit, the team moves towards the interdisciplinary approach to solving problems.

As a discipline, service-learning is all-inclusive and should utilize diverse

outlooks from individuals in varying fields. These participants will have different perspectives through which to view the community problem, different ideas for solutions, and different goals for completing the project. By evaluating the linear methods of mono-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary problem solving, students have the opportunity to recognize the benefit of uniting their team by a common goal while approaching their problem from different angles. This dimensional team dynamic ultimately creates a community project that has been examined under various microscopes and employs a more complete solution.

### **Teamwork**

For most students enrolling in service-learning courses, teamwork has been a common theme among other areas of study. Many classes of other disciplines require group projects and team presentations, giving students exposure to working together with others to achieve a goal. Unfortunately, these other classes sometimes omit crucial details of team formation and the process of reflecting upon team endeavors. Service-learning as practiced by The \$100 Solution™ takes a holistic look at teamwork and seeks to address the roots of team dynamics in an effort to create more effective team players and enhanced cooperative learning.

Essentially a group of individuals working together toward a common goal, a team operates synergistically to approach the goal that members, as individuals, would be unable to achieve effectively. These individuals should hope to hold or develop complementary skills and be united by a commitment to a common purpose for which they hold themselves individually and mutually accountable.

With many strategies for building effective teams, service-learning should emphasize six defined steps to maximize team learning for students. These steps will assist instructors in facilitating team development, allowing them to measure the progress of student teams and gauge the need for further teaching in specific areas. The overall goal of these steps is to create student leaders and followers that can carry teamwork skills to their community projects and future endeavors.

The first step of team building highlights the need to establish a mutual goal. Students must express their goals in the group setting and define a goal on which all members agree. This goal should meet the determined problem and maintain feasibility for completion within the length of the course. With the possibility of altering the goal remaining open as the project develops, the team should frequently revisit the established goal in group discussions.

The second step refers to the interdisciplinary nature of service-learning teams, encouraging each student to carve out their piece of the group goal based on their disciplinary skills. Each individual must look at the larger problem at hand and work to solve a portion of that problem. Still, disciplines may work together and learn from each other in approaching the overall goal, sometimes even bringing in outside consultants for additional knowledge. True interdisciplinary teams integrate across disciplines to understand and solve a problem together. This second step reflects the need for each individual to have a task within the overall group goal, allowing ownership to everyone in the team and holding each student accountable to their individual piece of the puzzle.

Thirdly, students must practice holding frequent team meetings and structuring these meetings for efficiency. A length of each meeting should be determined to ensure

that tasks are completed within a timeframe, and teams should learn to plan meeting dates and times to meet every members' schedules. The skill of prioritizing topics and organizing team meetings is one that will aid students in building efficient and effective teams.

Important in all team settings is the concept of trust, the step designated as fourth in building effective service-learning teams. Members must trust each group member to fulfill their individual tasks and meet team standards for the product of each task. They must trust that others will complete what they agree to do to the best of their abilities. Classroom exercises and teambuilding activities can be done to help build trust within the group.

Another stage in this process is designating titles and roles to members of the group. Each team should designate a leader and set rules for appointing or electing leaders within the group. Teams may wish to name positions such as a Secretary, Treasurer, Timekeeper, and Public Relations Coordinator to interface with community partners. Each team should consider their overall goal and the personnel necessary to achieve that goal.

Lastly, it is imperative that teams form a written agreement that outlines their goals and responsibilities. This document, which may be called a Team Constitution, creates an open dialogue at the beginning of team formation that allows for decisions to be made and precedents to be set. Team Constitutions should have components such as a name for the group, purpose or mission statement, titles and responsibilities of all group members, procedure for noncompliance, and other topics deemed important to the group.



## Steps of Group Development

Instructors may include in their teaching of teamwork the four steps of group development as outlined by Bruce Tuckman in his work, *Developmental Sequence in Small Groups*. The model developed by Tuckman proposes that four steps – Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing – are necessary and inevitable in order for a team to grow, face up to challenges, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work, and ultimately deliver results (Tuckman). Understanding these steps will help teams recognize their stage of the teambuilding process and better build effectiveness within their group as they move through the model.

1. **Forming:** This step involves first impressions and beginning to learn each team member's goals and motives. A group dynamic is formed and there are generally positive feelings in the team. This is also the stage in which mutual respect should develop, laying the framework for open team discussions.
2. **Storming:** The storming stage may result in a heated debate or simple feelings of frustration, but its occurrence is important in moving the team towards the following phases. In this stage, the team develops communication skills as they work through their disturbances.
3. **Norming:** In this stage, norms of the group are established as they have worked past their initial storming and began setting rules and expectations. Standard operating procedures and ongoing team dynamics become regular.
4. **Performing:** The team begins to produce a product that meets their previously established goal. This step should also include a method for evaluating the success of the product.

5. **Adjourning:** To adjourn, the team concludes their tasks and evaluates their efforts. They may celebrate their accomplishments and discuss steps for the future of their completed project.

### **Elevator Speech**

An elevator speech is intended to be developed by a group and used by members of that group when discussing the group's goals and missions. In service-learning, student groups are often asked to articulate their community projects and motivations for their selected project. The practice of developing an elevator speech as a response to these outside discussions is one that can aid students throughout the course and beyond to their future endeavors.

As an element of the supplemental curriculum, instructors may conduct classroom discussions on how to write an elevator speech, when to use the speech, and how to ensure individuals of the student group send the same message to the community at large when asked to speak about their project. Reviewing sample elevator speeches may be helpful, while creating elevator speeches of their own will facilitate students in articulating their project, speaking publicly about their group's goals, and working as a team to produce a written document of public relations.

### **Ethics**

Ethics is often defined as a code of thinking and behavior, governed by a combination of personal, moral, legal, and social standards of what is right. It is

essentially the rules of conduct that humans use to guide their lives; a concept that must be present in each occurrence of service-learning.

Every service-learning project must be viewed in the context of ethics before and during its implementation. Students are encouraged to look at the problem they are addressing to determine if their approach and solution meet ethical standards. With no singular code of ethics existing within the discipline, and with humans holding varying ideas of right and wrong, each service-learning team is encouraged to construct its own code of ethics that will be followed throughout the project. This code establishes integrity within the group and may be referred to when questions regarding rightness, wrongness, or moral responsibility arise. It is sometimes helpful when creating a code for the group that students refer to codes established within their fields of study and reflect on their effectiveness.

When constructing this code, each team must be conscious of who and what they are representing. If they are students doing service through a university, they represent that university and its faculty and administration. When working with a community group, they exemplify the integrity of that group. Students of service-learning must recognize that they are liable for the face presented to the community and all that they represent, making a code of ethics essential to maintaining integrity throughout a project.

## **Evaluation**

Included in every service-learning program design must be a method of evaluation. Evaluation serves as a means of assessing the program after completion and finding ways it can be improved for the future. The plan for evaluating the end result

should be established at the beginning, ensuring its systematic and collaborative nature. As most students have not had experience with formal evaluation, it is necessary that instructors of service-learning build evaluation into classroom lectures and discussions. Emphasizing that there are many forms of evaluation, including interviews, observation and analysis, demonstrations of skills learned, surveys and questionnaires, and more, students learn the skill of determining which method of evaluation and plan for implementation best fit their community project.

## CHAPTER 6

### METHODS OF STUDENT EVALUATION

As an academic discipline, service-learning requires a unique method for evaluating student performance and designating course grades and documented learning outcomes. This need is more complex than a simple grading rubric, as service-learning strives to create students who possess the skills and competencies to enact social change and community development. With this unique expectation comes the added need for dynamic grading and evaluative processes. While instructors of service-learning have a vision for the caliber of student they seek to create, the complexity of how to determine if a student meets this vision often relies too heavily on personal discretion.

As a tool for bringing legitimacy to the grading structure of service-learning courses while better reflecting the distinctive structure of these courses, methods of evaluation have been laid out by educators in the field and studied in practice to determine not only what grade to give but more importantly what skills students must possess to carry service-learning into the community and future endeavors. This chapter offers proposed methods of evaluation and suggested tasks for students, as developed through implementation and observation at Western Kentucky University, outlining expectations of students at the university level and integrative techniques for assessing student performance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some material adapted from course syllabus of Dr. Bernie Strenecky.

As an alternative to traditional quizzes and exams, service-learning classes should utilize the Professional Portfolio as the primary method of evaluation. A portfolio is a written creation that aids in critical thinking on assignments, serving as a reference for the foundations of service-learning. Portfolios allow students to tangibly represent what they have learned and augment their learning with further outside research. Each student should develop his or her own portfolio throughout the duration of the semester, culminating their learning experiences into a polished document. This portfolio will allow students to exhibit their learning achievements both in the classroom and in the community, serving as a material representation of what was accomplished through the service-learning process. This may also serve as a reference document for further academic pursuits, with many past students using their portfolios for graduate school and employment interviews.

The Professional Portfolio is not merely a final project, but an evolution of the student's progress and achievement throughout the semester. Some students may even choose the option of mingling service-learning concepts with their discipline of study to create a portfolio that is more applicable to their career path. As an example, one student studying Public Relations focused her portfolio on the relationship between the two disciplines and formatted the final product in the style of her field of study.

With frequent portfolio discussions, instructors are able to gauge the progress of student learning and evaluate topics that require further in-class discussion. It is encouraged that instructors provide guidelines at the start of each semester, including a scoring rubric portraying how portfolios will be evaluated. It may also be possible to

provide sample portfolios by past students to give current students examples of outstanding work.

### **Benefits of Portfolio Assessment**

Professional Portfolios aid in the development of learning and engagement by promoting ongoing development as opposed to occasional studying for exams and quizzes. It is a method of holistic assessment that contributes to a valid measure of higher-order thinking skills, as students collect evidence of service-learning from multiple sources and use it to create an end goal of their own creation (Cook-Benjamin). This process hopes to make students less reliant on grades and more dependent upon dialogue and ongoing learning. An added benefit is the relationships it creates between students and instructors as they continually discuss components of the portfolio and invest together in its success.

### **Best Known Practices of Portfolio Construction**

To aid students in building effective portfolio construction practices, instructors may discuss with students methods for achieving the most optimal portfolio performance.

These practices include, but are not limited to the following:

- Abiding by a schedule for completion of the portfolio to ensure it is an ongoing piece of work and complete for midterm and final submission deadlines.
- Completing sections of the portfolio as they are discussed in class, designing a linear model of discussion in the classroom and research outside of class.

- Utilizing work created by the team to construct the portfolio, collaborating with team members to attain various perspectives on class topics.
- Recognizing the progressive nature of a portfolio as to not be consumed with the potentially overwhelming feelings of a project of this magnitude.
- Remaining cognizant of the portfolio evaluation rubric developed by the instructor.
- Considering work presented by past students' portfolios for ideas, inspiration, and examples of quality expected.
- Having a peer frequently and thoroughly evaluate the contents of the portfolio.

The important thing to note is that there is no right or wrong way to create a portfolio, as it is a professional creation that continually evolves for each individual.

### **Peer Review**

Peer Review is an essential element of portfolio construction. Students should meet with a fellow classmate throughout the semester to review portfolios and provide feedback for improvement. Ensuring that students actively participate in this process will provide them with skills for reviewing documents and providing constructive criticism when warranted. Each student should be required to have a scoring rubric completed by a peer reviewer at the time of midterm and final portfolio submission.



## **Group Learning**

Service-learning works best when students are broken into teams of 3-5 individuals who will work together throughout the duration of the semester and community projects. Allowing students to self-select their teams allows them to be held accountable for team performance. Each team should develop a team constitution that outlines how members will work together and who will assume which roles. These constitutions should be discussed within a class to allow for feedback and ideas from other teams. They should also be revisited throughout the class to encourage students to think about how their team has matured and how they can continue to improve.

## **Oral Presentations**

During the semester, students should be required to make formal and informal class presentations. Presentation topics should consist of concepts in the core curriculum of the class. These will evaluate their understanding of the concepts and enable them to learn by teaching. Making each individual in the classroom both a teacher and a student will create a community of scholars; an environment in which ideas can be shared and a greater wealth of knowledge can be established. Skills gained in oral presentations include critical thinking, public speaking and research abilities. Presentations should be assessed by the instructors and feedback should be provided to the presenters.

## **Grading Structure**

Service-learning courses provide unique challenges in grading which can be mitigated by providing students the ability to self-select their intended grade at the

beginning of the course and use the grading rubric to fulfill their desired grade throughout the semester. This untraditional structure builds responsibility and independence in students as they choose their own grade and work toward its accomplishment.

### **‘A’ Projects**

With this grading system in place, students who choose to receive an ‘A’ grade are required to develop an assignment in addition to the basic course standards. These students will implement their additional project and report on their topic central to the study of service-learning. The topic may address a theoretical or practical issue and must be approved by the instructor through the completion of a proposal form provided by the instructor. In some cases, students may elect to work in small groups on projects of greater undertaking. These projects are generally open-ended to allow students broad options. They should ultimately choose something that they are passionate about and would like to complete within the context of this course. This gives students ownership over the project and the opportunity to utilize their own skills and interests. It is not simply a research paper, but can be manifested in many forms, including events, informational sessions, poster presentations, and more. With each option, it is expected that students designate a portion of their portfolio to their ‘A’ Project. They should talk with the instructor regularly about the progress of their project. Upon completion, students must have a physical display of the project to present to the class and the instructor, which can manifest in the form of a scholarly paper, written report, presentation outline, or another creative means of displaying work.

## **Additional Requirements**

In addition to completing general requirements outlined in a grading rubric by the instructor, it is essential that students of service-learning be present and engaged members of class. It is common to hold oral class reflections and discussions in which all students have opportunities to speak. Additionally, a written reflection must be turned in at the start of each class period. Students are also expected to be active members in their teams and community projects.

## **Final Portfolio Review**

At the conclusion of each semester, students should set up individual meetings with the instructor to review the contents of their portfolio and discuss their progress while reflecting on the course. This review serves in the place of a final exam and is conducted in a format similar to an interview. Instructors may pose questions addressing the portfolio itself, the community project, progress of the team, 'A' project success, and other tasks of the class. Sample questions for final portfolio review include:

- How did your 'A' project contribute to your overall understanding of service-learning?
- How was reciprocity manifested in your team's community project?
- What insight did you gain from the peer review process?
- What outside resources were used in the compilation of your portfolio?
- How do you see service-learning incorporated in your future life and profession?

## **Student Presentations**

Another illustration of work that could be utilized in place of or in addition to the final portfolio review is the holding of a public event during which students present their work to members of the academic community. With the opportunity to articulate and display their work to the class and outside students, faculty, and members of the administration, students of service-learning are able to celebrate their individual and team accomplishments and promote service-learning to the community at large.

## CHAPTER 7

### ESTABLISHING SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS

As service-learning grows in prominence across academic discussions, educational institutions acquire the need to strategically plan service-learning programs ensuring credibility and sustainability. Many colleges and universities have begun to develop such programs, but experience has shown that more is required than simply a desire to provide students with these enhanced learning opportunities. By building a strong infrastructure to house service-learning initiatives and consistently govern its implementation in educational settings, institutions can pave the road to success in higher learning for their faculty and students.

#### **Steps to Building Service-Learning Programs**

When universities decide that service-learning is an appropriate fit for their educational missions and learning opportunities, a department must first be designated or established to house the developing program. It is important that a location on campus serve as the symbolic representative of service-learning and offer a space for meeting, discussing, and building community projects and initiatives. Some universities may find a related department existing within their school that's goals parallel that of service-learning, while others may wish to design a new department or institute to hold the emerging program.

Secondly, service-learning programs can be sustained by faculty members who wish to embed its principles into their teachings and courses; having permanent faculty members who will represent the emerging program and continually teach its subject while establishing best known practices will carry the program through a lifecycle of implementation. It is important that these faculty members self-select themselves for involvement in the service-learning program, holding each accountable for their dedication and drive toward its success.

Having these faculty members emerge to teach service-learning through the university will also require formal training on the new content of their courses. Faculty training is one of the primary factors of developing service-learning programs while also one of the most complex. Universities must tread lightly in requiring components of faculty-designed classes and syllabi, as academic freedom and expression must be maintained. Still, educational institutions must ensure that service-learning is being taught to its full potential and faculty members are methodically relaying principles of the discipline to their students.

As faculty become knowledgeable of the concepts of service-learning and develop syllabi for their teaching, they begin to distinguish how service-learning merges with their discipline of study. The universality of service-learning allows it to be adapted by any curriculum and for any discipline, weaving its components through disciplines from engineering and public health to social sciences and public policy. Faculty may choose to teach service-learning alongside their current courses as embedded sections of another discipline, or create service-learning titled courses that stand alone.

Another step in this process is creating an effective faculty support network within the university setting. As most professors may be new to teaching service-learning, designing a committee through which they can network ideas and discuss experiences may be helpful in further developing each program. This allows an open forum for faculty to share syllabi and grow together as a community of scholars. They may also wish to collaborate on research, share community contacts, serve as guest lecturers in others' classes, and link student projects of similar focus to create even more dynamic service-learning courses.

To aid in the faculty development and service-learning integration process, each university implementing this subject matter should establish governing bodies to oversee the emerging programs. This group of individuals will work in the best interest of the university's administration, faculty, and students, creating worthwhile partnerships and further expanding the infrastructure to manage community projects. This body will document and track projects established in the community and keep databases of past and present students enrolled in the program. It may also wish to set up a research committee to even further advance the discipline, measure student outcomes at their university, and witness examples of other universities implementing similar programs. Furthermore, this governing body should manage the task of ensuring funding sources are available for students to pursue in implementation of community projects.

### **Classifying Service-Learning in Course Catalogs**

As service-learning grows across colleges and universities, it may be necessary for these institutions to begin finding methods for classifying these courses in course

catalogs. Since service-learning is a form of experiential learning with major distinctions from traditional coursework, it may be appealing to many students while not desired by others. Students should know in the initial course decision process that service-learning courses require an advanced commitment with engaged community interactions, dedication to teamwork, and significant obligations outside of class.

### **Challenges in Developing Service-Learning Programs**

In her work, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*, Barbara Jacoby takes the stance that service-learning has tremendous potential to enable colleges and universities to meet their goals for student learning and development while making unique contributions to addressing community, national, and global needs. While its potential is alive and relevant throughout this text, a major hindrance to the discipline is the developing nature of its maturation. With comparatively fewer years of existence than other academic disciplines in the core curricula of universities, it lacks the substantive and quantitative research of its counterparts. While its research is rapidly increasing in magnitude and credibility, its integration into core university programs is often stifled by its age.

Related to the realm of faculty development, another challenge in creating service-learning programs is the process of gaining support from faculty for the training process. Many faculty members with the potential to pioneer service-learning teaching at their universities have expertise in their fields and little desire to undergo a new and intensive training process. Simply, many feel that it is not needed. One of the greatest challenges universities will face in creating new programs is convincing faculty that they



need to be educated in the new subject matter and establishing a systemized and standard method by which to enhance faculty development.

Some critics of service-learning also cite the strains put on faculty members that may prevent them from self-selecting themselves as professors of service-learning. In a competitive environment in which university administrations push the need for research and frequent faculty publications, some may view service-learning training and teaching as an added task with a smaller reward compared to the career and salary advancements offered by research. If faculty allocate a specific number of hours each semester to academic development, these critics believe that most would choose research over service-learning. To dispel the common misperception that service-learning must take the place of research and faculty must choose between the two, supporters of the discipline must portray the personal and professional benefits that service-learning offers. It is not merely an additional task for busy faculty members, but yet a supplement to material already being taught and studied. Many faculty members may find that service-learning offers opportunities to enhance their own research, some even pioneering new research studying service-learning outcomes within their area of expertise. This common debate involving service-learning versus research is easily dismissed by knowledge in the field but one that universities must consider when developing new service-learning programs.

### **Establishing High School Programs <sup>2</sup>**

The service-learning curriculum created for students is not exclusive to the university setting. Most recently, this curriculum has been adapted for use by a high school audience. Upon the realization that the service-learning discipline could offer

<sup>2</sup> Some content created in collaboration with students of Western Kentucky University and Teaching Assistant Kaitlin Hartley.

service-learning enthusiasts in Bowling Green, Kentucky pioneered a program linking Western Kentucky University (WKU) with a local high school.

At Bowling Green High School, a top-down approach was utilized starting at the highest level of administration. With support from the superintendent of the school district, the principal of the high school himself sought to learn this curriculum and share it with his students. The integration of this program began with students of WKU holding their class at Bowling Green High School, focusing their community projects on problems identified by the high school students. As a second tier to this approach, the next semester of integration will include a classroom of both university and high school students learning together. By integrating WKU students in the classroom alongside high school students, the university students will be able to expand their thinking beyond the campus while the high school students will learn about classes in a university setting. This will foster a deeper learning environment, benefitting both student groups. In addition, multiple guests and partners in the community will serve as consultants to the student groups to provide the framework for successful projects. The intention of this approach is to build the capacity of the high school service-learning program to run sustainability in future semesters.

### **Benefits to High School Students**

In addition to teaching students how to become active and engaged citizens through community involvement, the service learning curriculum offers supplementary skills that can be beneficial in all fields of study and academic endeavors. At a critical time when students are finding their niches in academia or in the workplace, some

preparing to declare areas of study for higher education, service-learning acts as a tool for teaching skills with real-world application. Not only are these skills applicable to the service-learning class being taught and other high school classes, but they are skills that build the capacity of students and better prepare them for any professional and academic endeavors ahead.

Firstly, service-learning teaches critical skills such as teamwork, project management, ethics, problem solving, and more as outlined in the supplemental curriculum. These co-curricular competencies seem common sense to some but have consistently been left out of formal education with the hopes that they will be learned in an outside setting. By embedding these soft but tangible skills into the curriculum and calling on students to put them into application, students are able to tune their skills and develop their leadership abilities in a structured and facilitated environment.

Additionally, service-learning is an enticing blend of traditional and non-traditional classes. This blend combats the occasional trend of high school students being unengaged and unenthusiastic about education. While still based heavily on research in the field, the opportunity to become immersed in the surrounding community sets this discipline apart from others. In many cases, high school students have not ventured to parts of their community or engaged with neighbors outside of their social spheres. The process of immersing students in their community and allowing them to witness problems of their community offers a glimpse into society that many students would not otherwise gain. Furthermore, the process of witnessing these problems helps students see themselves as part of the solutions, creating better citizens and community activists. By

recognizing that some students seek this enhanced form of learning, participating high schools are able to meet the demands of diverse student learning styles.

Service-learning at the high school level also gives students the chance to become enthusiastic about their learning opportunities. Many students engaged in the service-learning process develop a passion for impacting their community or advocating for a specific cause that they carry on to future endeavors. Whether students are interested in seeking a career in public service or simply giving back to society outside of their career, this discipline provides them with the tools and practices to optimize their community impacts.

Many believe that it is a responsibility of citizens to contribute to their society, instilling reciprocity and civility into the core values of every community. By creating socially-aware and responsible students, high schools have the ability to create a better surrounding community and a better world. By examining social problems at the local level, students are encouraged to examine the larger scope of these problems and how they are manifested throughout the world. By encouraging students to think globally while acting locally, high schools can increase international learning opportunities for their students.

While many high school students are already involved in volunteer initiatives, it is suggested that these students be exposed to the service-learning process prior to college. Studies conducted by the Harvard University Institute of Politics indicate that high school students across the United States are some of the most active in their communities, which can be explained by the growing demand for community involvement on college applications and job resumes (Executive Summary). Learning these concepts prior to

college or other forms of higher education will enable students to begin implementing them into their own lives through civic engagement. They begin to recognize their responsibility to be active members of society and the social impacts they can have on the community at large.

Lastly, concepts and skills learned by students in service-learning courses influence their other classes, projects, ideas, and goals. The universality of service-learning allows it to improve or enhance other areas of learning. While many high school students are exposed to forms of volunteerism and community service, service-learning allows them to take these motivations a step further by making their projects a comprehensive learning process for themselves and their community partners. The process facilitates maturation of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they address community-identified needs and work with the community to develop solutions.

### **Adaptation of the Core Curriculum**

The content recommended for high school classes is the same content utilized in university classes, although attention is paid to the variations in age, experience, and maturity of high school students as compared to university students. High school teachers may alter this content as needed to best fit their students' abilities and learning styles.

To distinguish high school classes from university classes, teachers should have frequent deadlines for the professional portfolio as opposed to one final submission deadline. Timelines should be established for ideal completion of specific sections of the portfolio. This may dispel overwhelming feelings that could result from the largeness of

the project. An articulate timeline provided by teachers allows students to stay on track and receive periodic feedback.

One further adaptation to the high school curriculum refers to the requirement for out-of-class meetings. In typical university courses, it is a firm requirement that student groups meet outside of class to engage in group reflections, meet with community partners, construct frequent presentations, and implement community projects. For high school students, it is recommended that teachers provide time in class for students to work with their groups on service-learning projects. While it may occasionally be necessary for students to attend or hold community events outside of school, students should be given enough time in class to develop their projects, making outside meetings optional. This allows teachers to supervise the students and facilitate group discussions, and negates the complications that could arise with extra-curricular activities, part-time employment, and driving.

### **Granting College Credit**

As service-learning programs progress in high school settings, it may be possible for the administration of these respective high schools to partner with local colleges and universities for the offering of college credit. This could be in the form of dual-credit, enabling students to fulfill high school requirements while still earning credit to be transferred to an institution of higher education. Students should have the option to enroll in the semester-long service-learning course for dual-credit, or experience service-learning embedded into a traditional high school class for high school credit. This allows students to be exposed to service-learning whether they seek college credit or high school

credit. The critical element is that all service-learning experiences are credit bearing, obliging students to be held accountable to the work and the community projects.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

With the growing demand for academic programs focused on service-learning and its corresponding community development, the core and supplemental curricula outlined in this text recommend the standardized method by which to educate students on its content. This standard set of knowledge has the potential to be adopted by educational institutions of all disciplines, portraying the universality and adaptability of service-learning's central components.

As an emerging discipline, service-learning continues to grow its numbers of students involved universities participating. The \$100 Solution™ continues to expand its partnerships, bringing service-learning training and experiences to universities at the local and global levels. While the status of the discipline's development falls short of other academic disciplines carrying substantive experience and research, hope lies in the rapidly-growing demand for its innovative and experiential learning practices. Compared to its infant stages, The \$100 Solution™ and researchers in the field have propelled service-learning by developing more models and principles to guide its practice, gaining support from government and community organizations, and conducting more research regarding the effects it has on student learning. There now exists clearer understanding of the ways in which service-learning contributes to student learning outcomes and sharper



emphasis on the impacts it has on educational development. With the construction of best known practices and the intentional integration of service-learning into formal education curricula, we may begin to see the effects of service-learning on the health of our civic and global societies.

At the heart of the service-learning discipline is its ability to entirely transform ways in which students view education. It is empowering and engaging, bringing intention and purpose to all who grow through its coursework. Service-learning takes community development to new heights and teaches students not only the need to be socially engaged and responsible citizens, but how to carry this passion into the world and be the catalyst for positive change.

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