

Best Practices

Passion, Purpose, and Service: Best Practices and Strategies for Integrating Service-Learning in First Year Seminars

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Abstract

First-year seminars and service-learning programs have contributed greatly to the efforts designed to reinvigorate the undergraduate academic experience over the past 25 years. Despite the mounting research indicating that service participation during the undergraduate years substantially enhances academic achievement, life skills development, and sense of civic responsibility (Astin & Sax, 1998), fewer than a 25% of institutions nationally report using service-learning in first year seminars (Tobolowsky, Mamrick, & Cox, 2005). As a result, most undergraduates participating in first year seminars do not benefit from service-learning participation until their second or third year of study. Using empirical evidence and both learning (Kolb, 1984) and intellectual (Perry, 1999) developmental theories, this paper will argue the benefits of including service-learning in the various models of first year seminars. In addition, the paper also illustrates best-practices from various institutions and provides recommendations for integrating service in both extended-orientation and academic first-year seminars.

The first year of college can be a transformative experience for new students arriving at institutions with much hope, optimism and anticipation. Unfortunately, institutions have not been fully able to harness that hope and optimism. While enrollment in colleges and universities across the United States has nearly tripled from 6.4 million in 1966 to 17.6 million in 2006 (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006), American College Testing reported the retention rate in 2006 was 68.7% across all institution types. This attrition results in a staggering 5.5 million college students who enrolled in 2006 but did not return to our campuses in 2007. However, a 2002 American Council on Education report entitled *Access and Persistence* found that more than half of the students who leave institutions after their first year of college complete their degree at another institution. These findings suggest that while new student retention is a problem, there is strong student persistence towards completing a college degree. As such, the potential for improving student success exists provided there is strong institutional commitment. Providing well developed and engaging transition programs can serve as powerful tools to support new student success in college (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates,

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2005), and, as a result, also provide new students with more meaningful civic and academic experiences.

Over the past two decades there have been many efforts to support student success and to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience in the first year. These efforts are most notably evidenced in the form of the contemporary first year seminar introduced by John Gardner at the University of South Carolina in 1972 and the publication of the comprehensive text on the first year entitled *The Freshmen Year Experience: Helping Students Survive and Succeed in College* by Lee Upcraft, John Gardner, & Associates (1989). Similarly, significant efforts have been advanced to improve the undergraduate experience such as organizing residential learning communities, promoting undergraduate research projects, and engaging service-learning in the curriculum (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005).

While many institutions have used community service successfully in orientation programs and in the first semester to engage new students and ensure a positive socialization to the institution (Astin & Sax, 1998), only 23.7% of institutions reported using service-learning in first-year seminars (Tobolowsky, Mamrick, & Cox, 2005), despite the mounting research indicating that service-learning substantially enhances academic achievement, life skills development, and sense of civic responsibility (Astin & Sax, 1998). Certainly, there are substantive reasons why more institutions do not use of service-learning in the first-year. The prevalence of survey courses and the disproportionate use of adjunct faculty are the two most common and significant obstacles for integrating service-learning in the first year. However, given the positive outcomes of service-learning, institutions should look at creative ways to integrate service-learning as early into the curriculum as possible. As a result of the successes of first-year seminars, and institutional support they receive, seminars serve as the most logical vehicles to introduce service-learning in the first-year.

This paper also includes an overview and history of first-year seminars and service learning and offers theoretical support for integrating these programs by using the work of William G. Perry (1999) and David A. Kolb (1984). Additionally, three examples will be used to illustrate the use of service-learning in first year seminars. Finally, recommendations for increasing service-learning in first-year seminars will be made based on literature and the best-practices of the three case examples.

First Year Seminars

While not a recent innovation in higher education, freshman seminars, as they were originally called, date back to 1877 when John Hopkins University offered the first extended orientation course designed to assist students to the academic life of a research institution. More than 30 years later, Reed College was recognized as the first institution to offer a freshman seminar for academic credit in 1911. However, the contemporary seminar took root in 1972 at the University of South Carolina, and momentum was generated with the establishment of the Center for the Study of The Freshman Year in 1986 and the publication of *The Freshmen Year Experience: Helping Students Survive and Succeed in College* (Upcraft et al., 1989). First-year seminars, as they are now regularly called, are generally small discussion-based courses centered on, and concerned

about, the individual needs of new students and the institution (Hunter & Linder, 2005). The format and content of seminars vary, but inevitably, they are designed to assist new students' transition to their new academic environments and support their personal and academic development. Currently, seminars take many forms based on the institutional culture, but generally they fall into three types; extended-orientation, academic with common content, and academic with varying content. According to the 2003 national survey conducted by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, the most frequent format consists of the "extended-orientation," which is offered at 65.2% of the reporting institutions. Seminars with an academic focus and common curriculum are offered at 27.4% of the reporting institutions, while 24.3% of the institutions offer academic seminars with varying curriculum.

Extended-orientation seminars are typically sponsored by a division of Student Affairs rather than Academic Affairs and vary widely in many of the defining characteristics: required or elective courses; bearing credit or no credit; taken for a grade or pass-fail. Generally the course curriculum focuses on transition issues for new students such as time management, study skills, and diversity. Academic seminars with a common content are by and large offered as part of general or core curriculum and usually focus on essential academic skills such as writing, reasoning, and critical thinking (Hunter et al., 2005). Academic seminars with varying content offer senior faculty the opportunity to design seminars for first year students on areas of interest or expertise. Students are provided with an opportunity to choose a seminar topic of interest to them, but most importantly have stimulating exchanges of ideas with senior faculty in a small and engaging class setting. The examples provided at the end of the paper reflect each of these types: the University of Rhode Island will focus on an extended orientation course, Indiana Wesleyan University will showcase a common academic seminar, while Millersville University (PA) will serve as an example of the varying content model. The type and format of first year seminars continue to shift to meet the needs of evolving curricula and institutional goals. Hunter and Linder (2005) note an increasing trend of institutions shifting from extended-orientation formats to academic content, resulting in more seminars being offered for academic credit. With evolving formats and more institutions offering seminars as new components of the curriculum, a need for assessment of learning outcomes is also critical.

Service-Learning

Campus Compact, a national coalition committed to fulfilling the public purposes of higher education, defines service-learning as a teaching methodology that "incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community (Campus Compact, 2007)." Service-learning is differentiated from internship experiences, which largely benefit students, and volunteer programs, which largely benefit the community, by a mutually reciprocal relationship between the academic and the community. Service-learning is characterized by using a community service project to meet one or more course objectives and utilizing reflective activities 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 (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

As with first-year seminars, service-learning has a long history, although only embraced as a teaching pedagogy in the past 30 years. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2007) cites an Annotated History of Service-Learning: 1862-2002 by Peter Titlebaum, Gabrielle Williamson, Corinne Daprano, Janine Baer & Jayne Brahler (2004) suggesting that early principles of service-learning can be identified in the rationale for the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. Furthermore, philosophers John Dewey and William James are widely recognized for developing the intellectual foundations for service-learning in the early 1900s. In 1903 the cooperative education movement was founded at the University of Cincinnati. Significant federal initiatives including the Work Progress Administration in 1935, Peace Corps in 1961 and Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) in 1965 provided momentum for conferences on experiential education and service-learning. In fact, the term "service-learning" was first used in 1966 at meeting to describe a project designed to link students from participating Oak Ridge Associated Universities and tributary development organizations. Service-learning became part of the educational landscape due to the establishment and success of Campus Compact in 1985 and with the publication of *Combining Service and Learning* (Kendal, 1990).

Empirical Evidence for Service-Learning in the First Year

While both service-learning and the first year seminar are widely used in higher education, few institutions use both programs in complimentary ways to help ensure *both* a successful *and* a meaningful transition in the first year of college (Zlotkowski, 2005). In a 2003 national survey, of the 771 responding institutions, only 145 institutions (23.7%) reported using service-learning as part of some first year seminars. Even fewer provide service-learning opportunities in the first year of the undergraduate experience. At Florida State University, of the 71 courses offered in the fall of 2006 designated as service-learning, only 3 courses (4.25%) were designated for first year students. In the spring semester, of the 62 courses coded as service-learning, only 4 (6.5%) were designated for the first year. Despite the growing research indicating that service-learning substantially enhances academic performance, student development, and a sense of civic responsibility (Astin & Sax, 1998), most undergraduates do not benefit from service-learning participation until their second or third year of study. The fact that so few courses offering service-learning are offered to first-year students represents a significant lost opportunity since the impact of service is enhanced by the length of time students are exposed to service learning (Astin et al., 1998). Furthermore, recent literature suggests that service can be a catalyst for profound frame-changing experiences, especially in the first year of college (Seider, 2007).

There has been a significant body of research that supports the use of service-learning. The most recent and significant study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (2006) compared the effects of service-learning on the cognitive and affective development of undergraduate students. Their findings showed significant positive effects on all outcome measures: academic performance (GPA, writing skills,

critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding), self-efficacy, leadership activities and interpersonal skills, choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college. Furthermore, these results were strongest when associated with course-based service. The length of time and frequency devoted to service also resulted in a stronger positive effect (Astin & Sax, 1998). These results support the expanded use of service-learning in first-year seminars, rather than limiting service participation in the first year to out of the classroom experiences or continuing to offer service-learning experiences in predominately upper-level courses.

Theoretical Support

There exists sound rationale and a wealth of research for using student development theory to inform the design and implementation of programs that support and challenge the first year student (Skipper, 2006). Student development theories can illuminate the benefits of service-learning during this critical time of transition and maturation. While rationales for using service-learning in the first-year can be found in the works of, but not limited to, Chickering (1969), Kohlberg (1969), and Schlossberg (1984), this article is informed by the work of Kolb (1984) and Perry (1999).

Cognitive development theories, such as the Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development advanced by William Perry (1999) describe a sequence of stages in which individual position themselves in relationship to the construction of knowledge (Skipper, 2005). Perry's scheme describes the process of "meaning-making" during the evolution of the students' sense and perspective about knowledge (learning), self (and peers), and authority (instructors). William G. Perry articulates a sequence of nine positions through which persons move in a fairly descriptive manner, beginning with simplistic forms of duality of knowledge and ending with complex forms in which individuals seek to affirm personal commitments. Perry intentionally uses "positions" to describe the various segments of this theory to ensure that no time is inferred, and because position represents the view from which individuals view the world around them. Many college students arrive at our institutions having moved through the first position of *Basic Duality* where all questions have answers that are right and wrong. However, it is moving students through positions two through five that can be the most beneficial to college students.

In his second position, *Multiplicity Pre-legitimate*, Perry posits that students rationalize the existence of diverse thought by suggesting that confusion is intentionally created by authorities so that students can discover the answers for themselves. In position three, *Multiplicity Subordinate*, students begin to accept the uncertain nature of knowledge. While answers remain undetermined, and sensing uncertain, students begin to question the criteria for evaluation within a varying context. Position four is identified as *Multiplicity Coordinate* or *Relativism Subordinate*. In the former, students begin to recognize that some opinions are more appropriate than others. In the latter, students seek to understand how authorities arrive at an opinion and seek to emphasize a process rather than absolute content.

Relativism, which is position five, can be a position in which students remain for quite some time. In this position, students recognize that theories are structures for

interpretation of information rather than absolute constructs and most useful in context of understanding them. Position six is *Commitment Foreseen*, at which point students begin to ground their beliefs, opinions and values internally, rather than externally. Students sense that new commitments must be made with little, or no, directions from others. Lastly, positions seven, *Initial Commitment*; eight, *Implications of Commitment*; and nine, *Developing Commitment*, are defined by Perry as ones in which students begin to make and affirm deep commitments to values and beliefs.

When you consider the pedagogy of service-learning and examine positions two through five, those most associated with the undergraduate experience, it is clear that service-learning can facilitate a student's movement through Perry's positions by utilizing intentional reflection and facilitating a synthesis of the service-learning experience. Moreover, as Perry argues, examining how individuals move from one position to the next is as critical as understanding the current position of the individual. From this perspective, service-learning can be a powerful tool if implemented well. Pre-service orientations, a requisite for a well executed service-learning experience, provide students with information on the setting, expectations, and clientele of the host site before the student even begins the service experience. This process sets the stage for redefining the authorities of learning, shifting the focus from the instructors to off-site leaders, fellow students, and clientele of the service-site. The service experience itself can call into question a student's certainties or challenge a student's comfort zones, and as a result, it can examine the variables that define positions three and four. In addition, well constructed reflection activities can illustrate the relativism of information and reconcile the need for individual commitments to make meaning of the varying context of the experiences.

David A. Kolb's theory of Experiential Learning also informs the use of service-learning as a teaching methodology. Originally developed for use with adult education, his model has found pervasive pedagogical implications in higher education, particularly in professional disciplines such as technology and engineering, business and teacher preparation. The model comprising of a "four stage cycle" includes concrete experience, observation and reflection, formation of abstract concepts, and testing in new situations (Kolb, 1984). For the best outcome, the first stage, *concrete experience*, requires full and unbiased involvement in learning experiences. Likewise, *reflective observation* should include contemplations of one's experiences from various perspectives, usually through guided discussion or purposive construction of dialogue. The third stage, *abstract conceptualization*, consists of idea formulation and integration based on the experience and reflection. Last, *active experimentation* includes the incorporation of new ideas into action.

Kolb suggests that learning is a central life task, and how individuals learn impacts their development. Kolb argues that development, with learning as a central focus, comprises of three stages: acquisition, specialization, and integration. Development through these stages, as is expected, is characterized by increased complexity and relativism of the world and an individual's ability to integrate the components of the experiential learning theory. The successful implementation of service-learning in large part follows the description of the four stages of experiential learning model. In fact, Kolb specifically chose the term experiential learning as a result

of the influences of John Dewey (Evans, Forbney & Guido-Dibrito, 1998) who also provided much of the early intellectual reasoning for service-learning.

Passion Seminars at Millersville University

Millersville University is located in Millersville, Pennsylvania, and was founded in 1855 as the state's first Normal School and has evolved into a liberal arts university. Millersville is designated as a selective admissions institution and currently enrolls 7,200 undergraduate students, drawing 96% of its enrollment from the state of Pennsylvania. The institution's mission statement reads, in part:

Millersville University has focused program initiatives on student learning and engagement centered on the commitment to the liberal arts and sciences while embracing experiential learning experiences with public, private, regional and global organizations. Initiatives include first-year programming with living/learning communities anchored by seminars, infusion of service-learning throughout the curriculum, internships and cooperative education experiences in national and international settings, expanded study abroad opportunities, and an extensive undergraduate research program which culminates with formal presentations on-campus. Collaborative partnerships between academic and student affairs have resulted in well-integrated curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular programs that promote multicultural awareness, civil engagement and student development (Millersville University, 2007).

The passion seminars at offered Millersville University serve as an example of an academic seminar with varying content. Passion seminars are housed out of the University's Exploratory Program under the direction of Dr. Ralph G. Anttonen and were established in 2005, building on the success of an "extended-orientation" seminar model that addressed transition issues, but did not fully engage first year students with senior faculty. The passion courses are three credits, content-based thematic seminars linked to a general education course. Faculty members are encouraged to develop seminars focusing on topics about which they are passionate, and most importantly, that challenge and engage first-semester students. In 2005, the first year of the program, five seminars were offered with the following titles: "Homes and Homelessness," "The Dream of America," "Facing Fear," "Why don't they speak English?," and "Why We Hate." The program was so successful that in the fall of 2007 Millersville will be offering 14 sections and now require undecided students to enroll in a passion seminar of their choice. Faculty members are encouraged to incorporate teaching methodologies that engage students more effectively than traditional classroom instruction. Service-learning was used with great success in both of the seminars featured in this article entitled "The Dream of America" and "Amish and the Media." The course description for "The Dream of America" reads:

This course introduces students to various interpretations, conceptions, and manifestations of the concept, promise, failure, and myths associated with the

dream of America. Students will read fiction, drama, and non-fiction prose depicting various American writers' perspectives of the dream and myths of America. By analyzing these readings, students will develop their own interpretations of the dream of America and its efficacy for a generation uncertain of its relevance in their lives (Exploratory Program, 2007).

To examine the "myth of the American dream" students were asked to participate in a service activity at a local battered women's shelter, where a weekly book reading and discussion was held and facilitated. This experience moved the students and challenged them to consider how others viewed the same content within the context of different lives and perspectives. Both the faculty and students were touched by the openness of the women and learned a great deal about the myth of the American dream and its unfulfilled promise to its citizens. The students formed great bonds with each other and the guests of the home and learned a great deal about justice, perception, and fairness. Furthermore, the content of the reading assignments came to life for them with a great deal of complexity and meaning.

A second course, not offered in 2005, but offered in 2006 as the program expanded, was "Amish in the Media." taught by Professor Diane Zimmerman Umble. The course description reads:

This seminar will explore the intersections of the Amish and the media by studying both the representations of the Amish in the media as well as Amish efforts to represent themselves. After an introduction to Amish history and culture, the seminar will explore ways in which the Old Order Amish have been represented in a variety of mainstream media (feature and documentary films, television programs, poetry, non-fiction narratives, tourism) for non-Amish audiences. Then the seminar will move beyond a consideration of the Amish *as mediated images* to the Amish *as actors*—that is, as agents who produce and consume their own media, create and transmit their own representations of Amish life (newspapers, magazines and other publishing enterprises) and, in various ways, interact with and respond to mainstream media endeavors. These texts provide a useful window for exploring larger issues about culture and identity in the mediated landscape of contemporary American life. Furthermore, a comparative approach that considers mainstream mediations of the Amish along side of Amish interactions with and uses of the media will shed additional light on the processes of mediation and the maintenance of cultural identity (Exploratory Program, 2007).

As a requirement of the course, students were asked to perform service by supporting a benefit auction which benefited a clinic serving the Amish community. The timing of their service commitment coincided with a cultural analysis of the Amish in the syllabus. Their service consisted of performing duties as event runners, cleaning tables and emptying trash in support of this event, which was almost exclusively spoken in Pennsylvania Dutch. With one exception, the participating students had no previous interactions with the Amish community, and as such their experiences allowed them to

compare their perceptions, largely informed by the media, with their personal experiences. There was a great deal of disconnect between the two representations, which allowed for rich dialogue and reflection. Students had an appreciation for craftsmanship of the items and as some noted, they realized that “plain” did not equate to being dumb. The timing of this service also coincided with the tragic shooting in which a gunman held hostage a schoolhouse with 26 students in a nearby Amish community. The gunman killed 6 girls execution style before shooting himself. This incident was widely broadcast in the media in October 2006 and made the experience incredibly personal for the students and instructor. The service project allowed the students to understand more fully the culture and community that became victim to this horrific shooting in a very personal manner, which would not have been achieved through traditional academic pedagogy.

The seminars, regardless of the use of service-learning, have been well received and are responsible for reported gains in many student learning outcomes. According to internal assessments, students in the seminar had more conversations with peers, worked more with classmates outside of class, were active in more research for academic work, contributed more to class, and came to class more prepared than students who were not in a freshmen seminar (Foster-Clark, Ward, McDowell, O’Neill & Weinstein, 2006). Not surprisingly, these outcomes were even more significant in the courses that offered service-learning opportunities as part of the instruction methodology.

Transitions and Transformations at the University of Rhode Island

The University of Rhode Island (URI) was founded in 1892 and is the only four-year public University in the state of Rhode Island. URI is designated as a selective admissions institution and currently enrolls about 11,500 undergraduate students, of which half are in-state. The mission statement at URI reads, in part:

At the heart of the University is a strong core of traditional academic disciplines that promote students’ development and capabilities as critical, independent thinkers and provides the foundation for more than 100 different undergraduate and 80 graduate degree programs. With its interdisciplinary focus on research in areas that affect people in their daily lives, the University provides innovative hands-on learning opportunities for students in partnership with faculty members and partners within and outside the University. (University of Rhode Island, 2007)

Since 1995 URI has offered a one-credit extended orientation seminar, which offers the traditional course contents including academic integrity, values formation, diversity, drugs and alcohol education, library skills, career planning and time management, along with a community service component (Richmond, 2002). The course is coordinated by University College which is also responsible for overseeing services that include academic advising, new student orientation, academic enrichment center, service-learning, all international education and internships. URI101, Transitions and Transformations, was designed to meet the following student outcomes: academic

motivation and success, personal and social integration into the University, and pride in the campus community by connecting new students to academic resources and introducing them to topics essential to their successful transition. Alan Shawn Feinstein, a noted Rhode Island philanthropist, generously endowed the service learning component of URI 101, from which the Feinstein Enriching America Program was developed. With the endowment, Mr. Feinstein helped ensure that University of Rhode Island students would have the opportunity to be involved in a meaningful community service activity, to reflect upon that experience, and to have the forum to share their thoughts and feelings with other students (Richmond, 2002).

The task of executing a service opportunity for 3,000 students in 150 courses in the first ten weeks of the academic calendar initially met with limited success. This ambitious project was originally received as another course requirement with limited meaning to the service participants. Committed to making the service component a critical feature of URI101, the service-learning center became an integral stakeholder and focused service work in thematic areas including: children and families, education, elderly, environment, domestic violence, health care, homelessness, housing, hunger and literacy (Richmond, 2002). Sections are organized around majors, and service activities are developed to reflect academic interests. Additionally, intentional use of relevant literature, related speakers and activities, and pre and post service reflections facilitated by trained student mentors provided the rigor that helped shift this project from a focus on community service to a meaningful service-learning component of the course. The success of the program is also related to the pairing of all URI 101 sections within a learning community, a group of four classes that a cohort of 20 students take in common. Students get to know each other better, form study groups, and are able to participate in their service activities with peers who share their interest in an academic major.

Life Calling, Work and Leadership at Indiana Wesleyan University

Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) was founded in 1920 and is an independent Evangelical Christian comprehensive university. IWU is designated as a selective admissions institution and enrolls a total of 8,500 students, but has a traditional student population of 1,800 on its main residential campus. The institution's mission statement reads:

Indiana Wesleyan University is a Christ-centered academic community committed to changing the world by developing students in character, scholarship and leadership. The primary value for Indiana Wesleyan University is Christ likeness. The challenge to follow Christ compels us to pursue a personal and professional life of: commitment, learning, serving and stewardship. (Indiana Wesleyan University, 2007)

In the fall of 2000, IWU began offering LDR 150: Life Calling, Work and Leadership as an elective course targeted traditional undeclared new students on its main residential campus. This course focuses on students developing an understanding of the concept of life calling or purpose through the use of the Life Calling model developed by Dr. Bill Millard, director of the Center for Life Calling and Leadership. Successfully

implementing the Life Calling model includes using service-learning to facilitate reflection, integrate their experience, and explore their foundational values, unique design and personal mission. The course is taught by “Life Coaches,” all of which are staff members of the Center under Dr. Millard’s leadership. Students are guided to understand the world of work and individual leadership from a life calling perspective (Reynolds, Gross & Millard, 2006).

Quantitative analysis of the course in its inaugural year provided evidence that supported students enrolled in LDR150, in which all sections included service-learning, were almost 6 times more likely to persist and 6 times more likely to have earned a degree at the end of four years than those who did not enroll in the course. More powerful than the retention and persistence data was the qualitative analysis of the course. Discussion with students suggested that those enrolled lead more intentional lives, helped achieve academic expectations, and provided the support needed to succeed at IWU. By leading more intentional lives, students were able to find congruity between who they were and what they wanted to do, and as a result affirm the choices they made. Quotes shared by Reynolds, Gross & Millard (2006, p. 3) from IWU students supported this analysis:

I think the class just gave me directions because I had no clue what I wanted to do.—*First-year female college student.*

It’s a class about yourself and self-discovery.—*First generation, first-year female college student.*

The course is designed to provide students with a purpose-guided approach to their educational experience. The material and instructional design are intentionally combined to equip students with the tools to address challenges in college and live a lifetime of purpose consistent with their sense of life calling. Dr. Millard indicates that using service-learning is a critical teaching methodology essential to meet the objectives of the course and the responsibility of the institution to serve as an “incubator” from which authentic student leaders rise. In reflecting on their experience enrolled in LDR 150, a student wrote:

Don’t think that they’re going to try and tell you what they should do. They’re going to leave the decision to you and you’re going to have to do the work and decide for yourself. But it’s really beneficial to find out who you are, what your strengths are, what your God-given abilities are and that you have time to search through that and explore yourself and what you may be interested in. (Reynolds, Gross & Millard, 2006, p. 4)

Recommendations

From the literature (Astin & Sax, 1998; Bringle, & Hatcher, 1996; Jones & Hill, 2003; Kezar & Rhoads, 2001; Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998, Sidle & McReynolds, 1999;

Zlotkowski, 2005) and best practices identified in the case studies, recommendations for increasing service-learning can be suggested that are applicable across all institution types and seminar formats.

1. *Clearly differentiate service-learning objectives from community service assignments:* Since both service-learning and first-year seminars challenge traditional instructional methodologies about student learning and the role of the faculty, a failure to distinguish service-learning sufficiently from a community service project as well as a failure to assess effectively learning outcomes will compromise the integrity of the course objectives and potential of the learning pedagogy.
2. *Create service-learning assignments that appropriately match the learning objectives of the first-year seminar:* Simply assigning a service requirement to a course doesn't make it a service-learning experience. As the literature shows (Astin & Sax, 1998), the most effective learning happens when the assignment is directly connected to course objectives, and there is purposive reflection of the activity within the context of the course, rather than an ancillary assignment. In each of the case studies, the service matched the unique format and objectives of the course. Effective use of service-learning in any course requires intentional planning, advanced coordination and preparation, and thoughtful integration into the curriculum; in this manner the first-year seminar is no different than any other course.
3. *Develop and maintain strong relationships between first-year seminar and service-learning functions:* A common and valid criticism from faculty is the level of work associated with properly planning and executing an effective service-learning element in the course. This perception is especially daunting for faculty and instructors for whom this will be the first attempt at integrating service-learning into the classroom experience. A strong relationship between the service-learning center and first-year seminar coordinator is critical to overcoming this challenge. The service-learning center can be a critical element in preparing faculty, engaging the community partner, and facilitating reflection activities.
4. *Provide on-going support for instructors who choose to implement service-learning:* As indicated, the level of commitment needed from instructors to implement service-learning can be quite demanding; it will be important to extend the working relationship between the first-year seminar coordinator and the service-learning center to instructors. It is critical that the service-learning staff are involved with training, make available their resources, and provide ongoing support to faculty who choose to use service-learning as a new method of instruction
5. *Extend service-learning professional development opportunities to first-year seminar faculty, staff and student leaders:* Almost without exception, mandating faculty to use service-learning will ensure the failure of the experience. Service-learning should "emerge naturally" as indicated by Dr. Anttonen and to do so, faculty and peer instructors should be invited and encouraged to attend

- appropriate institutional, regional, and national professional development opportunities.
6. *Utilize peer-mentors in the execution and support of service-learning in the first-year seminar:* Most seminars utilize student leaders as a portion of the instructional team. As evidenced by URI, utilizing student leaders to help facilitate the service-learning component of the course is a critical element of the process. Student leaders provide a unique perspective on the experience and can often provide their own support based on previous service-learning experience. Additionally, Student leaders have also played important roles in addressing risk-management related issues associated with implementing service-learning. As you would expect, it is particularly important to prepare and train student leaders in advance for this recommendation to be as effective as possible. Expectations for student leaders should be clear regarding their roles beginning with the recruitment and selection process.
 7. *Establish assessment and diagnostic tools to evaluate service-learning elements of the first-year seminar:* As indicated earlier, and evidenced by the University of Rhode Island, a detailed assessment of service-learning is important for continued improvements and refinement. In the literature, and in the case studies, service-learning was never a complete success the first time out and involved improvements as the course evolved. In addition, assessment should correspond to the complexity of the service-learning project. Too often, assessment is a one-line question as part of an overall evaluation. Thorough assessment involving both qualitative and quantitative methods should be used as was the case with the research brief produced by Indiana Wesleyan University for LDR 150.
 8. *Extend first-year initiatives beyond the first semester:* A common criticism of first-year initiatives centers on the reality that most of their efforts are focused exclusively on the first semester and do not extend into the second semester. A truly effective program should continue to challenge and support new students the entire first year and beyond, as is the case at Millersville University and IWU, where seminar instructors continue to serve as the students' academic advisors after the completion of the courses.

Conclusion

Integrating purposive and meaningful service-learning in the curriculum is never an easy challenge, but it can be deeply rewarding experience for the instructor and the student. This experience is certainly the case faculty members utilizing service-learning for first-year seminars. Faculty members who incorporate service-learning report an increased level of satisfaction with student engagement and a more rewarding teaching experience (Astin & Sax, 1998). As a result, faculty can become advocates for shifting the educational paradigm from teaching to learning. The benefits for students are conclusive; there is a significant body of research that both first-year seminars and service-learning contribute positively to student success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005). Despite shared educational objectives, the fact is that these programs are largely independent of each other across many campuses. However, through enhanced campus

partnerships with first-year instructors and service-learning staff, these powerful practices can produce an educational synergy with the potential to create a more engaged first-year student who is more likely to succeed, to take full advantage of the academic and involvement opportunities, to develop a more meaningful and purposive life, and to exhibit pro-social behaviors throughout their college experience and beyond.

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