

Integrating Diversity Education and Service Learning: A 15+ Year Journey Continues

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Abstract

This paper reports the 15+ year journey undertaken by university faculty to integrate service learning with diversity education. It has taken the faculty from its initial integration of academic community learning and diversity education in 1999 to its current course offering in 2015. The purpose of this integration has remained the same, to engage graduate students in exploring varied aspects of diversity while learning to work and live in a diverse world and serving the needs of the community. Over the years, graduate students enrolled in the diversity course have been participants in service learning experiences of their choice in diverse, non-profit community-based organizations. With few exceptions, based on student reflective journals, the instructor's service learning pedagogy, and the students' organization choices, service learning in diverse environments has contributed to positive change in students' views about diversity.

Keywords: Graduate students, Diversity, Service learning

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Introduction

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 defines service learning as a method: (a) in which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs, (b) that is integrated into students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for students to think, talk, or write about what that student did and saw during the service activity; (c) that provides students chances to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and (d) that enhances teaching in school by extending student learning into the community and helps foster a sense of caring for others. The Student Service Alliance, Maryland Department of Education provides a model of service learning used throughout the United States. The Alliance advocates a planning cycle that includes: preparation, action, and reflection. According to Kraft (1996), although some agreement on the definition of service learning has been achieved in recent years, its practice in schools and colleges varies widely.

At the university where this journey has taken place, service learning is described as the application of academic skills and knowledge to address a community need, issue, or problem and to enhance student learning at the university where this study took place. The university also uses a view of service learning set forth by Bringle and Hatcher (1996) which states that service learning is "a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (1996, p. 2). Regardless of how service learning is defined, the basic components found in any university program are (a) meaningful service and academic rigor, (b) active service engagement with a community, (c) significant impact on everyone involved (students, instructors, community service providers, and people in the community), and (d) an expectation that students will meet the instructor's stated objectives.

Review of Literature

The following section provides a summary of existing literature related to service learning in higher education and how various programs have evolved as has the program at our institution.

Service Learning in Higher Education Evolves

Service learning has grown considerably at the postsecondary level since we began our first effort over 16 years ago. Surprisingly, the integration of diversity education with service learning has also grown. Although the idea of service learning as a strategy to enhance instruction about diversity was largely untested at the time we began, findings from King, Perez, and Shim (2013) suggest service learning to be an appropriate strategy to teach about diversity at the postsecondary level. They examined how students experience intercultural learning using data from the Wabash National Study. The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education was a large longitudinal study to examine critical factors that affect the outcomes of liberal arts education. The aim was to help colleges and universities improve student learning and enhance the educational impact of their programs (Center of Inquiry). Using data from this study, King, Perez, and Shim found that "intercultural learning occurred when students directly encountered others' experiences; feeling safe enough to explore cultural differences was a key dimension of intercultural learning; and students used a variety of approaches that led to intercultural learning and that these varied in degree of complexity and agency" (2013, p. 69). Their finding that intercultural learning occurred when students directly encountered others' experiences, coupled with a major component of any service learning program—providing opportunities for students to engage in community service through a hands-on approach, supports use of service learning as a strategy to teach about diversity issues.

Holsapple (2012) conducted a critical review of 55 studies of the impact of service-learning participation on students' diversity outcomes, identifying six diversity-related outcomes that emerged from the studies. These outcomes included tolerance of difference, stereotype confrontation, recognition of universality, interactions across difference, knowledge about the served population, and

belief in the value of diversity. Although Holsapple offered some criticisms and suggestions for improvement, he concluded that “diversity researchers and higher education leaders should give serious consideration to service-learning when they are considering ways to help prepare students to work and live in a diverse world” (p. 15), thus also supporting this integration between diversity education and service learning.

Celio, Durlack, and Dymnicki’s (2011) developed a meta-analysis focused on the impact of service learning on students, perhaps motivated by the growth of service learning as a teaching strategy, even though student outcomes associated with service learning are still unclear to some. Their work included 62 studies involving 11,837 students and resulted in findings that “students participating in SL programs demonstrated significant gains in five outcome areas: attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic performance” (2011, p. 74). They also stated that there was empirical support for the belief held by many educators that if certain practices are followed, such as linking to curriculum, community involvement, and reflection, better outcomes are likely.

Over the years, many colleges and universities have become embroiled in the service learning phenomena, moving from individual faculty providing service learning opportunities to a few classes, to full-scale service learning programs and offices. Practically every program we reviewed had at least these three service activities as identified by Ohio State University’s Office of Service Learning: is connected to specific learning outcomes, meets identified community needs, and provides structured time for student reflection and connection of the service experience to learning (Ohio State University). The university level service learning programs or offices consistently state similar definitions of service learning as well as similar goals and objectives. This consequence suggests that there is consensus among educators about service learning’s place as a teaching tool, again even though some say the merits of service learning are still not fully known. However, evidence of the positive outcomes from service learning is becoming more and more apparent. For example, The University of Missouri has an Office of Service Learning that was founded in 1995. This office grew from a need to understand why students were not participating in the community. Focus groups revealed two problems, time and connections. Initially, Missouri’s Honors College Community Involvement Program grew from the focus group findings in 1990, but five years later, that course became the Office of Service Learning. In 2001, a study of “students ages 18 to 22 was conducted and showed that greater numbers of students were engaged in community service. Students now entered college with an expectation of community involvement and opportunities to provide service in the community within which they lived” (Office of Service Learning).

The University of Richmond launched The Bonner Center for Civic Engagement in 2004, a fully operational center that grew out of existing programs; the Bonner Scholars Program, the Center for Faith and Service, service learning and other community-based learning courses, and the School of Professional and Continuing Studies (University of Richmond). The Bonner Center for Civic Engagement states that it seeks to connect students with opportunities to enhance their education outside the classroom, address community-identified needs, and build students’ understanding of the larger social contexts that shape their off-campus experiences through community-based learning (CBL), another term often used to describe service learning. Regardless of the term used, service learning courses at universities attempt to connect classroom and community. Service learning projects at universities are designed to meet community needs and must partner with community organizations to provide experiential learning opportunities. If all goes well, community partners become fully engaged and supportive of service learning on a recurring basis (University of Richmond).

According to Miami Dade College’s Institute for Civic Engagement and Democracy (iCED), service-learning is “a teaching and learning tool that combines course content with organized community service experiences at local nonprofit organizations” (Miami Dade College). This office was established in 1994, but as the Service-Learning Center with a Learn and Serve grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service for the purpose of developing a service-learning

program at the college. Due to growth and after joining the Democracy Commitment and participating in the development of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' national call to action, a new mission statement was developed and the department's efforts evolved to include civic learning and democratic engagement. Although the iCED now has many programs serving all of its campuses, its flagship program is academic service learning. It is said to be the largest of any community college in the US with 300 faculty, 1000 course sections, and 8000 students involved in course-related service each year (Miami Dade College).

The Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (ASLER) (1993) states that:

service learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully-organized service experiences... that meet actual community needs, that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community, that are integrated into each young person's academic curriculum, that provide structured time for young people to think, talk, and write about what they did and said during the service project, that provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life, situations in their own communities, that enhance what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom, and that help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others. (p.2)

The Kentucky Learn and Service Project planning model includes preparation, meaningful service, structured reflection, and recognition/celebration. The National Association of Secondary School Principals, Department of Student Activities, and Quest International Foundation advocate a four-step model: preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration. Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis developed a model, Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning (CAPSL) that identifies four constituencies on which a program for service learning needs to focus its principle activities: institution, faculty, students, and community. Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990) provide an example of a student development model that identifies the following five phases of involvement in service learning: exploration (naïve excitement), clarification (values clarification), realization (insight into the meaning of service), activation (participation and advocacy), and internalization (the service experience influences career and life choices).

Evolving Models and Strategies

According to Burns (1998), the four components common to the models presented here are a solid foundation to plan and execute instructional service learning activities or projects through: preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration/recognition. These are the four components used in our initial integration of diversity and service learning although they are identified as those used in K-12 education. In the *preparation* phase, needs of the community are assessed, a viable need and learner outcomes are identified, the core content (knowledge and skills) of the adopted curriculum (school, agency, program) to be learned through the service learning unit are identified, interested community leaders and organizations to become involved are identified, orientation and professional development activities with community leaders and organizations about service learning and the instructional strategies to be implemented, assessed, and evaluated are conducted, the instructional unit or project is planned, the roles and responsibilities of the school (students, teachers) community leaders and organizations, and other involved human services, agencies, program directors and resources are identified, and students are oriented and prepared for assuming their role(s), understanding the learning outcomes, and demonstrating the expected social behaviors (p. 40).

Burns (1998) continues to describe the *action* phase where you would facilitate development of the knowledge and skills needed by students to initiate and complete the academic community learning project. You would also facilitate student planning, research, problem solving, and evaluation relative to the identified community need. Another part of the *action* phase would involve implementation of the academic community learning activity or strategy, continuously assessing and involving students in assessing achievement and progress, as well as correcting and adjusting activities and strategies (p. 40).

In the *reflection* phase, Burns (1998) states that this involves requiring students to engage in continuous reflection processes during the planning and implementation phases through writing, speaking, and demonstration activities. During this phase, you would facilitate continuous student investigation and research, engage students in assessment and evaluation of the project or unit, connect and link activities so students have the opportunity to understand the meaning and impact of their efforts, and facilitate the reflection, assessment, and evaluation by community leaders and organizations (p. 40).

Finally, in the *demonstration/recognition* phase, Burns (1998) states that students are involved in reporting to peers, faculty, and/or community members. Students are engaged in tasks such as writing for publications (newspapers, magazines, and newsletters), videotaping or live television programs, producing an audiotape or radio program, creating Internet information, or publishing a brochure or book. In this phase you would recognize students, teachers, and community members for learning/achievement and accepting social responsibility. Examples of how stakeholders would be recognized include complimentary oral and written communications, awarding T-shirts with the community need identified, organizing a project that includes a trip, lapel pins, awarding certificates of appreciation, and other types of rewards appropriate to the stakeholders involved (p. 41).

The following list, prepared by the National Youth Leadership Council (Cairns & Kielsmeier, 1991), is exemplary of the types of projects carried out by many college and secondary students in the early 90s: bicycle shop, Big Buddies, blood drive, board membership, building projects, clothes collection, community education classes, community history, cooking meals, crisis center, day care, emergency services, environmental research, environmental cleanup, fund-raising for charities, gardens, helping the homebound, home chores, hot lines, Meals on Wheels, overseas volunteers, paint-a-thons, peer helpers and tutors, performing arts, planting trees, public awareness, public media, reading for the blind, recreation programs, recycling, research, special equipment, Special Olympics, tax preparation, tutoring, victim aid, visiting institutionalized people, visual art, voter education, youth agencies, youth leadership, and youth sports. Most, if not all of these strategies, are still being used today.

In an 11-week political science class called "Public Policy: the Homeless," at the University of San Francisco, students spend a minimum of four hours a week working in specialized areas. Several, for example, help homeless people fill out the numberless forms required to apply for relocation to apartments or better shelter facilities a complicated process that not only aids the clients but introduces students to the Byzantine workings of bureaucracy.

One project at Miami-Dade Community College's Medical Center Campus involves a partnership with a financially strapped YMCA. Nursing students are involved with the Y's daycare program; dental hygiene students develop and introduce programs to teach sound dental habits to children at the Y; and psychology students work with youngsters exhibiting behavioral problems. A pre-law student pores through court documents to develop a legal history of the homeless, determining when and why they were first identified as a specific class and how that affects their treatment in court proceedings today. Others work with city officials in developing a simplified, coordinated system to enable the homeless to get health care, food stamps and welfare payments without having to apply to four or five different agencies. Through street research, another studies the impact of crack cocaine addiction on homelessness.

Background of Our Journey

In 1999, a colleague and I received an institutional grant to support activities necessary to redesign at least one of our courses to include what was then referred to as Academic Community Learning (ACL). The proposal stipulated that we would each redesign a core professional course to include academic community learning. The first course chosen for redesign was a diversity course, a core professional course in our department. This course was selected because its emphasis on

diversity, economically and culturally diverse learners, and educational and societal responsibilities seemed well suited to inclusion as an ACL component. As a core professional course, it was, and still is, a required course for teacher education students and all students in our program. It was first offered in the summer of 1999 and has been offered each spring and summer since. The next sections of this paper summarize activities involved in developing, implementing and assessing the course. Where appropriate, a brief discussion of changes made over time is also provided.

Rationale, Purpose, and Objectives

To encourage and promote excellence in scholarship is one of seven goal statements identified by the department in which we work. Of the seven objectives identified to aid in achieving this goal, one specifically addresses a commitment to service learning as pedagogy; stating ‘to establish academic community learning activities in appropriate departmental courses.’ Similarly, one of the department’s core principles is to provide opportunities for collaborative ventures of outreach, service, and academic community learning and expand the possibilities for improving education and lifelong learning. Partnerships with people, schools, community organizations, clinics, agencies, businesses and governments at state, national, and international levels are integral to our research, teaching, and service.

Redesign of a Professional Core Course

The framework for student academic community learning (ACL) experiences in this course is similar to that adopted by many institutions on a national level: *preparation, action, reflection, demonstration, and recognition*. The first step was to attend workshops designed by leaders of the College of Education’s ACL Initiative. As a side note, ACL is now referred to as service learning and the institution now has a full-service Office of Service Learning. Two additional professional development workshops were attended where the framework for incorporating ACL experiences into our courses, in consideration of each phase, was emphasized in each workshop and subsequent professional development activities.

After materials provided at the workshop were reviewed thoroughly, an extensive review of literature pertinent to ACL was conducted, information related to diversity and service learning was noted, and service learning models identified were studied. Information taken from the workshops and discerned during the review of literature was used to aid in development of the course. Materials designed or redesigned included (a) a reference list of ACL web-based and printed materials, (b) a syllabus including the COE definition of ACL and a description of ACL as a “serve and learn” experience, (c) a PowerPoint presentation for use in introducing the ACL framework for the course (preparation, action, reflection, demonstration, and recognition), (d) a schedule of weekly activities, (e) a weekly agenda, (f) a weekly feedback form, (g) four rubrics (critique, report, presentation, and portfolio), (h) a format for student ACL proposals, (i) a critique format, (j) an activity record format, (k) a reflective journal format, (l) a course packet that included literature about service learning, (m) a Student Information Form (SIF), and (n) a Consent from Participants in Class Projects form. When completed, these materials were uploaded to the existing course web site to facilitate teaching and student access.

Students Plan Service Learning Experience

Students planned and executed a paired-group academic community learning (ACL) experience that took place within a school, agency, or program where the focus was on an issue of relevance to diversity in education and work (e.g., individuals with disabilities, disadvantaged students, multicultural and diversity issues, youth at risk and senior centers). The ACL experiences, now referred to as service learning, took place for a semester through on-site visits and participation, while maintaining reflective notes. Outlines of planned ACL experiences and the eventual proposals were approved by the instructors. Unlike today, our initial journey into academic community learning (service learning) required students to locate and receive approval to participate and provide service to an organization in their communities. Answering the 10 questions presented in the following list proved helpful to students as they developed proposals and plans for their ACL experiences. These questions were reviewed in class using a PowerPoint presentation and question/answer session.

1. Will the experience meet all of the criteria identified in the definition of ACL adopted by the College of Education?
2. Will the experience be distinctively different from “community service” as defined here: “Community service is generally a service function performed by individuals for the benefit of others, for an organization, and/or for a community? Individuals and/or organizations usually commit their time and energy to a worthy cause without engaging in a structured learning process” (Burns, 1998).
3. Will you be able to establish a clear purpose and goals for this experience?
4. Will you be able to spend enough time involved in this experience to lead to learning in academic and affective areas (Shumer, 1997)?
5. Will this experience be conducive to you engaging in reflective activities that require you to process your service experiences and connect them with the learning goals of the course (Shumer, 1997)?
6. Will this experience allow you to demonstrate that the level of responsibility and the importance of the tasks performed influence the quality of learning and the ability to apply the knowledge in current and future settings?
7. Will this experience be of value to the people you will serve or the organization you will assist?
8. Will this experience provide you with an opportunity to be responsible for things that have real consequences?
9. Will your ACL site be willing to communicate with your instructor to ensure that adequate learning takes place?
10. Will your site be willing to work with your instructor to identify the kind of learning expected, and to help ensure that the quality of your learning is explicit and understood by all parties involved?

The students, 31 in 1999, completed their proposals and after some discussion with contact persons at the sites they had selected and revision, their proposals were approved. This first effort to integrate diversity with service learning was successful, but not without some difficulties and unexpected situations that had to be addressed. For example, one student provided service to a community church and while there became involved in developing a church directory; his area of study and expertise was desktop publishing and design. The directory was not finished when the semester ended due to church members not showing up for photos when scheduled. However, the “happy ending” was that the student wanted to finish it and did, even after the semester ended.

A written record of all activities undertaken in redesign of the diversity course to include an ACL component, including a personal portfolio detailing the activities undertaken and materials developed or redesigned, was maintained. The portfolio included copies of all materials identified under the section “Redesign of a Professional Course.” Other materials included in the portfolio were copies of ACL certificates, literature on designing rubrics, feedback forms from students regarding the required ACL experience with a summary, a student mailing list, student completed information forms, a table listing ACL sites and contact persons, service learning definitions, resources obtained from the ACL Professional Development Workshops, copies of literature reviewed in preparation for redesign of the course, signed consent forms, copies of cover letters and certificates sent to ACL site contacts, class photographs, diskettes (back then we weren’t using USB drives) with all materials designed or redesigned, and copies of web site materials. My colleague and I developed a proposal to present at a national convention. The proposal, “Integrating Academic Community Learning in Education for the Workforce,” was accepted and the paper was presented in fall, 1999. Much of what was learned about providing an academic community learning experience through diversity instruction has been presented at state and regional conferences thereafter. The remaining sections of this paper focus on the most recent teaching of the diversity course; fast forward to 2015.

Continuation of Our 15+ Year Journey

Over the years, some changes have been made in the diversity course that was initially redesigned to include academic community learning, now referred to as service learning. Now, in preparation for the first course session, an enrollment roster was obtained and the following was sent to each student registered for the course (a) copies of the reading materials for the first class session, (b) an agenda, and (c) a cover letter welcoming each student to the course and providing an initial description and expectations for the service learning component. Total enrollment in the class was 22, mostly non-traditional students who also worked full-time. Students were subjected to four assessments (a) service learning to include participation in a “serve and learn” experience with a written report of the experience, (b) oral presentation about the experience, (c) critique of literature relevant to the service learning experience site, and (d) development of a portfolio that emphasized teaching about diversity and service learning. However, the service learning experience served as the primary assessment.

Back in 1999, due to the size of the initial class (1999, n = 31), students were encouraged to work in “paired-groups” and were allowed to select the sites for their service learning experiences. Although service learning sites are now available as a result of developing relationships over the last 15+ years, students are still allowed to suggest a site for approval. They are also still allowed to work in paired-groups of two, depending on the rationale they present in their proposals and the results of communication with the site contact person. The continuation of these strategies, site selection and paired service, is due to the success of these experiences students have had over the years. Actually, based upon examination of the students’ reflection notes, those who have worked in pairs and who have been able to select a site have been more successful and much more engaged. However, students are not allowed to begin their service learning experiences until we have approved their proposals.

For this most recent teaching of the diversity class (n = 22), approved service learning proposals resulted in six paired groups and 10 students who served and learned independently. The service learning sites included a domestic violence center, two homeless shelters, a hospitality house for women, a community job training program, a church with a community outreach program, DFCS/TANF, a community women’s centers, a local Y.E.S. program, a local program that works with individuals with disabilities, a regional evening school for non-English speaking citizens, a respite care center, the Salvation Army, a family connections center for the homeless, a local help center, a JTPA training center, and a New Connections to Work center.

Students were required to maintain activity records and reflective journals that they later included in their portfolio along with their service learning experience reports and critiques of relevant literature. Students informally shared their critiques, made a formal oral presentation of their service learning experience, and gave weekly briefings about the materials they were including in their portfolios. Students were given a “Consent from Participants in Class Projects” form designed to seek permission for the instructors to use materials they developed and/or to report findings from their experience. This form was also required for IRB approval. Twenty-one of the 22 students signed this form.

The service learning sites previously mentioned were contacted at least once a week to receive reports of the students’ involvement at the site. A service learning experience certificate, signed by the instructor, the department head, and the service learning site contact person was prepared for each student. The service learning site contact persons were invited to attend the last class session to hear the students’ ACL experience oral presentations. Also, on the last night of class, the students were presented with their signed service learning certificates and five service learning site contact persons attended the class on that night. Similar certificates were sent to the site contact persons by mail.

Summary of Outcomes

Based on our examination of students’ reflective journals and portfolios, these graduate students experienced an improvement in their ability to recognize and solve problems. They also were

able to expand their professional networks. Some reported moving from a position of awareness to one of acceptance of diversity. Of interest is that many reported seeing value in all forms of diversity, not simply the diversity they experienced at their assigned or selected service learning organization site. These graduate students also reported an increased understanding of diverse cultures, a major focus in the course, and attributed it to the hands-on service learning experience. Almost 100% (86.4%) of the students encouraged us to continue to provide service learning as an opportunity through our classes. Outcomes such as these were reported each year the course was taught, support our continuation of the project in our courses and, for us, confirmed one way to move beyond basic classroom instruction when teaching graduate students about diversity. Outcomes also suggested that organizations are receptive to service learning and prompted us to make note of those organizations and agencies that were supportive of service learning, thus building a data base of “friendly” contacts.

Recommendations

Based upon our experiences, we believe the following statements deserve consideration by university faculty who plan to begin their own journey to integrate service learning with a professional core course. If your institution has a service learning office, your first step would be to contact that office for advice and support. It is likely that with such a large infusion of service learning on university campuses today, much of what you will need to know to begin is available through that office. However, for faculty at institutions where there is no official office of service learning, and there are still some, begin by examining best practice programs and courses at other institutions. Examine the literature, including the positive and negative reports about service learning, to determine where successes and failures can be found; try to avoid the failures. Once you have done an exhaustive review of the literature and examined best practice programs and courses, determine how you characterize the service learning experience, making sure that you include the basic elements of service learning. At this point, you should be ready to ask yourself these questions about the service learning you are considering:

1. Will what I have in mind provide students with an opportunity for active participation in an extended, thoughtfully organized learning experience that meets actual community and student needs?
This question suggests a need to answer key questions by adoption of a service learning framework or model for the course. For example, will the instructor provide and select a student’s service learning site or will selection of a service learning site be a student choice or responsibility? The answer to this question would be particularly important for faculty working with non-traditional students because traditional placement strategies may not be feasible. However, adoption of a framework should be a joint effort between the instructor and the students if possible. This question also suggests need for a formal service learning proposal developed by students, refined, and then approved by the instructor of the course. A format for such a proposal should be provided and should include examples of what the instructor considers to be “extended, thoughtfully organized, as well as what meets actual community and student needs.” Examples of sites that meet the instructor’s specifications should also be provided. This formal proposal, when approved by the instructor, would include a contract signed by the student and the service learning site contact.
2. What will be the conditions for collaboration among student, school, and community? This question suggests need for a professionally developed brochure that introduces service learning to the community and anticipates answers to questions posed by potential site contacts. It also suggests need for a formal contract, with its initial framework, developed by the instructor, and that students can use to secure cooperation of a service learning site. The contract should include information to students and potential service learning sites about “human subjects” issues, long and short-term service and academic goals, and a section to specify expectations of each party involved in the contract (e.g., student, instructor, service learning site). Instructors should maintain periodic contact with the service learning site throughout the experience.

3. How will I integrate service learning experiences into the student's academic curriculum? This question suggests a need to spend considerable time helping students develop long and short-term service and academic goals. Students should be encouraged to develop these goals jointly with the instructor and the intended service learning site contact person. The intent should be to have these goals become a part of the service learning contract. Joint development of goals may help students clarify the relationship between their service and academic goals—an extremely important consideration. It is also your opportunity to determine if the course you are teaching is appropriate for a service learning approach and to envision what that approach might look like from start to finish.
4. How will I provide structured time for reflection and evaluation? This question should alert you to the time factor; how much time will you have to teach content, how much time will your students have to devote to service learning (especially if they are non-traditional students as our students were), and how much time do you have to manage the effort. The first effort is likely to take more time than you expect. This characteristic also suggests a need to encourage students to keep a record of activities, a reflective journal, and to engage in self-evaluation. Students should be encouraged to share reflections and engage in self-evaluation continually as the course progresses. A website or learning management system is a good place for keeping communication going between you, the students, and the service learning site contact person.
5. How will I enhance what is taught by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community. This characteristic suggests a need to provide clear examples of previous service learning experiences through exhibits, guest speakers (former service learning site contacts, faculty who have previously incorporated service learning into their courses or taught a service learning course, students who have developed and implemented a service learning experience), and previous proposals and contracts developed.

Summary

The definitions for service learning differ depending on the goals and objectives of the educational institution providing the service as well as the needs of the local communities. Regardless of the term used, the ultimate goal is to provide opportunities for students to serve and learn. This experience redesigning, implementing, evaluating, and adding a service learning component to an existing course focused on classroom and workplace diversity provided benefits to us as instructors. For example, the relevance of the experience to our students' lives validated our teaching and enhanced learning, the overall experience helped build a classroom "community of learners," and students established relationships with people in the community that continue today. The students, however, also benefitted in that they were given an opportunity to make the curriculum relevant to their lives, clarify their values, develop community and civic responsibility, increase their multicultural awareness, develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, and enhance their social and personal development. Similarly, resulting benefits to the community included meaningful services to local communities, opportunities for community agencies and organizations to participate in student learning, and community awareness of the university's programs and services was built.

Now more than ever before, with limited funds and a continued wave of education reforms, our society is at a crossroad. Educators are not only being held accountable for their work, but also seeking ways to reach both students and the larger community. Although the degree to which service learning can play a role in education and social reform is yet undetermined, based upon our experience implementing service learning described herein, we believe service learning is a viable instructional strategy to move toward achieving diversity education and community engagement goals.

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