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Community Service and Metropolitan Universities

Meeting the Challenge of Social Responsibility

Introduced originally on campuses as extracurricular activity, community service is now becoming integrated into the curriculum and into cocurricular activities. The benefits to students, the faculty, the community, and to institutional goals are so significant that metropolitan universities have good reason to support community service programs and to integrate them into educational programs. The article discusses the particular challenges facing metropolitan universities in this effort.

As recently as five years ago, the idea of thousands of college students engaged in community service seemed faddish and fanciful to many campus administrators and faculty. Community service projects conjured up thoughts of the sixties or of a politically naive response to the failure of government social service programs. However, over the past few years, more and more colleges and universities have discovered an affinity between community service activities and institutional goals.

To colleges with religious affiliations, the ideal of service is consistent with institutional mission and history. To many public universities, service activities are viewed as promoting students' active practice of citizenship. Prestigious private universities see community service as an opportunity for students to engage in leadership for social responsibility. Liberal arts colleges often believe that participation in community service reinforces students' ethical development. Whatever the immediate or long-term goals such projects are perceived as serving, it is clear that many universities have decided that community service relates directly to the development of students' skills of good citizenship, to their habits of social responsibility, and to their understanding of the relationship between individual development and the common good. Increasingly, community service

projects are the means by which the principles of social responsibility are being taught as part of the undergraduate curriculum and as cocurricular activities.

Community service is known under a growing and confusing set of terms, from volunteering to service-learning, from public service to service-leadership. To add to the confusion, many people know the term "community service" only as an alternative sentence to prison. To most educators in the field, the terms community service or service-learning are preferable. Whatever the terminology, the philosophy of service to the community in an educational context includes assumptions that the goal of service is the common good rather than personal gain, that service experience needs to be followed by opportunities for reflection in order for learning to occur, and that mutuality between the provider and the receiver of service is the ideal: Each party in the relationship has something to teach and to learn, to give and to receive.

As the Johnson Foundation's "Principles of Good Practice For Combining Service and Learning" states, "Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both. Those who serve and those who are served are thus able to develop the informed judgment, imagination, and skills that lead to a greater capacity to contribute to the common good." Therefore, advocates of community service stress the development of programs that are integrated with the curriculum, drawing the content for students' reflection about their experiences from the broadest range of historic and contemporary theories and ideas.

The location and mission of metropolitan universities provides a natural alliance between the opportunity for meaningful projects and the development of educational experiences focused on social responsibility. Metropolitan universities are in regions with significant community needs and they characteristically focus on regional problems. However, the lack of personal relationships and informal networks within the metropolitan university may make the development of excellent community service programs a more major undertaking than, for example, for a liberal arts college in a small community. Here, administrators are interested in maintaining good town-gown relationships, and it is relatively easy to create a good program model.

In smaller communities, social needs are understood by faculty and administrators because of long experience and strong community ties, and points of access to the social service community are fairly obvious. A coordinator of community service activities, whether reporting to an academic or student affairs dean, generally knows faculty well enough to be able to identify those likely to be interested in using community service projects in conjunction with courses. When problems arise in programs associated with smaller, nonurban communities, informal conversation between faculty and community supervisors is often effective, because they often know each other from the P.T.A., the Rotary, or their children's soccer team. In a large metropolitan area, the relationships between persons in universities and their regions may be somewhat remote, requiring greater attention to the means for recognizing and resolving potential problems between the faculty and the community persons involved in service projects.

Stanford University, Chicago's Columbia College, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Bronx Community College, and Augsburg College are all located in metropolitan areas. In spite of their disparity in size and type, each illustrates the creativity being used to begin and maintain viable programs. Program administrators at those institutions have identified several issues associated with community service programs as particularly challenging because of the urban environment in which they operate: meeting needs that have been defined by the community; fostering faculty involvement so as to tie community service into the curriculum; assuring the support of administrators; designing programs that have the capacity to be financially self-sufficient; developing alliances outside the university; and encouraging participation by overly busy students who are frequently working and commuting.

Meeting Needs Defined by the Community

Effective community service programs that successfully serve educational goals require community collaboration and support, and therefore must reflect priority needs as perceived by the community. Many community service programs are begun by individual faculty members or administrators who are personally committed to the idea of service. In the last few years, grants have become increasingly available to prime the pump, providing funds to strengthen student and faculty involvement in community service. Federal grant programs such as the Student Literacy Corps, the Innovative Projects for Student Community Service Program of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), and ACTION grants, as well as private foundation funding, make it fairly easy to start a program that conforms to the purposes of the granting agency, but which may not have been identified as important by the community. Although it may be difficult to imagine that literacy training, or homelessness initiatives, or hunger programs are not needs in any community, community agencies may not be ready for—or interested in—the particular kind of help a university-based program would provide. When students and faculty become so involved in doing good that they do not consider if the project is welcomed by the recipients, the program is less likely to succeed as a meaningful educational experience. Stanford's tutoring program is a case in point.

Stanford's community service programs have benefited greatly from the strong support of President Donald Kennedy, one of the founders of Campus Compact, an organization of college presidents committed to community service on their campuses, and from that of other campus administrators. The generous endowment of the Haas Center for Public Service by a family committed to such philanthropic activities has also helped assure viable programs. Nonetheless, according to Tim Stanton, associate director of the Center, there have been a number of operational issues the Center has had to confront. One major issue has been community definition of its own needs.

Stanford had regularly been supplying students as tutors to the Ravenwood City School District of East Palo Alto, but Stanford students

had worked without focus and direction, and the university had been expecting the local school district to take full responsibility for how the college students would be used rather than negotiating shared obligations. A new superintendent challenged Stanford to work with the school district to define the needs that Stanford could meet effectively. Now, under the theme of school improvement, Stanford students are providing a highly structured and effective tutoring service. Students are asked to make a two-quarter commitment. Six schools have been chosen by the district as sites for the tutoring. Students with previous tutoring experience become site coordinators, who take on multiple responsibilities from meeting with the superintendent to arranging car pools. A permanent full-time coordinator on Stanford's campus teaches an accompanying seminar to twenty students each quarter through the School of Education. Both Stanford and the school district understand that the tutoring program is the present expression of the theme of school improvement and that a different initiative on Stanford's part may eventually be necessary to continue school improvement as defined by the school district.

Fostering Faculty Involvement

Fostering faculty support to redesign curriculum so as to integrate community service means making the difficult transition from a student-oriented program to one filling long-term faculty interests and needs. Most people in the community service field are quick to point out, however, that this transition is crucial. The community service movement, so popular in the 1960s, had all but disappeared from most college campuses by the late 1970s because little effort had been made to consider how to make community service a meaningful part of the curriculum. If community service is not to be rediscovered again in twenty-five years, faculty involvement and commitment are crucial. At Stanford, a faculty steering committee has been formed, and a faculty long-range planning committee will be constituted to envision how an infrastructure of strong academic links can be built.

It takes a special dedication to include community service in the curriculum.

Although many faculty are deeply committed to community service in their personal lives, it takes a special dedication to find the time, energy, and intellectual justification to include community service in the curriculum, especially when the reward system at most universities ignores such efforts. Most program administrators advise that it's important to work with interested faculty and to build on that interest a little at a time rather than trying to affect faculty behavior at the policy level.

Stanford has had particular success with the Freshman English Community Service Writing Project. Because two quarters of Freshman English are required at Stanford, administrators of that program were looking for ways to motivate students more effectively. Twelve instructors now give students an alternative to writing typical expository themes. The students may, for example, do persuasive writing for a variety of

nonprofit groups in the San Francisco area, either individually or in groups. One group of students producing a newsletter for the South Bay Covenant became so committed to completing their work that they worked even through the aftermath of the 1989 earthquake, hurrying to libraries throughout the area to gather the data they needed. The Haas Center provides support to the composition faculty by working with community groups to broker writing needs, but Stanton notes that faculty motivation has come from seeing that the important experiences students gain through their community writing transfers to their academic writing.

Stanford supports curriculum design incorporating service in a variety of ways. For instance, a pilot project to link service and academic learning was launched in cooperation with the dean of Undergraduate Studies, who provided small grants to faculty members who wanted to develop curriculum. One history professor proposed a new multidisciplinary course on "Poverty and Homelessness" to include internships and/or research with the Emergency Housing Consortium of Santa Clara County. A sociology professor proposed to extend a course in the "Sociology of Mental Health" to include student service with the Palo Alto V. A. Medical Center. An English professor planned to revise a freshman English course to include "real writing" for community service. A linguistics professor designed a project to have students integrate public service work with linguistic minorities into a sociolinguistics course.

Other faculty make imaginative use of service opportunities as options within courses, through individualized curricula, and as preservice preparation. For instance, the manager of Stanford's Student Health Services, who teaches a psychology course, "Peer Counseling: Chicano Community," offers students the opportunity to earn extra credit by applying basic counseling skills in a variety of service contexts. A number of individual faculty sponsor "Motivated to Serve: Public Service Theory and Practice," which operates as a student-facilitated, discussion-based seminar for students in many disciplines. Several prefield public policy courses, including "Washington, D.C.: Issues and Players" and "Urban Studies: Preparation for Internship Learning," focus on knowledge and skills students will need in order to serve effectively.

For most faculty, affiliation with community service programs occurs gradually. Garry Hesser, professor of sociology and director of internships and cooperative education, explains that during spring 1990 to 1991, three Augsburg faculty—in urban studies, psychology, and business—redesigned their courses to include a service component. This was followed with four more faculty—in biology, English, art, and sociology—who planned to design new curricula with assistance from the director of the community service program. Sue Zivi, executive director of cooperative education, internships, and student employment at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, stresses the importance of identifying the concepts and language that faculty in different disciplines find compatible. In the School of Management at her institution, she says, case studies give students an opportunity to learn real-world skills, while social scientists find participant observation projects useful.

Through this common-sensical approach, Zivi has encouraged the development of courses in all parts of the institution. During the coming year, ten courses are planned to be offered, from "Technology and Society" to "Population in History."

Integration of community service into the curriculum need not be limited to courses in the major. At some universities an effort is being made to accomplish this in the general education program. General education courses, which often concern social issues, can readily combine the literature of social reflection with student work in the community. At Augsburg, students can fill a new general education requirement by taking a course on how communities operate, by participating in a field-based course, or by combining community service with a seminar on community issues. Honors programs, which often encourage students to fulfill general education requirements through thematic seminars rather than the traditional introductory courses, are other natural homes for innovative curricular development. At Salisbury State, a recent honors course, "Habits of the Heart," combined readings from philosophy and sociology with student projects to assess community needs and individual student service in the community.

Assuring Administrative Support

Most faculty and administrators who are involved in program development mention the necessity for high-level administrative support; most also mention that it is not as hard to come by as they had initially assumed. Many presidents, provosts, and deans are interested in integrating service into the educational experience and are cooperative in helping program administrators to leverage modest grant funds or financial aid resources.

Philip Klukoff, chair of the English department at Columbia College, a 7,000-student open admissions college in Chicago's South Loop area, used a Student Literacy Corps grant to get community service started at Columbia. The tutoring program he began in area elementary schools attracted the attention of the Montgomery Ward Company, which was involved in tutoring 300 elementary students from the Cabrini Green Housing Project. Montgomery Ward requested help from Columbia's faculty in training their employees to be tutors. Because of the success of the tutoring program, the interest of English department faculty, and the commitment of the chair, the academic dean was willing to approve a workload reduction of one course for each of four English department faculty members to act as resource people for the tutors.

According to Klukoff, gaining the administrative support to institutionalize community service at Columbia is proceeding by stages. With the approval of the president and the academic dean, the English department will be offering four sections of second semester composition (out of about forty) that will emphasize social issues. Readings on aging, homelessness, literacy, etc., will provide content for student writing. However, students will also have the opportunity to earn one credit in

addition to the usual three credits by engaging in tutoring or other direct service work in the community. This additional credit will be based on the reflection that students do in journal entries and more formal expository writing. Klukoff notes that there is interest among faculty in psychology, the humanities, and science in integrating community service with an additional credit option. This type of plus one option has also been used successfully at Georgetown University for a number of years.

Augsburg College, a 2,500-student liberal arts college in Minneapolis, has been able to increase its commitment to community service quickly and markedly because of the work of a faculty-staff committee working with the president's office, and also as a result of successful leveraging of grant funds. According to Hesser, the committee had been working with the president's staff to develop a grant proposal for FIPSE's community service program. One requirement of that program is that students must be able to reduce their educational debt while participating in community service projects. As part of the proposal development, Augsburg agreed to use college work-study funds to support student participation in off-campus service. At the same time, the state of Minnesota happened to be running a mini-grant program that provided matching grants of up to $12,500 to colleges willing to develop service programs with a tutoring component. Using matching funds from the U.S. Department of Education's supplemental grant program for developing off-campus service opportunities for work-study students, Augsburg obtained that grant. With a modest additional commitment, Augsburg was able to hire two part-time staff people to work not only with students but also with faculty who want to develop service-oriented courses. The development office, aware of institutional interest in community service, sought a grant from the Aid Association for Lutherans, which recognized Augsburg's commitment and funded scholarships for students who are involved in community service.

Zivi emphasizes that creating a comprehensive plan, which includes everything from volunteer community service to paid cooperative education placements, not only saves money and encourages synergy in program development, but also helps assure administrative support.

Designing Self-Sufficient Programs

Although institutional support may be increased by leveraging grant funding, the long-term viability of any program ultimately depends on its financial self-sufficiency. According to Michael Steuerman, who was professor of health and physical education at Bronx Community College at the time he started the SHARE program on his campus, he was attracted to it in part because of its self-sufficiency.

SHARE was not originally a campus-based program; it was created in 1983 in San Diego by the collaboration of the Teamsters' Union, the San Diego Archdiocese, and the Hunger Project Foundation. Food was purchased at bulk rates, and each volunteer worked several hours on the

distribution of the food and paid a small amount for a bag of food. Everybody worked; everybody received food. Churches were usually host organizations.

After two years of participation as a volunteer, Steuerman recognized the terrific opportunity the program provided for college students. Steuerman wrote a FIPSE proposal so that he could put students eligible for work-study funds or wishing to earn internship or field work credit into a training program for ten to twelve hours a week, develop curricula for them, give core faculty release time, and develop Bronx Community College as a host site.

Steuerman proudly reports that about seventy-five students have been trained to take leadership responsibility for the program. There have been forty consecutive monthly distributions of food to between 60 and 120 families, and every month, whether school is in session or not, students show up at three o'clock in the morning to unload, pack, and distribute groceries. They also recruit other students, set up computer inventory and accounting systems, write training manuals, etc. Although the average age of Bronx Community College students is twenty-six, and although they have work and family responsibilities, students find the program valuable enough to fit into their lives. As Steuerman notes, "this is real work and a real opportunity for reflection with faculty who have the same passion." In all, SHARE now serves 250,000 families, and colleges throughout the country are becoming host sites for distribution.

Promoting Alliances outside the University

Bronx Community College has sought alliances with community organizations and other educational institutions in order to expand its volunteer base and maintain the momentum the SHARE project created for service-learning. For instance, Steuerman sought an ACTION grant so that his students could work with the alternative junior high school in the neighborhood. His students became mentors and worked with the younger students to incorporate work in writing, social studies, and math with the SHARE program. The Bronx Community College student government has now taken over sponsorship of that program. And a still less-expected alliance brought Cornell students to New York for an urban semester program to work with the Bronx students, resulting in the friendship of a petite seventeen-year-old suburban Philadelphian and an equally slight Hispanic community woman, who discovered their common interest in the martial arts.

More and more often, consortia of local colleges are addressing issues too large and too complex for any one school. The Bay Area Homelessness project involves a number of different schools that are taking a variety of approaches to homelessness issues. Through funding from the Hewlett Foundation and the coordination of San Francisco State University, many different projects, some connected with courses, are being developed.

Encouraging Student Participation

Today's college students are often accused of being self-interested. However, most program developers report that students are very willing to become involved in community service activities. Still, at larger universities, reaching them effectively is an ongoing problem. For instance, at the University of Minnesota, three different offices, one connected with the College of Liberal Arts, one with the Office of Financial Aid, and one with the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, offer community service opportunities. In addition, fraternities, sororities, student groups, and the University YMCA also provide programs and projects. Although some collaboration does occur during an annual service fair, busy students might never hear about opportunities that are right for them. The availability of a central resource, such as the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford; the Cooperative Education, Internship, and Student Employment Office at New Jersey Institute of Technology; the Experiential Learning Programs Office at the University of Maryland College Park; or the Center for Public Service at Brown University, gives a focus for student access.

Zivi notes that at commuter schools, emphasizing the way in which a community service activity can fit into a major or career choice gives students an additional impetus to get involved. For instance, New Jersey Institute of Technology has developed a Housing Fellows Program, in which architecture students work with nonprofit housing agencies. These students provide a useful service by helping to supervise construction, doing site surveys, and working with architects, and

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they gain experience directly related to their careers. Zivi also mentions listings in the student newspaper and collaborations with other offices, such as the Honors Program, as effective ways to encourage participation.

Augsburg, as a college with a religious affiliation and a historic mission of education for service, attracts many students who have already had high school or youth group volunteer experience and who have an interest in education, social work, and other serving professions. However, even at Augsburg, new ways of channeling student energy are continually being sought. For instance, Jane Addams House, a student group previously dominated by social work students, is finding a new life as a more broadly based community service program.

Stanton cautions that multicultural issues need to be considered in recruiting students. Do students feel comfortable serving those who are not at all like them? Is the community organization willing to work with students who are not ethnically or economically like those served? Do students resist participating in service programs with students who are not ethnically or racially similar because of what they perceive as a lack of shared values? Stanton notes that Stanford continues to work on the matter of cultural and ethnic fragmentation and encourages diverse groups to participate. He suggests addressing the problem directly by

having students develop materials that are representative of the diversity of those with whom they are working. For example, a wonderful tutoring manual has been the result of a lot of digging to find the literature of different racial and ethnic groups. Stanton says that the issue of multicultural diversity is particularly significant in any setting in which the students come from a privileged background: "If they are not to be isolated by a sense of *noblesse oblige*, they need to have cross-cultural experiences with lots of opportunity for reflection and discussion."

Resources for Program Development

A few years ago, faculty and administrators interested in community service might have felt isolated and marginal, but the availability of support from national organizations, of excellent written materials, and of colleagues across the country, as well as of new federal legislation, have made their roles more central and their capabilities more appreciated. For example, the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE) provides publications, membership services such as conferences and newsletters, consulting services for program design and evaluation, and access to the National Resource Center for Experiential and Service Learning. A three-volume set recently published by NSIEE, *Combining Service and Learning*, offers a major philosophical, practical, and bibliographic resource. Other national organizations, from Campus Compact, an association of college presidents, to Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), a national student organization, provide a variety of services and philosophic approaches. With the passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, $62 million will be available in 1991 for new grant programs at all educational levels, giving opportunities for colleges to expand their service programs in innovative ways.

Although there may be lingering doubts about the importance of community service for the education of college students, small-scale studies and anecdotal data about its effectiveness abound. All administrators mention that their students find their involvement in community service meaningful and worth continuing. Stanton notes that students who have been involved in community service are more interested in the graduate teaching preparation program, as does Philip Klukoff. Steuerman says that his studies have shown students who participate in the SHARE program have a higher retention rate, higher grade point averages, and a higher graduation rate than those who don't. Klukoff, Hesser, and Steuerman also notice their students' changed expectations, and their newfound sense of empowerment. Hesser especially notices the growth in leadership capabilities of students who become involved. Steuerman hopes that this will translate into community leadership, as more students will choose to use their skills on behalf of the community instead of fleeing the Bronx. All note that the attitude of students as they begin to be involved in community service (that they are there to "do

unto") changes drastically, and that collaboration, respect, empathy, and mutuality of teaching and learning replace it.

Metropolitan universities often face particularly difficult challenges in being responsive to the communities of which they are a part. Community service programs offer special promise not only in their potential for being responsive, but in fostering values of social responsibility in their students while doing so. Metropolitan universities therefore have ample reason to support students, faculty, and administrators who already have a commitment to community service, and to encourage those who have yet to become involved.

Suggested Readings

Kendall, Jane, ed. *Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service.* Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 1990. Information about book ordering and other services is available from NSIEE, 3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 297, Raleigh, NC 27609–7229.

Porter-Honnet, Ellen and Susan Poulsen. "Principles of Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning." *Wingspread Special Report.* Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation, 1989. Individual and multiple copies are free upon request from The Johnson Foundation, Inc., Racine, WI 53401–0547.