

Serving to Learn & Learning to Serve in Rural America**2005 National Rural Sociology Meetings, Tampa Florida****Jean C. Karlen and Dawn Hirschman****Wayne State College; Wayne, NE 68787****Introduction: Service-Learning and Rural Colleges/Universities**

Those of us who live, work, and serve in rural America are very cognizant of the impact “ruralness” has on our lifestyles, our professional work, and our communities. Likewise, rural colleges and universities are aware of the impact rural realities have on the reciprocal relationships that develop between colleges and their communities and regions in which they are located. The potential benefits of positive college/community relationships, collaborative partnerships, and overlapping networks for both colleges and communities have long been recognized in higher education and emphasized by many academics, administrators, community agencies, rural schools, etc. Indeed, service to region appears to be a standard feature of most college mission statements. Thus, service-learning with its emphasis on collaborative community/college partnerships to address recognized community needs seems like an excellent opportunity for expanding the rural college/community repertoire enhancing the quality of living and learning in rural America.

Articles and books on service-learning generally espouse the value of the provided services and projects for community partners, the general contribution of service-learning to community development, and the improved relationships between the campus and community. (Zlotkowski, 1998; Crews, 2002; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoeker, & Donahue, 2003). Although articles focusing on rural service-learning are somewhat limited, available materials

cite the value of service-learning and its potential contributions to rural agencies, organizations, and communities. Vernon and Ward (1999) examined the perceptions of community agencies in rural areas regarding the service-learning campus partners and service-learning student participants. They report “communities overwhelmingly have positive perceptions of campuses in their areas” and the students with whom they work. Other writers have emphasized the increased potential significance of service-learning in rural areas given the limited resources available in rural communities to address their needs (Byers, 1994; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Miller, 1997, Weinberg, 2003). These ideas are underscored by recent economic news regarding continuing depressed rural economies (Bailey & Preston, 2003 & 2005) and the proposed reductions in federal and state funding for rural development. (See Center for Rural Affairs newsletters at www.cfra.org.)

While the potential reciprocal benefits of service-learning for rural areas appear fairly obvious, this recognition does not address the different types of service-learning projects and programs that may develop in rural areas. This is an important consideration. Just as location affects the general operation of a college so too does it impact the type of service-learning program that develops. Holland’s study of organizational factors associated with various institutional approaches to service-learning reports “the relationship of each institution to its community will have unique elements that reflect the expectations, limitations, and opportunities presented by history, economy, culture, geography, and even the weather” (1997:40).

Factors that appear to be particularly significant for service-learning at smaller colleges located in rural areas are distance, limited agency diversity, smaller agency staffs, limited technological expertise, and heavy reliance on volunteers for a variety of community activities including fire and rescue services (Karlen, Munderloh and Hirschman, 2002). The lack of inter-

agency infrastructure, a “community” that may involve a fairly wide geographic area as compared to urban neighborhoods, and small population densities all affect service-learning opportunities in rural areas (Holton, 2004). Weinberg (2003) mentions that few non-profit organizations, fewer local foundations, and volunteer-based local governments are features that increase the need for community-based research as a service-learning activity. Lewis (2004) identifies challenges for changing from a charity to a social justice approach to service-learning. Rural service-learning programs are, in many ways, fairly unique enterprises deserving of study.

This paper reports on the service-learning experiences of a small public college located in a rural region in the Midwest. It is an update on a 2002 Rural Sociological Society presentation. Since that time, our service-learning program has continued to develop. This presentation offers a glimpse into the operation and development of a rural service-learning program. Types of service-learning experiences within the college are compared. Results from service-learning assessment data from students and faculty are summarized. Our intent is to provide a general view of the challenges, choices, outcomes and opportunities associated with a rural service-learning program.

Service-Learning – A General Overview

For the past ten to fifteen years, service-learning has developed as a recognized pedagogy with multiple positive outcomes for students, faculty, institutions, and community partners. Simply stated, service-learning is “a teaching/learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities” (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse Website; July 2005). Although most service-learning definitions imply an academic course connection, co-curricular service-learning is also recognized in the field.

Interested individuals, agencies, administrators, and campus practitioners will find a plethora of sources and resources available on service-learning. There are special journals such as the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, national and regional conferences, organizations such as Campus Compact and the Corporation for National Service, special web sites such as those supported by the national Learn & Serve America program (www.servicelearning.org; www.learnandserve.gov) and various list serves all specifically devoted to the topic of service-learning. The number of monographs and books published in the area has also increased substantially in the past three to five years providing readers with information about a full range of topics including a general sourcebook for higher education (Crews, 2002), a toolkit to develop an engaged department (Battistoni, Gelman, Saltmarsh, Wergin, Zlotkowski, 2003) and an assessment guidebook (Gelman, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, and Kerrigan, 2001).

Specific academic disciplines have also contributed to the expansion of service-learning knowledge and research including service-learning articles in their publications, at times, devoting entire issues to the topic of service-learning as has been the case for Teaching Sociology in 1998 and 2001. Service-learning papers and/or sessions are increasingly found at annual conferences in a variety of disciplines. Wayne State College (WSC) faculty and students have given recent presentations on their experiences at a variety of conferences including the areas of art education, family and consumer science, communication, business, and sociology.

Funds to implement and support service-learning are also available from such sources as Learn & Serve America (www.LearnAndServe.gov), Campus Compact (www.Compact.org/grants), and the Kellogg Foundation (www.wkkf.org). Institutions of higher education across the country have established centers, institutes, and programs focusing on service-learning and civic engagement. Some institutions even have a service-learning experience as a graduation

requirement (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, University of California-Davis, and Aquinas College/Washington State). Others have established national reputations anchored in their service-learning programs (Augsburg College/Minnesota; Portland State/Oregon).

As service-learning has developed, related research and funding agencies have increasingly emphasized the importance of evaluation, impact, and assessments regarding student outcomes, faculty participation, agency outcomes, and community partnerships. Articles about such service-learning discussion topics as charity-based vs. social justice service-learning philosophies, civic engagement, and community-based research have appeared in recent issues of the Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning. Debates regarding definitions of concepts and such details as what constitutes a service-learning “hour” continue.

Considering the wealth of service-learning materials, as was noted previously, information specifically focusing on service-learning in rural areas remains somewhat limited. The bibliography on rural service-learning (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse FAQ: Rural Service-Learning 2000) is five years old and focuses primarily on K-12. The K-12 emphasis is also evident in the sources listed in the ERIC rural education clearinghouse digest. Specific reports of experiences of college faculty regarding specific courses and departments are scattered throughout the literature, on the internet, and as links on college web sites. These sources consistently express positive views about service-learning in rural colleges. However, many articles offer warnings about various pitfalls associated with this approach. Harris (2004) mentions issues that can emerge when community organizations anticipate preferred results. Dahlquist, White, and Humphers-Ginther (2004) express concern that faculty may sacrifice serious research opportunities and academic freedom in the process of implementing service-learning projects. Similarly, Weinberg (2003:26) notes that while community-based research can

be a “vibrant and effective form of service-learning especially in rural communities, but there is little flexibility and high consequences for failed projects.”

Thus, colleges in rural America encounter circumstances that present both opportunities and challenges to creating and sustaining service-learning community partnerships. It is within this context that our students serve to learn and learn to serve. It is within this context that rural service-learning programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated. Wayne State College’s story provides a case study for consideration.

College and Community Setting

Wayne State College (WSC) is a small comprehensive public college in the heart of rural America with a student enrollment of approximately 3500 students and 150 full and part-time faculty. Many WSC undergraduates come from communities smaller than Wayne (pop. 5000). Approximately 40% are first generation college students; 20% tend to be classified as “non-traditional” students; and the majority (75%) are employed at least 20 hours a week or more.

Wayne, Nebraska sits amidst farms, feedlots, and small towns. Nine communities are located within 15- 30 driving miles; most have populations of about 1000 or less. The community is considered a regional service center for people living in the area, in addition to its label as a “college town.” The nearest “major” population centers are Norfolk (pop. 25,000) located 35 miles to the southwest and Sioux City, Iowa (pop. 100,000) situated 40 miles to the northeast. Three Indian reservations, each with its own community college, are found within the region.

Like many rural regions these days, the area is characterized by population decline, an aging population, increased in-migration of Latinos who arrive to work in the beef and poultry plants, poverty rates that exceed those found in urban areas, persistent low income and earnings,

and greater reliance on unearned income (Bailey and Preston, 2003). Concerns about economic, health, and educational resources are expressed daily in coffee groups, in agency offices, and at board meetings. In spite of these challenges, residents, in general, value the quality of life they have in rural America, frequently join with their neighbors in community development efforts, and express optimism about their future (Allen, Vogt, and Cantrell, 2004).

Service-Learning at Wayne State College

Overview:

Service-Learning at WSC is in its sixth year. It is now a part of the college landscape. Our “core” group of faculty, those who utilize service-learning regularly in their classes, has gradually expanded to approximately 15 faculty from a variety of disciplines. Interest in co-curricular service-learning is increasing. We have a strong base of support among faculty interested in environmental issues, education, rural poverty, and community development. Overall, our program has a mix of agency placements, specialized community-based events/programs, agency/organizational projects, and community-based research. During the past five years, over 50 faculty members representing over 20 academic disciplines have participated in academic and/or co-curricular service-learning. On average, service-learning involves 400 students enrolled in 15 courses (involving 25-30 classes) each semester. Many courses are becoming “known” for the service-learning experiences they offer. Examples include the general education biology course where enrolled students participate in the campus recycling project; students in Business Communications consistently develop promotional and/or fund raising materials for area non-profits.

Since 2000, the institution has supported service-learning personnel. A faculty campus coordinator and a budget manager/staff assistant have had 20% of their “load” assigned to

service-learning. In addition, \$100,000 in grant funds has been received to support WSC service-learning activities over the past five years. Approximately 60% of these funds are used to provide direct support to service-learning courses. Grant funds and institutional monies have also been used to underwrite the occasional hiring of student workers, supported attendance/participation at professional conferences for faculty and students, and paid for course-based service-learning celebrations.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, 25 faculty representing 16 disciplines from all four schools within the college were engaged in service-learning. This included some 36 classes and over 875 students. In addition, 4 co-curricular service-learning projects involving 10 faculty and professional staff and some 65 students received sub grant support. Collectively, WSC students provided over 9000 “hours” to service-learning either through individual agency placements or participation in service-learning projects. Approximately 40 community agencies/organizations and 14 area elementary and high schools were involved.

Student Outcomes:

Post-service surveys from 474 students over three semesters were the primary source of student outcome data used for this paper. The student survey consisted primarily of an attitude scale containing 17 statements about community needs, civic responsibility, and course content learning, all related to service-learning. Students were asked to respond to the items by indicating their agreement/disagreement with the statements on a four-point Likert scale ranging from a “4” indicating “strongly agree” to a “1” for strongly disagree. (Reverse coding was used, where appropriate for calculating total scores.) Attitudes were measured by examining the combined percentages of “strongly agree” and “agree” responses for the items for each semester data were available. In addition, mean total scores and mean total “service-learning” hours were calculated.

The results showed strong support for service-learning, echoing the positive findings cited in the literature. Student responses regarding enhanced learning of course materials (primarily Items 7, 8, & 13), a sense of civic responsibility (primarily Items 3, 10, 11), and support for service-learning in the curriculum (Items 5, 14, 15) were all quite positive. Combined percentages of favorable responses were all in the upper 80s and above for the items noted above except items 6, 12 and 13 which had reversed wording.

Student responses were also remarkably consistent across items for all three semesters. Lower percentages were noted on item #9 (73.9% to 79.2%) regarding awareness of prejudices and biases and plans to enroll in more courses that offer service-learning (63% -69.6%). The former may be associated with the more project-based approach that dominates service-learning at WSC which provides less direct contact with clients in agency settings. (See Appendix A for a summary of student survey data.)

Mean total attitude scores were quite positive for the years for which data were available. Average aggregate means were 52.76 in fall 2003, 53.61 in fall 2004, and 52.86 in spring 2005. Though not specifically reported in this paper, student reflections also indicate enhanced learning outcomes and a sense of service/civic responsibility.

Faculty Outcomes:

Faculty outcomes were based on information from a faculty luncheon “focus” group (N=9), 8 faculty interviews, surveys from 9 faculty, and a multitude of informal faculty conversations/consultations. During the faculty luncheon, the conversation focused on faculty stories, frustrations, service-learning questions, and suggestions. It was obvious that faculty “believe” in the motto, “serving to learn and learning to serve,” but admit that service-learning

takes more time than regular courses. Faculty report spending anywhere from 15 -100 hours on course-related service-learning projects; 30-40 “extra” hours was the average time reported.

Time demands and constraints appear to be the biggest obstacles. In addition, “little things” (a cancelled appointment, missed meeting, unreturned phone call, incomplete communication, etc.) on the part of agencies, students, administration, etc. can greatly hamper project progress. Lessons are learned from these experiences and the subsequent adjustments but the process can be very time-consuming and frustrating.

Faculty appreciate the financial support provided by the campus sub grants and the funding of campus celebrations which provides students with important recognition. They consistently indicate that enhanced learning outcomes and addressing recognized community needs “keep them going.” Faculty participants are motivated to use this pedagogy because it works. These statements were reinforced by the data from faculty interviews, faculty post service-learning surveys, post-service follow-up reports, and multiple informal conversations.

Faculty survey responses were fairly consistent regarding the positive value faculty attribute to service-learning. Negative responses were rare. Enhanced student learning received the highest rating as a reason to use service-learning in a course. This was followed by a desire to increase relevance in the course and encouraging civic responsibility. In addition, faculty reported that service-learning had affected them in three primary ways (in their relationships with students, with community partners, and in their own service in the community). It appears service-learning not only impacts students, it impacts faculty as well. (See Appendix B for the summary results of the faculty survey.)

Faculty comments reinforce this message. As one faculty mentioned “I want to help students see that there is more than their own little world. With all the assignments, they often

don't think of others.” Another faculty involved in a recycling project said, “I know I'm helping my environment. Service-learning is the best activity to mesh what you're doing with what's going on in the real world. It's an incredible (though dirty) learning experience – making a difference in the environment. There is no better way to learn Environmental Concerns than to get your hands dirty.” A third remarked “Students get so much out of service-learning. The interaction with senior citizens allows them to see service...Some incidents provide good experiences because they are hard to simulate in class.” “Why use cases when you have reality and when seeing the completion of projects makes the work worth while,” was offered by yet another faculty member.

Service-Learning at WSC - Upper Level, Project-Based Service-Learning:

From early on, service-learning at WSC has been characterized by two features. Service-learning courses tended to be found in upper level courses and involve participation in various agency/organizational projects (vs. individual placements). These two seemingly simple features are in many ways related, directly and/or indirectly, to their rural locus. In addition, a number of practical, logistical, and pedagogical issues/ramifications come into play with the type of service-learning program we have described.

Course Level: The inclusion of service-learning into upper level courses has numerous ramifications. First, upper level courses tend to have fewer students (10-20). This reduces the total number of students involved with a particular project and increases the involvement and contributions of individual students. Second, the number of projects and/or placements required to achieve course goals is reduced. Third, the projects also tend to involve more specific and direct applications of course content such as conducting a marketing survey or producing a web site. Fourth, upper level students tend to bring a higher level of knowledge and expertise to the

project and are thus able to successfully respond to specific agency/community needs. Fifth, the ability of students to apply their “professional” skills to a community project provides them with a direct experience to utilize what they are learning in school as preparation for a professional career can also be quite useful in a number of community settings. The work of the Computer Science students who set up the computers and the online catalog system for a library in a nearby community is a prime example.

Service-Learning Courses- Types, Definitions, and Examples: Service-Learning literature tends to recognize four general types of service-learning experiences (direct, indirect, community-based research and advocacy). Specific definitions of these terms tend to vary depending on the institution or author involved; however, certain themes are noted. For example, “direct service-learning” generally involves situations where students are in “direct” contact with clients/client groups and operate in a “community-based” setting. For the purposes of analysis and clarification, this category can be further sub divided into two sub types including “individualized student placements” and “specialized community-based programs and events.” The latter sub type tends to involve student groups who (in cooperation with faculty and community partners) organize special events or programs and carry them out primarily in off-campus community settings with community members as the audience or participants. WSC examples of these “specialized community-based programs and events” include coordinating a healthy lifestyle competition involving fourth graders in 6 area schools, a “Family Math Day” at an area elementary school, and the collection and planting of native grass seeds as part of a Prairie Restoration Project.

“Indirect service-learning projects” involve students in the creation/design, production, and, at times, distribution of a variety of materials used/needed by agencies. Items may include

promotional brochures, fund raising letters/flyers, web sites, power point presentation slides, employee handbooks, etc. The activities indirectly address community needs providing a needed item(s) and contributing to agencies/organizations overall effectiveness and operation. Some specific WSC examples include the researching and publication of a directory of self-help groups, the construction of receiving blankets and quilts for distribution to low income new mothers at the local hospital, and the preparation of an operations manual for a local United Way.

Community-based research is defined as “a partnership of students, faculty, and community members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting community change” (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoeker, & Donahue 2003: 3). At WSC this type of service-learning tends to occur in research courses and involves survey design, data entry, and/or analysis for communities in the region who use the results for grant applications surveys and/or community planning. At the present time, WSC “advocacy service-learning” (activities where students lend their voices and talents toward an issue in the public interest) is very limited and would apply only to co-curricular projects. (See handouts for short summaries of WSC academic and co-curricular service-learning.)

Service-Learning Course Classifications: A recent classification of our service-learning courses over the past 6 semesters showed that no more than 12 % of the service-learning courses during any semester involved the placement of student volunteers in area agencies. This finding contrasts with much of the service-learning literature that emphasizes individualized student placements. Over the past six semesters, 70-75% of service-learning courses have been either specialized community-based programs/events or indirect service-learning projects. Another 10-

20% of the courses have involved community-based research service-learning. (See Table 1 for course classifications and distributions over time.)

Table 1: Course Classifications

SEMESTER (*COURSES NOT SECTIONS)	STUDENT PLACEMENTS	SPECIALIZED COMMUNITY – BASED PROGRAMS & EVENTS	INDIRECT PROJECTS	COMMUNITY- BASED RESEARCH
Fall 2002 (20)	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	9 (45%)	2 (10%)
Spring 2003 (20)	2 (10%)	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)
Fall 2003 (6)	1 (16%)	1 (16%)	3 (50%)	1 (16%)
Spring 2004 (10)	1 (10%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)
Fall 2004 (14)	1 (7%)	4 (29%)	6 (43%)	3 (21%)
Spring 2005 (17)	2 (12%)	7 (41%)	6 (35%)	2 (12%)

Total (87) *Each semester no more than 12% of Service-Learning Courses involved

The Implications of a Project-based, Upper Level, Service-Learning Program: As noted earlier, approximately 90% of the service-learning courses at WSC can be broadly defined as project-based. Upon closer examination, a number of logistical, relational, and pedagogical aspects are worth commentary.

First, project-based service-learning tends to produce community “outcomes” that are more tangible, more easily “documented.” An event happens, a special program occurs, survey results are reported. In addition, “indirect” projects and community-based research tend to result in more tangible products whose value extends beyond a particular semester or course. Consequently, repetition of the project in another semester is unnecessary. New projects addressing “new” community needs must be identified.

Second, service-learning efforts also tend to be completed in concentrated time blocks in the classroom, in the field, or during agency consultations and/or presentations. This allows easier scheduling for students who frequently commute and/or are employed compared to service-learning placements that require students to find a few hours during every week to do service-learning.

Third, projects, particularly those involving direct specialized events/programs may require students to spend a block of time, at times an entire day, at a site. Thus, projects require the cooperation of employers and other faculty whose classes may be missed by students involved in a service-learning day with the Nature Conservancy, a local community center, or an area school.

Fourth, service-learning projects require more time from the instructor in planning, coordinating, and monitoring project progress with both agency partners and student teams. At WSC service-learning faculty who use a project-based approach identify the extra time involved as the biggest demand in service-learning.

Fifth, when we combine a project-based approach with an internal sub grant process, budget management can be very challenging and time consuming. While faculty are appreciative of the support for their projects; as with all things that depend on the actions of others, the

process can be stymied by just one person. As a state institution, working with faith-based organizations can sometimes be tricky and purchasing of certain items, such as food, must be carefully documented in both the faculty sub grant as well as the institutional budget narrative.

Sixth, service-learning time variations occur. The actual time students tend to devote to a project also tends to vary by course, depending on the project and course enrollment. For example, WSC students involved in the campus recycling project report completing 4-5 hours while the computer science students who were involved in a technology project for a small parochial school averaged 40-50 hours. At times, an agency request may only require a small number of hours to complete. The completion of the project may certainly be important to the community partner but be far below the 15-20 hours recommended in the literature. The dilemma is – do we turn down a project because it does not meet the recommended academic hour component or do we meet the community need which is the hallmark of this approach. At WSC the latter option is usually selected.

Seventh, the primary relationship of service-learning shifts from those between student and client to those between faculty and agency personnel. With this shift, the positive student–client relationships reported in the literature associated with student placements in agencies are less likely to occur. However, the fundamental faculty/agency bonds that emerge may contribute to future project partnerships and a stronger sense of reciprocity between partners than may be the case for direct placements.

Eighth, at times, the same agency may be a partner in multiple service-learning courses during a given semester. Such was the case for two agencies in spring 2005 when each was involved in five separate service-learning courses. These situations lead to the development of what we might call “core” community partners, a situation we expect to investigate more

seriously next year. Coordination and communication are obviously key factors in managing these situations.

Ninth, service-learning involves a “match game” linking appropriate courses and community projects which, at times, is not successful. A community request for assistance may not be filled because appropriate courses and/or interested faculty are not available. On the flip side, there may be faculty members who cannot find suitable community projects for particular courses. Course rotations also impact this process. Wayne State College’s smaller size affects the course rotations which, in turn, have an impact on how we manage service-learning. Many upper level courses are not offered every semester or even every year so a “start & stop” phenomenon may develop. Finding a different yet similar course often taught by another faculty member to meet the demands of ongoing programs or projects can be challenging. At times, we may not even have a “match” (suitable course for an agency’s request taught by a faculty member interested in service-learning) and a community request is denied or delayed.

Tenth, project-based service-learning involves students with a more “institutional” type of client. Students spend more time with agency representatives rather than clients, business managers rather than customers or employees, and teachers rather than students. In the process, student comments tend to emphasize strong learning outcomes related to the “serving to learn” component of service-learning experience. However, faculty must make special efforts to frame the project in a service-learning context to enhance the “learning to serve” component of the experience. At times, these more “professional” experiences are not as easily defined by students as “service” compared to tutoring ESL students in a community center.

In summary, the project-based approach that characterizes our service-learning program presents us with an interesting mix of service-learning experiences each with its own set of

challenges and benefits. An awareness and understanding of these educational and situational factors contributes to a more realistic approach to managing the “realities” of service-learning institutionally and individually as faculty.

Course Comparisons:

Given the course variations we have described, we were curious whether student learning outcomes would vary depending on the type of service-learning course involved and/or the time students devoted to service-learning.

Service-Learning Hours: Students reported a wide range of service-learning hours ranging from 3-5 hours for a Family Math Day event at a local school to an average of 140 hours for students involved in a wellness program for senior citizens. Calculating the mean number of hours for students in different types of service learning courses also showed variation both within a semester and between the fall and spring terms. For example, mean hours for students involved in indirect project-based service-learning were 19.38 in the fall and 9.29 in the spring. Similarly, individual student placements mean hours were 30.34 in the fall and 14.59 in the spring.

Course Type and Service-learning Total Scores: Total service-learning scores also showed some variation with an average score of 35.9 for a Latino youth project with multiple logistical complications to 57.5 for students serving as pen pals to 4th graders as part of a literacy assessment project.

For the most part, mean sum scores for different types of service-learning courses did not show much variation in spite of differences in the number of reported service-learning hours. In fall 2004, scores ranged from 52.57 (mean hours = 19.38) for indirect project-based courses to 55.47 (mean hours = 30.34) for direct placement courses. In spring 2005, comparable course

scores were 52.32 (mean hours = 9.29) for indirect projects and 54.58 (mean hours = 14.59) for direct placement courses. (See Table 2 for more details.)

Table 2: Mean Total Service-Learning Hours and Total Service-Learning Scores by Service-Learning Category

	FALL 2004		SPRING 2005	
	How many service hours did you complete through this course assignment?			
	Mean Score	Mean Hours	Mean Score	Mean Hours
Student Placements	55.47 N=32	30.34 N=32	54.5833 N=36	14.59 N=34
Specialized Community-Based Programs and Events	53.36 N=102	15.02 N=93	52.2292 N=96	17.42 N=83
Indirect Projects	52.57 N=37	19.38 N=26	52.3200 N=25	9.29 N=14
Community-Based Research	53.87 N=15	25.00 N=15		
Totals	53.61 N=186	19.56 N=166	52.8605 N=158	15.71 N=132

According to the data, it does not appear that service-learning course type has much influence on student attitude scores regarding their service-learning experiences.

Time and Total Scores: There is some evidence that, regardless of course type, time spent on service-learning is somewhat correlated with more positive attitudes regarding service-learning. Comparisons of means between post-service scores and time using four time categories (5 or less, 6-10, 11-20, 21+) for data from 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 show that students who spend less time on service-learning have lower scores (less positive attitudes). The data shows

that mean scores tend to increase for every hour category for 2003-2004 and Fall 2004.

However, such was not the case for Spring 2005. (See Table 3 for more details.)

Table 3: Comparison of Survey Total Means and Service-Learning Time Categories

Service-Learning Hours Reported	SURVEY MEANS		
	2003-2004	Fall 2004	Spring 2005
Five or less	50.57	48.40	54.91
6 – 10	50.78	53.70	55.62
11 - 20	55.91	54.61	55.29
21+	58.25	54.72	54.36

Obviously, more research in these areas of the possible relationships between student outcomes and course type or time spent on service-learning, is needed especially since most literature strongly recommends 15-20 hours.

Conclusion

In sum, our diverse data support service-learning as an approach to accomplish multiple goals ranging from enhanced student learning, to possible faculty “transformations,” to contributions to the quality of life in a region. Service-learning appears to develop differently in rural areas. Anyway, such was the case for Wayne State College We have found that a project-based approach seems to “fit” our institutional, educational, and community situations. We also recognize that this approach is a more demanding technique than individualized student placements and must be supported as such. We encourage other institutions to do similar analyses to see if this pattern is repeated at other rural institutions. For those serving rural communities, these variations can make a difference in the way we promote, implement, and evaluate service-learning on our campuses.

“Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve in Rural America”

RSS 2005 Meetings

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