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Curricular Models for Service Learning

This article explains and gives examples of the following options for including service learning in the curriculum: fourth credit option, introductory service learning courses, courses linking service and leadership, service as an optional or required course component, service as a significant course requirement, service learning in the core curriculum, service as a graduation requirement, disciplinary capstone projects, research as integral to service, service learning internships, and service learning majors and minors. The authors suggest that by offering a wide range of curricular models, service learning can be more easily adapted to different institutional climates, disciplines, and the styles of individual faculty members.

Introduction

The integration of service learning into the curriculum provides students with opportunities to encounter competing definitions of the common good, diverse viewpoints on the root cause of social problems, and questions about the uses of knowledge. Courses employing service learning encourage students to consider the context of a discipline and to ask the larger questions that lie beyond the bounds of most traditional courses, in addition to helping students learn content. Service learning provokes intellectual struggles that result from testing abstract concepts against their practical implementation. Students find themselves having to explore ideas through the filters of many different constituencies and to confront multiple layers of meaning.

Service learning is not appropriate for every course, but can be used in any discipline. It has even been used in classics courses, in which students compared community and family life in ancient Athens with that of a contemporary American city. Service learning works best when it is designed to advance the objectives of a course and helps students learn course content. If service is merely an add-on, it degrades the

academic integrity of the course.

Service learning induces faculty to consider how their discipline, teaching, and research relate to community needs. It confronts professors with the questions: "What purpose does this discipline serve in society? What does its knowledge base offer ordinary citizens? How can service be used as a text to illuminate the concerns of this discipline?" In the process of answering these questions, experienced faculty and community service coordinators will probably discover several ways in which to link service to the discipline under consideration.

Curricular Service Learning Options

No one model of integrating service into academic study fits every discipline and every institution. It is best to choose among a variety of options in order to give faculty and students flexibility in achieving desired course objectives and student development outcomes, as well as meeting the needs of communities. The range of possibilities is explored below.

Fourth-Credit Option

The fourth-credit option enables students to add a fourth credit to a regular three-credit course by contracting to do a significant number of hours of community service (usually 40-55 per semester) and relating it to the course. The additional credit is awarded for the demonstrated learning that results from the service, not for the service itself. Typically, students complete a learning contract that must be approved by both the faculty member and the service learning center. Most faculty require students to keep a journal and write a reflective paper that synthesizes the service experience and the course concepts. Loyola College of Maryland, Pennsylvania State University, Georgetown University, and a number of other institutions operate effective fourth-credit option programs. At Georgetown, all fourth-credit option students must attend a midsemester seminar-like session with students from other participating courses. They are asked to reflect on why they chose to do the option, how the service is linked to the course, and how they view service learning in light of their experiences.

One advantage of the option is that students can be the initiators of a service-learning component, and often even end up introducing faculty to the concept, and becoming advocates for such educational experiencea to their classmates and to the instructor. The latter may then begin to offer the fourth-

credit option in subsequent courses or may decide to redesign a course altogether in order to integrate service.

However, a fourth-credit option is an add-on, not an integral part of the course. If faculty members do not invite the service-learning students to share their community experiences, the service learners will fail to reap the benefits of group reflection. If professors do invite such discussion, it might take some time for the nonservice-learners to become acclimated to the type of discussions that the service learners initiate. Faculty members who approve the option in response to student requests, lacking knowledge of local community agencies, often leave students to rely on their own resources or the advice of the service-learning center for help in selecting a suitable placement. Indeed, without such a center, the fourth-credit option may not be feasible.

Introductory Service-Learning Courses

An introductory course is likely to stress the service experience more than learning a particular discipline. Rather than focusing on one specific issue such as literacy, homelessness, or unemployment, students can learn about several of these issues and the relationships among them. This can motivate students to pursue further service-learning opportunities. An introductory service learning course gives students an early opportunity to serve with the full support of peers and faculty. Being able to discuss what they see and hear in their new experiences may prevent the reinforcement of negative stereotypes about people who are different from themselves.

Brevard Community College in Florida offers a three-credit Community Involvement course in which students give 32 hours of service and spend 32 hours in a seminar. The course develops students' skills and understanding of the community through reflection and action. In pairs, students select and research a relevant social problem, deliver a 15-minute presentation to the class, and submit a five-page research paper. Michigan's Albion College offers a course called Volunteerism, Community and Citizenship in which students spend 30 hours at a community organization. The course investigates the evolution of public service and volunteerism, and focuses on the limits and potentials of volunteerism as well as the balance of individual needs with service to community over one's life span.

Courses Linking Service and Leadership

Linking service with leadership sends an important message to students: that although leadership usually implies excellence and recognition, it also demands humility and compassion. A Jepson School of Leadership Studies course, Leadership and Social Movements, helps University of Richmond students understand the leadership of social movements and their own role in them. By working with leaders of social movements, students learn about strategies used to bring issues into the political system. For example, students choosing to study advocacy for people with mental disabilities might work with the staff of a mental health consumers' association. Another University of Richmond course, Leadership in Community and Volunteer Organizations, imparts a general understanding of the nonprofit sector and its contextual variables that impact on leadership. In this course, students must conduct an administrative task with the staff of a community or volunteer organization.

The article by Drew Leder and Ilona McGuinness in this issue describes the Service Leadership program at Loyola University in Baltimore, and the last issue of *Metropolitan Universities* contained an article describing another approach to linking service learning and leadership at Wright State University in Ohio (Seitz and Pepitone, 1996).

Service as a Limited Course Component

At many institutions there are courses that include a limited service component as the basis of papers, class presentations, and other assignments. The focus of such courses is generally on students learning about an issue, reflecting on the cognitive and affective aspects of the experience, and linking the experience with academic content, rather than on substantial community outcomes. Students are engaged in a variety of service work, such as providing meals in a soup kitchen, tutoring children at risk of academic failure in elementary and middle schools, or cleaning up playgrounds and public areas. Such courses exist throughout the curriculum. For example, at Florida International University in Miami, students provide approximately 10 hours of service as part of courses in world nutrition, social welfare policy, introductory writing, and other subjects. Service may be substituted for other course requirements. In some cases, students may elect to write a synthesis paper based on their service experience instead of a customary research paper. Students write descriptive and analytical reports based on their experi-

ences, identifying issues, programs, and problems faced by clients and those addressing community needs.

A course on the family at Indiana University-South Bend requires four to eight hours of service in a family-related organization. Service options are predetermined with community agencies in which students are involved with home-based day care for migrant children, parenting education, educational enrichment for institutionalized children, and other projects. Students use these experiences as a basis for short papers linking service with course work, examining how the agencies respond to community needs and noting unmet needs and problems.

The service experience is optional in a course at Rhode Island College called Learning by Doing: A Workshop in Sociology. Students learn fieldwork techniques while providing service of their own design. Those not taking the service option are required to complete a final paper that incorporates library research and interviews at community agencies. The aim of the class is both to document and to examine critically how agencies and workers define social problems and relate them to how clients and the public understand these issues. Discussions in class bring together in-depth work by some members in specific settings with the broader perspective of class members involved in developing an overview of services in the community.

Determining whether to make service a required or an optional component of a course is an important decision. Managing a course in which two-thirds of the class choose the service option differs significantly from a course in which all of the students are required to incorporate service. The limited service option may make it easier to introduce service learning to students and faculty. Creating one or two assignments requiring service in the community consumes less of the professor's time than does monitoring an entire term of community placements. The benefits of such an option, however, are limited. The brief exposure to service might reinforce student's negative stereotypes about populations typically in need of service, and reflection might not prod students into sufficient intellectual analysis to have any impact.

Service as an Extensive Course Requirement

In instances where service is an integral and time-intensive part of the course, some institutions have developed a set of criteria for official designation of the course as a service-learning one. The Lowell Bennion Community Service Center at the University of Utah, for example, has established

the following criteria for its designated service learning courses:

- Students in the class provide a needed service to individuals, organizations, schools, or other entities in the community;
- The service experience relates to the subject matter of the course;
- Activities in the class provide opportunities for students to think about what they learned through the service experience and how this learning relates to the subject of the class;
- The course offers a method to assess the learning derived from the service. Credit is given for the learning and its relation to the course, not for the service alone;
- Service interactions in the community recognize the needs of service recipients, and offer an opportunity for recipients to be involved in the evaluation of the service;
- The service opportunities are aimed at the development of the civic education of citizens even though they may also be focused on career preparation;
- Knowledge from the discipline informs the service experiences in which the students are involved;
- The class offers a way to learn from other class members as well as from the instructor.

Students in an anthropology course at the University of Pennsylvania are engaged in group projects that involve working with students at the Turner Middle School in West Philadelphia to understand the relationship among diet, health, nutrition, and growth. The project offers an opportunity for students to apply theory by engaging in community health enhancement. Readings and class discussions focus on theories of health and disease; the evaluation of health; nutrition and growth status at the aggregate level; and formulation, application, and evaluation of intervention programs. Sixteen students teach principles of nutrition to sixth-graders, four students evaluate dietary intakes, three students measure and analyze heights and weights, and three students work on a lunchroom project. Ira Harkavy's article in this issue of *Metropolitan Universities* gives further details about this course.

Using service as an extensive course component can exclude students who work or who have other time constraints. However, many faculty prefer this type of service learning because it transforms their teaching of the disciplinary content of the course and because it enables students to see the connections between service and course concepts more readily.

Service Learning in the Core Curriculum

In the 1994 Campus Compact member survey, 39 percent of the 114 colleges and universities that had revised their core curriculum in the previous five years reported that they included service in these revisions. The primary benefit of integrating service into the core curriculum is that more students have the opportunity to experience service learning. However, this is far easier to accomplish in smaller institutions. Before deciding to integrate service into the core curriculum, administrators and faculty must determine whether enough appropriate service opportunities exist in the community for the student body and whether sufficient faculty and staff support can be provided.

A general education requirement in effective citizenship at Alverno College in Milwaukee prepares students for service to the community by enabling them to develop and act on a vision of public good that enhances the individual and society. Students become aware of the inherently public character of their roles as workers, citizens, and neighbors, fostering the habit of viewing their experience in both individual and public terms. Faculty infuse the study and practice of four components that comprise effective citizenship across the curriculum, in all disciplines, from freshman through senior year: awareness, information gathering, judgment, and leadership/community involvement. Learning experiences focused on these components are part of both curricular and cocurricular experiences that are mentored by faculty. Students initiate applied research projects designed to meet the information needs of community groups, such as evaluating the effectiveness of community programs.

Every first-year student at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, takes the World Views Seminar that explores world views according to a different theme every four years. The two most recent themes have been the Latin American world and the Middle Eastern world. Over half of the World Views sections include service learning through one-time projects. For example, during the Latin American focus, one group of students explored rain forest issues in Latin America by conducting an environmental project locally. Another group served Hispanic migrant farm workers in nearby Woodburn.

Community Service Writing is a joint project of Stanford University's freshman English program and Stanford's Haas Center for Public Service. In the first six years of this project, over 1,700 students participated and engaged in writing projects for more than 100 agencies. Students enrolled in a

freshman English class choose community service agencies and receive writing assignments from those agencies, including newsletter articles, press releases, grant proposals, and brochures. Because they write for an audience in addition to the instructor, students find the program prepares them well for the kind of writing they will need to do in their future careers.

Service as a Graduation Requirement

At Centenary College of Louisiana all students must complete a 30-hour minimum service learning project. This may take the form of participating in a community service project under the direction of the college's service-learning director, an academic departmental project, a service-learning module, an academic course with a service component, or a preapproved independent project. For over 30 years, students at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina have been required to complete 20 hours of service each year. The service is evaluated by an on site supervisor. A pass/fail grade is given, students attend regular seminars, and the service is recorded on the student's transcript.

Beginning in the fall of 1995, North Carolina Central University, which reports offering 100 service-learning courses, instituted a graduation requirement of 120 hours of service. Students register each service experience with the Community Service Program Office and keep journals and portfolios as documentation. First-year students take a service learning course, Personal Growth and Development.

At Portland State University, all entering freshmen are required to take service-learning courses as a requirement for graduation. These are incorporated into the freshmen seminar and throughout the curriculum. A two-course capstone experience embracing both service and academic applications completes undergraduate education. Portland State occupies a somewhat unique position in that it has restructured its curriculum to redirect university work to the community and showcases service learning as a key building block of the curriculum.

Service or service-learning requirements for graduation have been hotly debated and in some cases have been the subject of legal challenges. Proponents argue that a service experience has important benefits, not only to the community but to the student as well, and represents an important opportunity to enhance cognitive growth and instill values related to civic responsibility, community mindedness, and social consciousness. On the other side

of the issue are those who argue that forcing students to do "volunteer" work might provoke a negative reaction from students and may in fact result in harm to the community.

Disciplinary Capstone Projects

Disciplinary capstone projects integrate students' cumulative knowledge in a specific discipline and demonstrate that integration through a project. When combined with service learning, such capstone projects can be especially powerful learning experiences. Recently, the Brown University Center for Environmental Studies (CES) began to require a course called Environmental Problem-Solving for environmental science majors to help them prepare for the senior thesis. Mostly juniors take the course. The Center for Environmental Studies links selected individual students with community groups. The students then collaborate with community groups on topic definition, research design, and results dissemination for their theses. As a result of this new program, the number of students choosing to write their theses on urban environmental issues has sharply increased.

At the University of Utah, students called service scholars engage in 400 hours of community service, take 15 credits of service-learning courses and complete a capstone project that integrates all of these elements. Their transcripts note their status as service scholars.

The capstone project approach to service learning helps students to make deep disciplinary connections to service and to understand the scholarship of service. They also learn how to integrate service into their chosen careers. Service learning in disciplinary capstone projects works if the student has taken prior service learning options as preliminary stepping stones.

Research as Integral to Service

Participatory action research and service-related research make studying community problems and applying the research findings to solutions the center of their service projects. The intent of such research is to change a system while studying it. The researcher does not set the agenda; the group affected by the change does. Because it emphasizes action by the affected group, participatory action research can help students understand the connection between service and citizenship. The service provided—research—does not achieve the desired result by itself. It is intended to empower the group by conducting research and using research results as advocacy tools. By their

involvement, students learn to view service as fostering capacity rather than dependency.

At Drexel University in Philadelphia, sociology majors must take 9 to 15 credits devoted entirely to participatory action research projects supervised by a faculty member. Students become involved in projects during their sophomore year, and many build on their projects to develop a senior thesis. In one project, students worked with a group of senior citizens at a neighborhood community center to conduct a needs assessment of the elderly population in the community. The results improved recruitment practices of an existing senior activity program and enhanced its funding opportunities. As part of another project, students and community members together read a published ethnography of their own neighborhood and wrote responses to it. In an approach similar to the one at Drexel, the University of Pennsylvania Department of Anthropology offers two participatory action research tracks, one in physical anthropology and one in cultural anthropology.

In an upper-division, two-semester oral history course at North Carolina Central University, students are engaged in service that is linked to research in a project supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. They apply oral history skills to chronicling the Jim Crow era in the South. These skills are then passed on to community members who are tracing the history of churches and community service programs in their own communities. Connections are also made to other research universities in the area that are engaged in documentary work on this period.

In a two-semester course on Community and Social Responsibility at Pitzer College in California, students are assigned as participant-observers and field workers in the local school district. The district serves a diverse population comprised primarily of Latino and Asian children. Research by the students discovered significant patterns of ethnic segregation that shaped interaction in the classrooms. This research formed the basis for a component of a more culturally sensitive curriculum and a revision of disciplinary procedure. In the second semester, students work with teachers to develop multicultural lesson plans.

The acquisition and passing on of skills related to research can be an important service to the community, especially if the ends of the research effort are clearly desired and sought after by the community members. This blending of research, service, and teaching requires careful planning and organization. Since they begin without a preordained agenda, participatory action

research projects often lay the groundwork for extended collaboration in the future. Community members favor this approach because it tends to be more sensitive to their agendas and does not amount to research "on" them. Participatory action research, however, does not neatly fit into an academic schedule. Students must be prepared within the time frame of the semester or academic year to identify and respond to community needs. Also, community and scholarly agendas do not automatically merge: the field of research and its action purposes must be worked out with community members. It takes a significant amount of time to build relationships in the community and to establish trust and a common agenda.

Service Learning Internships

Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis has developed nearly 20 group internship projects in which, as stated in the official description, "students provide needed service in the community and take complementary course work which enables their reflection upon theoretical/philosophical aspects of their experiences." Internships include academic work in photography, applied psychology, community health, family studies, English, and other disciplines. Group internships are also organized with students working at the same service site or on the same issue. Enrollment is usually limited to between 8 and 10 students. Seminars provide students with opportunities for reflection about cross-cultural issues, challenges in research design and development, and the application of theory to real-world situations.

Susquehanna University offers an internship called the Psychology Practicum. Students are placed in an array of agencies dealing with child welfare, criminal justice, child health, and other issues, providing up to 125 hours of service per semester. In class meetings, students examine the contested nature of the helping relationship and explore the nature of service. In final papers, students are required to examine key issues facing the agencies and their clients, identifying psychological literature that suggests answers to the problems at hand.

Service-learning internships have a great deal in common with traditional internship programs. Both have common requirements for success, such as careful selection of the site, clear and compelling projects for student assignments, and supervision and monitoring of student work on site. Both should also include opportunities for careful reflection by students on the connections between their actions on the job and their work in classrooms, although

at this time this may be more common in service-learning internships than in others. There is one important distinction with regard to the purposes of the activity. Service-learning internships emphasize the development of civic responsibility and moral character. The clarification of student career interest and the provision of practical experience are viewed as side benefits.

Service-Learning Majors and Minors

In 1993, Providence College opened the Feinstein Institute for Public Service and began to offer an undergraduate major and minor in public and community service studies, the first of its kind in the nation. For the major, students complete a total of 36 credits (12 courses), distributed as follows: a core of four courses, a specialized track of three courses, three courses in leadership skills and fieldwork experience, and two semesters of a capstone experience. For the specialized track, students choose from among the following courses: Not-for-Profit Management, Humanities, Social Science/ Policy Analysis, and Environmental Problems. The minor requires a total of six courses (18 credits).

Majors and minors in public service or community service learning require a strong core of faculty with expertise in this emerging field to teach the extensive number of courses included in the new programs. Partly because these programs are still few in number, educators continue to debate, without a definitive answer, whether service learning represents a method or a content area in education. As a method, service learning shares much with other forms of experiential education; as a content area, service learning needs additional clarification to distinguish it from areas such as nonprofit management.

Conclusion

A growing number of faculty and institutions are responding to the call for service learning in the curriculum. Although service has been increasingly visible on campuses in the last 20 years, moving service learning into the curriculum marks it as central rather than marginal to an institution . Given that service learning helps students and faculty integrate context with content, explore competing definitions of the common good, question the uses of knowledge, and confront multiple layers of meaning, it makes sense to place service learning at the core of our institutions. As we inquire further into the academic benefits of service learning and develop additional evalua-

tion instruments to measure those benefits, perhaps a majority of educators will affirm the importance of service learning in the curriculum and service in higher education. Service was, after all, a primary motivation in the founding of many of our American colleges and universities.

The second issue of the *Higher Education Exchange*, published by the Kettering Foundation in 1995, focused on the disconnection between intellectuals and citizens. Academic knowledge and practical knowledge seem to be worlds apart. Perhaps there is a space in which citizens within and without the academy can redefine scholarship, create new knowledge that bridges academic and practical knowledge, and yield new answers for our times. Perhaps service learning can challenge the dichotomy of expert and experience models of knowledge that have so polarized the academy and the community.

Educational institutions exist to preserve, transmit, and create knowledge. There are both traditional and progressive aspects to these functions. Wilkinson (1994) remarks that "Since education is the sine qua non of the university—both the perpetuation of the status quo and its antithesis, the preparation for change—are integral aspects of its ethos." Service learning represents both a return to the foundations of American higher education and a push into the future. The extent to which service learning can respond to and resonate with some of the key issues that face higher education as a distinct institution that is also a responsible member of the community may determine whether the impact of service learning is brief or long-lasting and deep.

Suggested Readings

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