

SU Service Learning Annual Report 2001-2002 Academic Year Syracuse University

Annual Report 1
Volume 1
Spring 2002

Overview

The Center for Public and Community Service (CPCS) at Syracuse University enacts the University value of learning through service by providing service learning opportunities as a part of the curriculum.

A typical service learning course requires students to work for a predetermined number of hours at a nonprofit or public site, where they participate in an organized service activity that meets legitimate community needs. Students receive academic credit for processing and reflecting on the service activity within the four corners of their curriculum.

Service learning provides an opportunity for further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Students are offered the opportunity to engage in reciprocal learning and explore diverse environments.

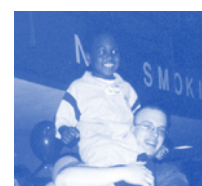


Service Learning at Syracuse

In the new Academic Plan, proposed by Vice Chancellor Deborah Freund, the Syracuse University community voiced its commitment to community-based experiential learning through service.

The service learning component of a course may be managed by the professor, instructor, teaching assistant (TA), or CPCS. The diversity of management makes it difficult to quantify the amount of service completed by students in service learning classes.

Data for this report was obtained from forms completed by the 670 students in CPCS facilitated service learning courses. In Fall 2001 and Spring 2002, these 670 students were placed at Community Based Organizations (CBO) by CPCS.



From the Director



The Center for Public and Community Service (CPCS) at Syracuse University is an integral part of the University's efforts to create a student-centered culture within a major research university by encouraging students, faculty and staff to work together for intellectual, ethical, professional and personal development through service with and to the community. "We must embrace the core value of service as a fundamental part of student learning and build this value into the mission and curriculum of the University," says Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw. "The University has an obligation to give students opportunities to learn how to be active citizens." (*Syracuse University Magazine, Spring 2001*)

This first issue of the *CPCS Service Learning Annual Report* will share with you how CPCS is helping to develop these opportunities for our students, as well as share our progress on the goals of the Service Learning Pedagogy project (funded by Vision) to more formally integrate service learning into the curriculum as we build a community of scholars committed to community-based service learning across academic disciplines. The pedagogical respectability of the courses described in this report validates the assumption that experience is an important foundation for learning. Academic credit is awarded for the learning that accompanies the community-based service. The three key theoretical principals of collaboration,

reciprocity and diversity (Jacoby, 1996) guide the development of the service components for these courses, and the pedagogy itself is anchored in the notion of reflective practice (Shon, 1983), which provides that service must be directed by thoughtful course assignments allowing the experiences to be considered within a larger theoretical framework.

CPCS facilitates the community-based service component of courses to enhance the academic goals of the course by providing community placements in organizations that closely fit the needs of the students and the community. CPCS helps students and placement sites meet special scheduling and transportation needs, and stands ready to help negotiate challenges that arise for students, faculty or site supervisors and staff.

I hope the information in this Service Learning Report will pique your interest in exploring possibilities for your own courses, provide interesting insights to the community-based service learning experience at Syracuse University, or perhaps suggest ideas about how you might enhance other kinds of assessments and evaluations you are presently using.

Please feel free to visit CPCS, meet and talk with our professional and student staff, and peruse the many resources available on community-based service learning and our community partners. I also invite you to explore the Syracuse University Community Involvement web site (<http://www.syr.edu/community.html>) to learn more about the University commitment to its core value of service through its many curricular, co-curricular and institutional commitments.

I look forward to meeting you all.

Sincerely,

Pam K. Heintz



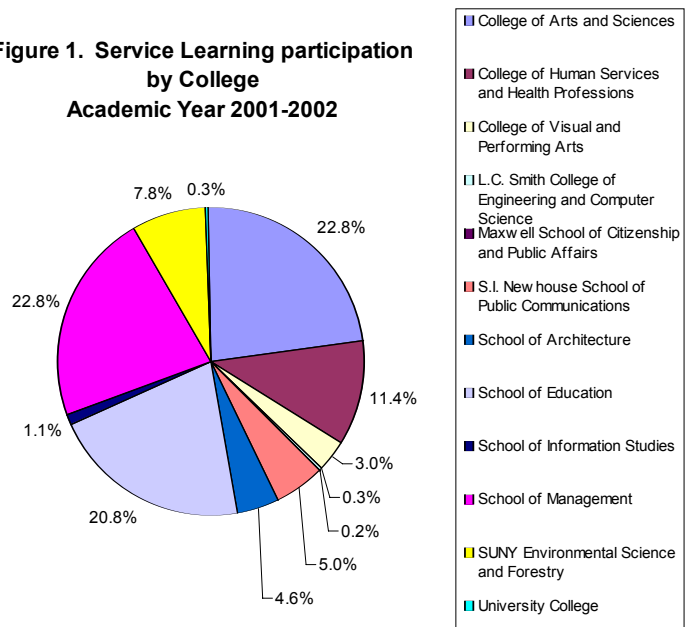
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College and Course Participation

College Participation

During Fall 2001 and Spring 2002, CPCS facilitated a service learning component for 29 courses in 12 colleges reaching 670 Syracuse University students. As shown in Figure 1, the courses were distributed fairly evenly across 3 colleges with participation from all colleges. 22.8% of the students enrolled in service learning classes facilitated by CPCS were from the College of Arts and Sciences (A & S); 20.8% from the School of Education (SOE); and 22.8% from the School of Management (SOM). One explanation for the high percentage of SOM students is the recent implementation of a community service graduation requirement. The semester before the implementation of this requirement, SOM students accounted for only 14% of enrolled students.

Figure 1. Service Learning participation by College Academic Year 2001-2002



Course Participation

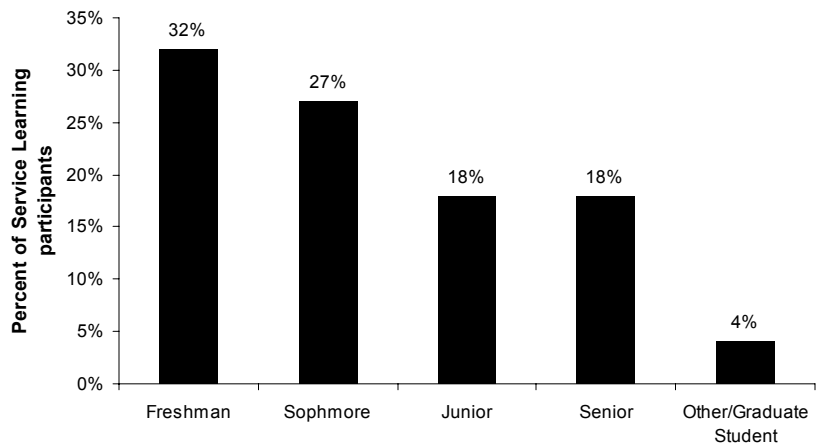
CPCS facilitated 29 courses with service learning components. In Fall 2001, there were five service learning Writing 105 sections and in Spring 2002 there were seven Writing 205 sections. Writing classes accounted for 31.2% of students in service learning classes managed by CPCS during Academic Year 2001-2002.

“CPCS facilitated a service learning component for 29 courses in 12 colleges reaching 670 Syracuse University students.”

College Year of Participation

Figure 2 indicates that the largest percentage of students participating in service learning courses, 32%, were freshman at the time of their service. There were however, a significant number of sophomores, juniors and seniors participating in service learning courses.

Figure 2. College Year of Service Learning Participants Academic Year 2001-2002



Pre Evaluation Responses

Each student who is registered in a CPCS facilitated service learning course is asked to complete a *Pre Evaluation* form. The *Pre Evaluation* provides CPCS with a history of the student's prior service. Three hundred thirty eight *Pre Evaluations* were obtained from 670 service learning students, resulting in a 50% response rate.

Figure 3 shows that over 84% of responding students had previous volunteer experience. Eighty one percent of students who had previous community service experience felt it contributed to their overall educational experience.

**Figure 3. Pre Evaluation Responses
Academic Year 2001-2002**

	<u>2001-2002 Academic Year</u>
Students who have volunteered before	84%
Students whose past volunteer experience enhanced their learning	81%
Students who feel their skills might fit into a volunteer setting	94%

The students also provided anecdotal responses that are valuable for understanding their expectations and past experiences. The following statements were taken from student *Pre Evaluations*:

"I...worked with a very diverse group of people which helped me to gain respect for people of different ethnic, economic, and social backgrounds."

"I learned...that one person can make a difference in another's life depending on what they do, or don't do."

"It taught me to work with kids and give back to the community."

"81% of students who had previous community service experience felt it contributed to their overall educational experience."



Children from a local non profit organization work on arts and crafts with student volunteers at the 12th annual Comstock Kidest.

Post Evaluation Responses

CPCS assesses service learning experiences at Syracuse University in several different ways. The statistics and comments listed below represent information from student *Post Evaluations*.

At the conclusion of each semester, service learning professors distribute *Post Evaluations* to assess the students' experiences. *Post Evaluations* focus on the following: enhancement of educational experience; contribution to the agency; recommendation for peer participation; barriers to getting started; and possibility of future participation. The following data was gathered from student responses.

Two hundred thirty five *Post Evaluations* were returned by students in service learning courses, resulting in a 35% response rate. Figure 4 shows that 81% of students responding felt their service enhanced their educational experience; 89% of students would advise another student to participate in a service learning project, 86% felt that their personal skills benefitted the agency, and 79% plan on participating in community service in the future.

The open ended responses on the students' *Post Evaluations* are valuable for further understanding their overall experience. The following statements were taken from student *Post Evaluations*.

Enhancement of Educational Experience

"I was able to work with children and relate it to the advertising world." (ADV 509)

"This experience has made me more socially conscious."
(ADV 509)

"I was able to relate my experience very well to the sociological lessons we learned in class." (FOR 202)

"It has given me a better perspective of the world outside of my college environment." (WRT 205)

Contribution to Agency

"I thought I'd be doing 'side' jobs, unimportant stuff, not at all...The kids were amazing, I was constantly interacting with them."

"I think that my ability to get along with the children and relate to their surroundings allowed them to feel more comfortable and willing to accept my help."

"I was able to extend myself to help those children who needed help and provide assistance to the staff."

**Figure 4. Student Post Evaluation Results
Academic Year 2001-2002**

	<u>2001-2002 Academic Year</u>
Percent of students that felt their service enhanced their educational experience	81%
Percent of students who felt their personal skills benefitted the agency	86%
Percent of students who would advise another student to participate in a service learning project	89%
Percent of students who plan on participating in community service in the future	79%



Agency Evaluations

Agency satisfaction is important to the success of the CPCS Service Learning program. After the Service Learning Coordinator receives the final placement information for students, *Agency Evaluations* are sent to each site. The site coordinator is asked to evaluate the students' performance and dependability.

202 *Agency Evaluations* were returned out of a possible 670, resulting in a 30% response rate. **Figure 5** shows that agencies reported 87% of students were punctual and responsible in their service. 93% of students were civil, respectful, and attempted to understand diverse viewpoints. The agencies gave students an overall rating of 3.7 out of 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.

The agencies also commented on the students and about the service component as a whole. The following statements were taken from the 2001-2002 *Agency Evaluations*:

“Bethany was a joy working with the children. She was compassionate, understanding and nurturing.”

“Eric’s work resulted in two new awards for the Science Fair this year, and opened doors through which we hope to move in 2003.”

“Jennifer was interested in our activities and participated with enthusiasm.”

**Figure 5. Agency Evaluation of Student performance
Academic Year 2001-2002**

	<u>2001-2002 Academic Year</u>
Percent of students who were punctual and responsible in their service	87%
Percent of students who completed his/her tasks	88%
Percent of students who were civil, respectful and attempted to understand diverse viewpoints	93%
Percent of students who understood the mission of the agency and attempted to implement its goal	89%
Average overall agency rating	3.7



Volunteers from the S.U. Ambulance Service show children from the local Spanish Action League their equipment.

Community Orientations

In response to feedback received during the June 25, 2001, Service Learning Agency Meeting, CPCS developed and piloted a Community Orientation program to help students develop a stronger sense of the Syracuse/Onondaga community. Students completing service as part of a course requirement were required to attend one of the orientation sessions before beginning their service.

The Community Orientation program was developed by CPCS to help orient students to the Syracuse/Onondaga community geographically, demographically, and culturally, by offering a clear and understandable presentation of community information. Figure 6 represents evaluation responses given by students about the Program immediately following the Community Orientation sessions.

289 students attended the Community Orientations, and 100% of those in attendance filled out a *Post Evaluation* immediately following the event. 79% of students Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they had a better geographic understanding of the Syracuse area. 83% of students Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they had a better understanding of their responsibilities as a volunteer.

At the conclusion of the semester, students who attended Community Orientations were asked to complete a second *Post Evaluation* that evaluated the impact of the Orientation Session after their service had been completed.

CPCS received 173 evaluations out of a possible 289 for a 60% response rate. As shown in Figure 7, 19% of students used material found in the manual at their site during the completion of their service. 30% of students believed the geographic orientation helped them locate their sites, and 43% of students believed the demographic information better prepared them for their service experience.

**Figure 7. Community Orientation Post Evaluations
2001-2002 Academic Year**

	<u>2001-2002 Academic Year</u>
Percent of students who used material found in the manual at their site	19%
Percent of students who believe the geographic orientation helped them locate their site	30%
Percent of students who believe the demographic information better prepared them for their service experience	43%

**Figure 6. Community Orientation Post Evaluation Responses
Academic Year 2001-2002**

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
Percent of students who now have a better geographic understanding of the Syracuse area	17%	63%	18%	2%	0%
Percent of students who have a better understanding of the Service Learning placement process	22%	62%	13%	2%	0%
Percent of students who have a better understanding of their responsibilities as a volunteer	30%	53%	16%	2%	0%
Student believes the material presented was clear and understandable.	61%	36%	2%	0%	0%



Assessment

Throughout the implementation of its programs, the Center for Public and Community Service (CPCS) obtains formative and summative feedback critical to the development and improvement of its programs and services. Bringle and Hatcher¹ (1996) presented a heuristic for assessment of service learning programs that identifies a sequence of activities for planned change and development relative to four constituent groups involved with service learning: faculty, students, the University, and community members. CPCS continues to use this model, as well as the specific learning outcomes for its courses and programs, to guide assessment efforts. The following are examples of service learning projects that, due to resources provided through the University Vision Fund, have extensive assessment plans in place.

The Service Learning Community & The Community Design Center

The Service Learning Community (SLC) and the Community Design Center (CDC) of the School of Architecture provide upperclassmen with the opportunity to explore their service experiences through their coursework. While the SLC affords students the opportunity to live together in apartment-style housing on South Campus, the CDC provides students with the opportunity to engage in collaborative projects outside of the traditional academic environment. Piloted in the fall of 2001, the SLC represents a collaboration between CPCS, the Office of Residence Life, community members, and students interested in exploring service in-depth. The CDC, piloted in 1997 as a collaboration between CPCS, the School of Architecture, and the community, is in its fourth year and recently expanded to include research as a program focus. Based on the learning outcomes for the respective projects, in-depth assessment plans were developed with input from all stakeholders. Document analysis on students' reflective journals and focus groups were conducted to identify areas of learning prevalent for students. Course evaluations, designed in a likert scale and open-ended question format, were distributed at the end of the semester to obtain student feedback about the respective course objectives and formats. Finally, CPCS *Pre* and *Post Evaluations* were administered to assess students' expec-

tations, personal and educational enhancement through their service experiences, and how CPCS can improve its services. The SLC also administered an experiential learning matrix at the beginning and end of the semester to evaluate students' perceptions of skills (e.g., communication, problem solving, applied ethics) developed through their SLC experiences.



Matt Geller SOM '04, volunteer at the Center for Nature Education as part of the SLC

Based on the information gained from assessment efforts, the SLC advisory group enhanced program components to better serve students' needs and SLC learning outcomes. The full assessment report, including in-depth findings and implications for the Service Learning Community is available in the Center for Public and Community Service. The CDC and CPCS staff will consider CDC assessment data and its impact on the community when developing future curriculum.

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¹Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (1996). Implementing service learning in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67, 221-239.