

Some Assembly Required: Building and Evaluating Service-Learning
in Higher Education Curriculum

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Abstract

Service-learning is a high-impact teaching practice that can benefit students' mastery of course material as well as their professional and personal development. This article examines the theoretical underpinnings of service-learning along with empirical evidence suggesting the benefits of this teaching pedagogy. The authors' own pedagogical examples are described as they pertain to Richard Cone's (2001) six proposed models. The nuts and bolts of building and sustaining service-learning are reviewed, followed by a discussion of the challenges that exist in relation to assessment.

Keywords: service-learning, course design, assessment, high-impact practice

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Teaching pedagogy in higher education is shifting. Traditional lectures in solely face-to-face environments are slipping away and being replaced by more dynamic, active, and student-centered methodologies. Innovative techniques, including online and hybrid courses, flipped classrooms, and active learning environments are now defining the new academic norm. This shift is demonstrated in the growing scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) literature, which comprises numerous journal articles, book chapters, and professional presentations that empirically support these new methodologies. One active learning strategy with a substantial amount of empirical traction is service-learning (SL). The shift is also reflected within institutions of higher education where SL programs are being created and supported both theoretically and financially. At the author's institution, MSU Denver, SL is a part of the larger Applied Learning Center program. Large-scale meta-analyses indicate numerous and substantial positive outcomes for students taught using the SL approach (see Celio, Durlak & Dymnicki, 2011; Conway, Amel & Gerwien, 2009; Novak, Markey, & Allen, 2007; Warren, 2012; Yorio & Feifei, 2012).

Bringle and Hatcher (1995) defined SL as a “course based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) 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” (p. 112). This definition contains several important aspects. First, the service needs to meet a community-identified need (Campus Compact, 2003). That is, the work that students engage in should be decided upon by the community partner and not dictated by the professor. The community partner can be broadly defined but ought to exist outside of the academic institution. Second, the SL work must be relatable to the course content (Campus Compact, 2003). Simple volunteer activities, though often very helpful for communities, do not always meet the criteria of course content connection. For example, volunteering at a soup kitchen represents authentic community service, but for many disciplines it would lack academic content, or, more specifically, connection to course learning objectives beyond the service being provided. Students should see

a direct relationship between what they are learning in class and what they are doing for the SL project.

As a result of these course-based and community-driven aspects, SL courses create reciprocal relationships between students and community partners (Heffernan, 2001). The partner benefits from the help the student is providing, and the student benefits from deeper understanding and application of the course content. Simply put, students are learning by doing and by reflecting on their actions. Furthermore, SL courses working within reciprocal relationships promote community-wide civic engagement. Seifert, Gillig, Handson, Pascarella, and Blaich (2014) argued that such reciprocity is essential within higher education:

If higher education is to live up to its potential to democratize opportunity and mitigate social inequities, the higher education research community must question and modify theoretical and conceptual models to maximize their utility to transform higher education policy and practice. (p. 532)

Service-learning course paradigms offer a new conceptual model of classroom learning and engagement and provide the opportunity to transform both academic and community constituents. Higher education has an important role in promoting civic engagement, which Saltmarsh (2005) describes as civic learning. Civic learning includes knowledge from academic and community sources, values such as justice and inclusion, and skills including critical thinking, creativity, communication, and public problem solving. Saltmarsh states that “civic learning illuminates the socially responsive aspects of disciplinary knowledge, those dimensions that expand the view of education to including learning, and developing the knowledge skills and values of demographic citizenship” (pp. 52-53). Through teaching methodologies such as SL, faculty can have a direct impact on students’ civic engagement/learning, and higher education institutions can work toward democratic participation in the public sphere.

Every SL course combines content and application in different ways. There are numerous SL projects that can be employed with various levels of activity, in all content domains, and at all academic levels (Conway et al., 2009). The goal is to create classroom assignments whereby students partner with community agencies or organizations to conduct projects or activities that are both relevant to the class and useful to the community agency. It is the aim of this article to describe some existing variations in SL, to provide theoretical and

research support for the implementation of SL, and to discuss outcomes and assessment strategies.

One reason that institutions often support SL course design is because SL is one of 10 “high-impact” teaching practices (Kuh, 2008). A high-impact practice is one that is widely supported as beneficial to college students, including increasing retention and student engagement. Learning communities, undergraduate research, common intellectual experiences (i.e., the core curriculum), internships, and study-abroad courses are also on the list of high-impact practices. These learning experiences occur outside of the traditional classroom environment; however, they still relate directly to the student’s educational experience. Within the classroom, high-impact teaching practices include collaborative assignments and projects, first-year seminars and experiences, writing-intensive courses, diversity/global learning courses, capstone courses and projects, and SL/community-based learning. Many of these practices, including SL, are classified as experiential learning (Kuh, 2008).

David Kolb (1984), an American educational theorist, described experiential learning quite simply as learning by doing. He proposed that students can use experience as a basis for reflection and theory building, and that theory can guide them in future decision making and action. According to Kolb, students first engage in the experience of community work. Reflection then takes place, whereby students think in-depth about the experience as it relates to course concepts (i.e., what they know or have learned). As reflection occurs, students will assimilate their ideas with an existing theory or understanding of the experience, conceptualizing the information. These concepts then become guides for students’ future behavior. As the students move through new experiences, the cycle begins again. In this way, the quality of the students’ conceptualization improves over time. Effective learners will thus be open to new experiences, reflect on those experiences, integrate those reflections into a logically sound theory, and then use that knowledge to make future decisions and solve problems (Kolb, 1984).

Kuh (2008) reported numerous statistically significant learning, personal, practical, and general gains through SL for both males and females, first-generation, African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Caucasian students. However, it should be noted that some of these gains are self-reported and that groups of historically underserved students are less likely to participate in

high-impact activities. Many of these individuals are first-generation college students and are busy learning the institutional systems and norms. In addition, it is important to recognize that the effects of SL might not be as blanketed as originally thought. A recent controlled longitudinal study was conducted to examine if relationships between engagement in high-impact practices and effective reasoning, problem solving, inclination to inquire, and lifelong learning were consistent across student subgroups (Seifert et al., 2014). The researchers found that the background that students bring to the classroom moderates the benefits they derive from exposure to or engagement in high-impact teaching and learning practices. While SL was not directly measured, the results are still pertinent and suggest that more should be done to attend to the needs of students, especially underserved students. Both Seifert and colleagues (2014) and Kuhl (2008) pointed out that while high-impact practices do not comprise a magic bullet, they can help to increase positive outcomes and are recommended methodologies. More assessment is needed to further understand the nuances of such teaching methodologies and their impact on all students. Additional work is needed that empirically measures—against a control group when possible—the specific effects of SL. There are, however, a few studies that have paved the way for this work.

Strage conducted one such study in 2000. Students enrolled in two SL cohorts were compared with students enrolled in three prior non-SL semesters. The SL paradigm involved working with children for 20 hours and reflection on the experience in structured journal assignments. The non-SL students made structured observations of children and wrote paper assignments instead. The study found that SL students attained higher test scores in the course with narrative responses (essay questions) than those in a non-SL child development course. In a similar study, DePrince, Priebe, and Newton (2011) compared two research methods courses to determine if a community-based SL project was able to educate students about violence against women without sacrificing content knowledge of research methods. They found that students in the SL course experienced more significant gains in their research methods knowledge as well as their knowledge about violence against women. More recently, data were presented on a similar SL community-based project embedded in a developmental research methods course (Fleck, 2014). We measured student learning, level of civic engagement, class motivation, and opinions on the SL paradigm in two course sections participating in SL and three sections that had no SL requirement.

Preliminary data analysis indicated high student regard for the project and increased learning in SL conditions over the control (as measured by a multiple-choice pre-post quiz). Civic engagement did not differ between groups; however, the author noted that all students scored relatively high. These findings suggest ceiling effects from the measure for the urban, commuter, and non-traditional students who participated in the study. (See Reeb, Katsuyama, Sammon, & Yoder [1998] for the original “Community Self-Efficacy Scale,” which was modified by DePrince & colleagues [2011], and subsequently used by Fleck in 2014.)

The studies described here represent methodologically sound approaches to understanding the effects of SL on students. Much more research has been conducted that varies in approach and data. To summarize this body of work, recent researchers have completed thorough meta-analyses. For example, Conway and colleagues (2009) coded 103 studies examining education level, curricular vs. non-curricular service, reflection, and length of service in weeks and hours. They found a moderate effect of SL on academic, personal, and citizenship outcomes, with general positive changes evident in the students from pretest to posttest. Building on these findings, a more current meta-analysis was conducted by Novak and colleagues (2007). Again, they found that student learning increased through the use of SL paradigms. Similar findings have been reported in other studies employing the meta-analysis approach (see Celio et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Novak et al., 2007; Yorio & Feifei, 2012). In sum, empirical support clearly exists for the SL paradigm. We will now discuss some successful examples of specific SL courses which should help readers understand how the pedagogy comes to life.

Pedagogical Examples of Service-Learning

For any faculty considering the implementation of service-learning, a helpful starting place might be Richard Cone’s (2001) six proposed models for SL. The models include “pure” SL, discipline-based SL, problem-based SL, capstone courses, service internships, and undergraduate community-based action research. Each model is defined in Table 1. Cone suggested that when faculty create a new course or revise an existing course to utilize the SL paradigm, they should consider each of the models and carefully select which one fits best. In addition, he asserted that whichever model is chosen should adhere to four essential principles of SL: engagement, reflection, reciprocity, and public dissemination. The principle of engagement requires faculty to make certain that

the service components of the course are meeting a public good. The reflective aspect requires that students are thinking about their service experiences and relating them to course content. Reciprocity ought to be apparent in that all parties involved are benefiting from the service. Finally, public dissemination involves sharing knowledge with the community organization and its constituents in some form (Cone, 2001).

Table 1

Richard Cone's (2001) Six Models for Service-Learning

Model	Definition
"Pure" SL	Students go into the community to serve. Service is the course content.
Discipline-Based SL	Students have presence in the community throughout the semester. Students reflect on experience regularly connecting the services with content.
Problem-Based SL	Students work on problems identified by the community. Students are "consultants" and communities are "clients."
Capstone Courses	Student use knowledge gained from degree program and combine it with work in the community.
Service Internships	Students work for a long time (10-20 hours) in the community. Students have ongoing reflection and produce a body of work helpful to the community.
Undergraduate Community-Based Action Research	Students work closely with faculty to design and employ research that serves the community.

To provide the reader with examples of pedagogically sound SL, we describe two successful SL courses. These courses have been taught numerous times. The model of each course will be identified, and the components will be described briefly utilizing Cone's (2001) four principles.

Introduction to Clinical and Counseling Psychology

Introduction to Clinical and Counseling Psychology is a senior-level course whose learning outcomes include both the acquisition of theoretical knowledge (i.e., differentiation of various theories of psychotherapy) and the development of professional counseling skills (e.g., reflective listening, open-ended questions, appropriate use of boundaries). To meet the latter objective, students practice basic counseling skills in dyads and triads during classroom meetings. While these lessons are valuable, they are also fraught with drawbacks. By definition, the interactions involve role-playing, which often makes them seem inauthentic, stilted, and/or silly. To provide students with more meaningful, real-life opportunities to practice skills, an instructor forged a partnership with a community mental health agency.

The partner organization is an ideal SL collaborator for a number of reasons: convenience (located less than two miles from campus and open for services every day but Sunday), mission (it serves people with chronic and debilitating mental illnesses), and philosophy (it operates through an innovative and open model of genuine partnerships that equally involve chronically mentally ill individuals, mental health professionals, and the larger community). The organization recognizes that individuals with mental illness often become socially isolated, and it seeks to provide rich and varied opportunities for social interaction, thus creating an ideal avenue for student involvement.

Hence, the SL component of the course was developed to meet a student-learning objective (demonstration of counseling skills) and a community partner need (social interaction for isolated and marginalized individuals suffering from mental illness). Using Cone's (2001) discipline-based SL model, the course adheres to the view that students' ongoing presence and practice in the community, coupled with regular reflection of that service, enhances their learning of course-specific content. When all elements function correctly, the

service engages the students in public good, and all parties benefit from the collaboration.

Students are required to complete 15 hours of service, which can be fulfilled in two different ways. Each semester, the class sponsors a social event at the community mental health agency. Depending on the season—and on the wishes of both the students and the agency clients who collaborate to plan, schedule, and produce it—the event might be a talent show, a barbecue, a Halloween party, or a picnic-and-games day. The event will invariably involve food, which the students typically prepare in the agency’s kitchen, and also structured (e.g., board games, outdoor games) and unstructured opportunities for social interaction. These events generally last two to three hours, so even if a student is involved with preparation, decoration, and cleanup, he or she will complete no more than five hours of service on that day. The remainder of the service hours is completed individually. Students receive a schedule of the agency’s groups, activities, and drop-in hours, which they attend and contribute to on their own.

Throughout the semester, students reflect both orally and in writing on their service experiences. Informal class discussions typically address students’ initial anxieties about interacting with individuals who have major mental disorders, their observations about themselves and the clients with whom they interact, and their thoughts about how the service experience influences their future career considerations. Paper assignments require students to describe their SL experiences and connect those experiences to key concepts from the course as well as to their personal values, attitudes, beliefs, and professional goals.

Advanced Spanish Conversation

Advanced Spanish Conversation is a third-year Spanish conversation course that is required for Spanish minors and majors. The objective of this course is for students to interact with each other, the professor, and members of the community using the Spanish language. It aims to provide students with practice in both written and oral Spanish and to increase their knowledge of Hispanic culture and heritage in the community.

Combining writing, oral skills, and research, the students are required to select a community partner and complete a minimum of 15 to 20 hours of community-based learning. A short list of partners is distributed at the beginning

of the semester and helps to guide students in the selection of a partner (who has worked with students in the past) and a learning experience that may link directly to what the student is studying. For example, many students planning a career in education select one of the bilingual schools to work with during the semester. Other students have interests in the medical field and choose to serve in a nonprofit, bilingual, urban clinic. Because the surrounding community has a large Spanish-speaking population (with almost 32% of its total population self-identifying as Hispanic or Latino/a), the selection of appropriate community partners relatively easy.

The Advanced Spanish Conversation course exemplifies Cone's (2001) discipline-based SL model as well as aspects of the capstone course model. In discipline-based SL the students have a presence in the community throughout the semester. In addition, reflection and connection to content are key components. In the capstone course model, large-scale projects work to consolidate students' learning into a final project that is then shared.

Specifically, throughout the semester the students are asked to submit five or six reflective journal entries written in Spanish. With each entry, the professor provides a list of questions to help stimulate contemplation and direct students toward the final capstone project. At its completion, the capstone—a digital storytelling project—is shared with the class and the greater community (it is uploaded to YouTube). Each final project is a compilation of photos, video clips, interviews with the community partner, and reflective pieces that are narrated (with a recorded voiceover) by the students in Spanish. The SL components in Advanced Spanish Conversation comprise 35% of each student's final grade and tie in directly with the student learning objectives of the course.

Building a Service-Learning Course: The Nuts and Bolts

Our examples of pedagogically sound SL describe established partnerships carried out by seasoned SL instructors, and while we are proud of these collaborations, we fear they may sound a bit too perfect. Let us be clear: These examples are the winners, the survivors, the successes; along the way, there were many false starts, failed collaborations, misguided assignments, and other botched adventures. Creating a successful SL course is not as easy as adding new language to a syllabus and setting students loose to find meaningful encounters in the

community. Creating a successful SL course requires hard work, intentionality, and perseverance.

Prior to creating your own SL course, we recommend exploring the internal support your institution might offer. Many colleges and universities have developed resource centers that can help. For example, an applied learning center might sponsor workshops for faculty about SL course preparation. In addition, some more broadly defined teaching and learning centers might also have similar programming. The existence of these centers, or stand-alone SL or civic engagement programming, at an institution would demonstrate that SL is supported by the administration. Campus Compact (2014) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' American Democracy Project (2015) are two additional resources that work to promote civic engagement through community-based volunteerism, research, and course work. After exploring your institution's resources, we recommend utilizing the following five processes which break down the various aspects of building and sustaining SL as an integral part of the curriculum.

Preparation

Careful planning is the key to success. Scholarship of teaching and learning instructors should first consider the goals and objectives of the course. What skills do the students need to learn, what issues do they need to evaluate, what knowledge do they need to acquire? Some courses may have learning objectives that are not at all conducive to SL. If, on the other hand, student-learning outcomes would be enhanced through engagement in the community, a search for suitable partnerships should begin. (Some very successful SL collaborations have been initiated by community agencies voicing a need to academic institutions; however, in our experience, it is more often the academic instructor who initiates the partnership.)

In theory, there might be advantages to allowing students to find community organizations on their own. In our early misadventures with SL, we fell for the allure of this approach (more flexibility for the students! more diverse learning opportunities! less work for us!). In reality, though, the more community partners there were, the less capable we were of establishing shared expectations, focused engagement, and mutually beneficial outcomes (Scheuermann, 1996). If a sustainable SL course is the goal, focusing on one or two community partners

allows for greater attention and, hopefully, enduring relationships. As indicated in the Advanced Spanish Conversation example discussed earlier, a pre-selected group of six to eight approved community partners can also work, as long as each one matches your course's specific learning objectives.

Planning for the course will involve collaboration with the community partner(s) to create clear expectations for the students and for the organization. Consider how and when the students will interact with the agency and the potential challenges they may encounter. Are there pre-involvement requirements (e.g., background checks, training, signed waivers) that must be completed? Is the community organization available at times (evenings, weekends) that can accommodate very busy students? What, exactly, will the students be doing? Whom should they contact if there is a problem?

How these expectations are presented in the course syllabus can be critical in shaping the students' educational outcomes (Heffernan, 2001). If service is noted merely as one of a handful of assignments, students may experience confusion, resentment, and even mistrust. Instead, the syllabus must reflect the intentionality of the service requirement and the explicit connections between the course objectives and the community engagement.

Promotion

Many students operate from a concrete and linear conceptualization of learning (a "Will this be on the test?" mentality), and SL challenges that kind of thinking (Heffernan & Cone, 2001). If they see the SL component of a course as extraneous busywork, students are likely to be resistant and feel disgruntled, which is no way for them to engage with the community. Therefore, instructors may need to "sell" students on the idea of service and how it will enhance their academic, personal, and professional development. One effective way of accomplishing this is by asking students who have successfully completed the course to be guests at the first session of class, during which they can share their transformative SL experiences with the new students.

Another valuable strategy for promoting SL to students is to invite the community partner(s) to a class session at the start of the semester. Representatives from the community organization can share their needs and expectations, their observations about how students have helped in the past, and their hopes for the coming semester. But perhaps most importantly, the guests will

personalize the agency for students. No longer is it just a community mental health agency or an after-school recreational program or a medical office; rather, the agency becomes real people with real names and real needs, a transformation which can quell the anxious anticipation that many students feel upon learning that they will be expected to go out into the community.

Participation

Service-learning need not involve a lot of instructor handholding. Yet, neither should it be characterized by a distant or absent instructor offering directives without first-hand involvement. Instructors should be familiar with the types of situations their students will encounter in the community, which means instructors need to spend some time on site and need to communicate regularly with the point of contact at the community organization. It is easiest to promote ethical awareness, to address potential issues related to safety and boundaries, and to ensure student professionalism and accountability when the instructor has regular involvement with the community partner.

Though the students' involvement in the community and their participation in the classroom are separate processes, it is important for instructors to help students understand that those processes are not parallel and disconnected but convergent and synergistic. Regular discussions in the classroom about what is happening in the community help to bridge the gap, as does the instructor's presence (when possible) at the SL site.

Contemplation

All guides for implementing SL call for student reflection, a hallmark of the SL experience. But we have chosen the word "contemplation" to encompass not only student reflection but instructor observation and community partner review. In other words, all parties involved—not just the students—examine the efficacy of the collaboration, the growth that occurs, and the impact on future directions.

For students, reflection—both through informal discussions and structured assignments—creates opportunities to "recognize and integrate their learning, work on personal developmental issues, define their personal service ethic, and deal with their discomfort and dissonance" (Albert, 1996, p. 190). As stated previously, recurring discussions in the classroom help keep course concepts and community service integrated so that ideally each can accentuate the other.

Beyond informal conversations, there is a wide array of assignment types that can further student learning. Students can keep individual journals, or the class can create a group journal (online or in a traditional notebook) into which students add their observations and share their developing competencies. Presentations, either by individuals or groups, encourage students to showcase their growth and knowledge; when appropriate, inviting community partners to the presentations—or holding presentations at the community agency—continues the collaborative process. Short reflective papers can be assigned throughout the term, and/or a longer summative paper might require the student to integrate knowledge and skills acquired across the semester, both in the classroom and in the field. Regardless of modality, well-designed assignments should probably include “the 4 Cs of reflection”: According to Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996), good reflection “is Continuous in time frame, Connected to the ‘big picture’ information provided by academic pursuits, Challenging to assumptions and complacency, and Contextualized in terms of design and setting” (p. 21).

Contemplating the meaning and efficacy of an SL experience should not be limited to students. Throughout the semester, instructors can intentionally observe the activities that are occurring, the learning being manifested in students, and the impact of student involvement on the community partners. Course instructors should be alert for unexpected obstacles and unforeseen consequences—good and not so good—of the collaboration. By doing their own reflecting on the SL experience, faculty develop insight into what is working well and what needs to change for the SL to be even more meaningful the next semester.

The community partner should also have a voice in the reflection process. In some instances, as the term unfolds, it may work well to have individuals from the partner agency reflecting with students on the effects of their work together. In other cases, it may make more sense to have an administrator from the partner organization share with the course instructor summative observations once the semester has ended. In other situations, some combination of these approaches might be most appropriate. Regardless of the approach, input from the community is essential to contemplating the efficacy and sustainability of an SL collaboration.

Dissemination

Finally, in keeping with Cone's (2001) four essential principles of SL, outcomes of the project should be shared. This goes beyond reflecting on the partnership as outlined earlier and includes the dissemination of data, of student projects or papers, of research outcomes, and/or of advancements made in the community. When SL works, there are many glorious results; announcing those results, in some fashion, is essential for several reasons. Highlighting the successes encourages continued collaboration with and from the partner agency, support from the educational institution, and endorsement from the greater community. We have been successful, at times, securing small grants for our community-based learning because we have disseminated information on the positive outcomes for students, partner organizations, the university, and the community at large. Being able to see, measure, and judge SL outcomes for future dissemination is largely dependent on assessment procedures, which we address in the following section.

Assessment of Service-Learning

One of the more difficult aspects of incorporating SL into higher education has been the application of assessment of this pedagogical approach. In the last 10 to 15 years, there has been an increase of published research investigating the efficacy of SL at the university level. Researchers across various fields advocate for theoretically grounded studies and well-validated assessment tools, which strive to justify the positive results that faculty, administration, and students are witnessing. In most studies, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, there seems to be some consensus that anonymous, self-reporting, attitudinal surveys are the most practical tools for assessment. However, self-reflective surveys are not without inadequacies and shortfalls. Bowman and Brandenberger (2010), for example, suggested that "numerous obstacles prevent accurate self-reporting" and that "students are simply unable to estimate their learning and development accurately" (pp. 28-29). Stoecker and Tryon (2009) argued that much of the research using surveys has relied on student self-reported satisfaction at a "relatively superficial level" (p. 5). Moreover, Nelson and Scott (2008) acknowledged that survey outcomes "are personal perceptions only, and therefore may not be a true representation of actual outcomes" (p. 457).

With these criticisms in mind, we recognize that well-developed surveys that are institution- or field-specific are capable of producing authentic assessment outcomes. The results can be more significant when pre- and post-class surveys

are administered and are compared with other sections of the same class that have been taught traditionally (i.e., without an SL component). In addition, if used in tandem with reflective journaling, final capstone projects, and specific artifact rubrics, anonymous pre- and post-class surveys can offer both substantial qualitative and quantitative data. In a study at Gettysburg College, Elorriaga (2007) advocated for this multi-tool approach to SL assessment, stating that it allows for a “descriptive, interpretive and theoretical case study” (p. 535).

At our institution, the Applied Learning Center (ALC) houses four high-impact practice programs: the Internship Program, the SL Program, the Center for Urban Connections, and the Undergraduate Research Program. The SL Program is still comparatively small but is growing quickly due to the support and interest of higher administration. We have accomplished various lofty goals such as an SL designation for classes across campus and annual mini-grants offered to faculty who include an SL component in their classes. One of our current projects is creating and implementing standardized assessment tools for faculty to use across fields and departments.

After reviewing the most current literature, the SL Advisory Council decided to mimic successful research studies by employing a multi-tool approach to assessment of SL (including a list of studies/suggested reading). We understand that due to differences in student learning objectives in each field of study, creating a single rubric to assess one specific artifact from each class can be quite problematic. For example, in the Advanced Spanish Conversation class described earlier, the capstone project consists of a digital storytelling project in the target language about the student’s relationship with his or her community partner. Yet, in a research methods class in psychology, the capstone project involves writing an APA-style research paper and conducting a professional presentation that addresses concerns originally brought up by, and studied for, the community partner. Thus, it is challenging to find a standardized rubric that can be applicable to diverse courses with distinctive student learning objectives. Our solution for this issue is to provide various assessment tools, which can then be tailored to fit the particular needs of the class. Currently, most of our classes with SL components are assessed using pre- and post-surveys and/or a simple artifact rubric that adheres to our SL designation requirements and learning objectives. In addition, we administer an end-of-course SL evaluation, looking at attitudinal changes of students after taking an SL course. This 21-question survey, borrowed

and adapted from Gelmon (2001), uses the Likert scale to better understand the impact that SL has had on students at our institution (see Appendix). The results from these surveys have been encouraging and very positive. According to our 2013-2014 annual report submitted by Eaker (2014), 74% of students who took SL courses agreed that the institution should offer more. Moreover, 24% of the students indicated that their SL directly resulted in a full-time job offer (Eaker, 2014, pp. 31-32).

In many areas, the SL program at MSU Denver is still in its nascent stages. The fall of 2014 was the first semester in which the SL designation officially appeared in the registrar and on students' transcripts. However, we are excited about the possibilities for continued growth across campus in terms of numbers of courses and faculty and administrative support. With regard to assessment, we believe that there is still work to be done. Currently, one of the most significant challenges is tracking SL classes being taught each semester and encouraging faculty members to adopt specific SL assessment practices. Some faculty members are understandably hesitant since they already utilize traditional assessment tools in their classes and have little time for additional grading and assessment. Therefore, it is our priority to develop and implement assessment tools that are not extremely time-consuming and are easily adaptable. Furthermore, the ALC is dedicated to supporting faculty members and staff who are interested in and/or incorporating SL into their curriculum. For example, last year the ALC purchased flash drives and loaded them with pertinent information and materials for the SL designation application process, supportive research, and our assessment tools. Along with distributing SL materials, the ALC hosts a SL faculty associate who serves as a liaison between the faculty and the center. Accordingly, the faculty associate can work directly with other faculty members to provide individualized help and ultimately assist in reaching our institutional assessment goals for SL.

Concluding Thoughts

Our increasingly global society demands that students graduate with skills that support their growth and the growth of the communities where they live. Civic engagement is paramount and can be cultivated by pedagogy such as service-learning. Through SL courses, students can refine their abilities in communication, leadership, and collaboration, and subsequently sustain their ability to apply what they have learned in school to the community to serve the

greater good. Empirical evidence strongly supports the practice of SL. We encourage you to try it out. While the initial steps may seem difficult, the building blocks and suggestions made in this article ought to help. Keep in mind that reflection is critical, and building a reciprocal relationship between the community partner and the students should be obvious. Use the examples and resources provided to you to develop your course and furthermore assess its outcome. We hope you enjoy the process of incorporating SL into your teaching, that you are open-minded and flexible, and that your students soon reap the benefits of this pedagogy.

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Appendix

Service Learning – Student Survey¹

The Applied Learning Center’s Service Learning Program would like to better understand the impact that service learning has on students. We particularly want to know how this experience has influenced your perspective on learning, your view of service learning, your choice of career, and your perspectives on working with diverse communities. Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this survey and return it to your instructor before you leave class today. *Thank you for your insights regarding service learning!*

I. First, we would like some information about you.

1. Name of the service learning course you enrolled in: _____.
2. Name of the agency/community organization you worked with: _____.

II. Next, we would like to gain your perspective about this course. Please mark your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. The community participation aspect of this course helped me to see how the subject matter I learned can be used in everyday life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The community participation aspect of this course motivated me to learn the subject matter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The community work I did helped me to better understand the lectures and readings in the course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The idea of combining work in the community with university course work should be practiced in more courses at MSU Denver.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I feel I would have learned more from this course if more time was spent in the classroom instead of doing community work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

III. The next set of questions relates to your attitude toward community involvement. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. I was already volunteering in the community before taking this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹ The survey is adapted from Gelmon, S. et al. (2001). *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: Principles and Techniques*. Boston, MA: Campus Compact.

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. I feel that the community work that I did through this course benefited the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I was able to work directly with a community partner through this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I felt a personal responsibility to meet the needs of the community partner of this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I probably will volunteer or participate in the community after this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My interactions with the community partner enhanced my learning in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

IV. Next, we would like to know about the influence of your service on your choice of major and profession. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. The community work in this course assisted me in clarifying my career plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. The community work I performed in this class enhanced my relationship with the instructor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. The community work involved in this course made me more aware of my own biases and prejudices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. The work I performed in the community enhanced my ability to communicate in a “real world” setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. The community aspect of this course helped me to develop my problem-solving skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

V. Finally, we would like some of your personal reflections on this experience. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of these statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. The syllabus provided for this course outlined the objectives of the community work in relation to course objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. The other students in the class played an important role in my learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I had the opportunity in this course to discuss periodically my community work and its relationship to the course content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please feel free to add below any additional comments you have about courses where learning takes place in a community setting.

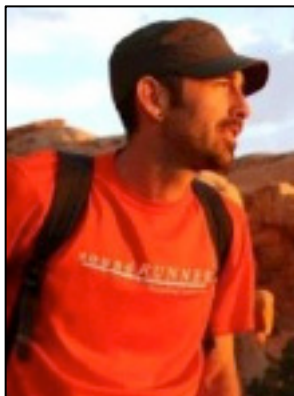
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