Creating Opportunities for Real Change and Life-long Learning

“Having the opportunity to work with an actual organization and create materials for them really opened my eyes to the real world and expanded my knowledge outside of the classroom. I will use this throughout future workplaces and life in general. Thank you!”

--Student

Service learning benefits all those involved: schools, organizations/agencies, and the community, though the ones who benefit the most from it are undoubtedly our students, which probably comes as no surprise to any of us. It provides students a variety of opportunities to apply, integrate, and elaborate on the knowledge they develop in the classroom for real audiences and purposes, as a vehicle to create lasting change. It is exciting. It is exhilarating. It is REAL, transferrable learning with the power to change people’s lives. And, it isn’t that hard to create these opportunities in our classes for students.

I have been using service learning in my professional writing classes for years, though only recently have I called it “service learning” and sought to make those classes designated as such. The projects that I create for my students ask them to locate a real world audience and negotiate a reasonable and mutually-beneficial writing project, working with community or university members to gain experience in a writing environment that requires collaboration with that organization, as well as with their classmates. Students have created everything from newsletters, to websites, to promotional materials, to policy manuals, to logos and business cards and more, but what is most exciting is that they can see how their writing makes a real difference, how it creates change for these organizations and in their own lives.

After meeting with Christie Billups, I saw how simple it could be to officially designate the classes in which I had already been incorporating service learning. After reading both the detailed Student Learning Outcomes for service learning and the criteria checklist for designation, I looked through my current syllabi and assignment sheets to see how I could make small changes in terms of language, outcomes, and explanations to connect more fully with academic service learning. It made me reflect on what I am currently doing in the classroom and to determine the best ways I can offer more explicit course objectives, assessments, and reflections. This is all for the benefit of my students, which is something we all want to do anyway—finding ways to be consistently reflective and open to making changes to create the best learning environment for our students. The support I have received from the Office of Service Learning, Christie, and her staff have made this process more manageable and I look forward to next year when I am able to offer officially designated service learning courses for my students, for the community partners and for the University.

Dr. Jennifer Consilio, Associate Professor of English (CAS)
The field of social work specializes in helping those most in need with a focus on marginalized and vulnerable populations. The social work department is currently offering an Introduction to Social Work class which incorporates service learning into its curriculum. The students choose a service learning site and complete the following assignment:

_Service Learning in a Social\Health Service setting (20 hrs) - Students are be expected to work with an agency and assist staff as they provide services to clients. Students are given a list of partnership agencies to choose from and the instructor will assist with the arrangements. This project will take place mid-September thru December and students will be required to write a reflection paper of 5-6 pages in length._

I am personally thrilled to be adding service learning to my Introduction to Social Work course next semester. As a new member of the faculty, I feel that the service learning program can greatly enhance my course and, more importantly, enhance student experiences. The following students are currently completing their service learning hours in Introduction to Social Work with Barb Rzeszuko and I hope their experiences can reinforce the importance of this pedagogical approach.

- Amanda serves at Heart Haven Outreach, a teen drop-in center in Bolingbrook. She assists with organizing groups for the teens and has facilitated a group session.
- Danielle is currently providing service at Youth Outlook, a counseling center in Naperville for LGBT youth. Danielle has provided service to transgendered youth during counseling sessions.
- Sean is serving at Loaves and Fishes, a food pantry, where he assists with food distribution and some case management.
- Samantha is providing service at Butler School in Lockport where she assists the social worker with both individual and group work with students.

These varied sites and experiences provide insight into the power and necessity of service learning. The social work department looks forward to expanding service learning opportunities for its students coming semesters.

Dr. Michael Lloyd, Assistant Professor, Social Work (CAS)

As a new faculty member in the Lewis University College of Business, I look forward to incorporating a strong service learning component in my undergraduate course during the Spring 2016 semester. I will be teaching Marketing Strategy, which serves as a capstone course for marketing students, and a service learning project will provide an opportunity for the students to put what they’ve learned at Lewis into action. I am especially excited about the prospect of working with the community partners with whom the Office of Service Learning has cultivated relationships. Working with such community partners not only fits well with the mission of Lewis University, but also provides the opportunity for our students to contribute to organizations that generally lack the resources to complete these projects on their own.

While I am new to Lewis University, I have utilized service learning in the classroom at other institutions. My students have worked with partner organizations ranging from university athletic departments and public library systems to an urban public school district, after-school programs and women’s summits. Each of these projects exposed students to the complexities of working with an external client and provided the chance to hone not just marketing skills, but communication skills, as well. For each of these organizations, the student teams brought strong skills and expertise to bear on projects that had immediate impact for their clients. The true beauty of working with external partners who are operating with significantly constrained resources is the opportunity for students to engage with clients who really need their help. The students get a chance to practice what they’ve learned and share their knowledge and abilities on projects with meaningful and impactful outcomes.

I can’t wait to work with Christie, Laura, and Tiffany in putting together a set of partners and projects for my students to work with in the spring!

Dr. James L. Oakley, Associate Professor & Chair, Marketing Department (COB)
Community Engagement in the COE

Attending college is a gift! The level of academic education obtained by individuals opens countless doors in terms of job opportunities and financial gain. However, attending a Lasallian university educates an individual in ways a standardized test or a term paper is unable to measure. Lasallian institutions, like Lewis University, educate the mind and the soul to recognize the marginalized in society and try to make a difference. This can start with a service learning course.

In the College of Education, elementary education majors are required to take a course entitled “Field I: Community and School Immersions.” Teacher candidates begin their field experience in grade school planning, teaching and assessing lessons. They are challenged to look for ways to carry out the mission of St. John Baptiste De La Salle. Some examples are:

One group of five students entered their field experience and noticed an inactive school library. Not only did they have the opportunity to create a functioning library, they were able to see the joy on children’s faces as they checked out books.

Other students worked in an after school program designed to help children with challenging home environments to complete their homework. Teacher candidates saw the monumental strides these young ones took not only with their academics, but in their enhanced self-esteem.

While all these and so many more stories like them depict great work, true education comes from deep reflection and asking questions like: “Why do these schools and children have such unfortunate situations to begin with?” and “What can I do to change this situation?” This course begins a shift in thinking from “I did a good thing to help someone have a better day” to “I made a connection to a child today and I can make a significant change if I start to look at them through a different lens.”

This challenge is not restricted to the elementary education majors at Lewis University; it is a challenge that lies before all of us, if only we accept. In the words of Mother Teresa, “Yesterday is gone, tomorrow is not here. We have only today. Let us begin.”

Ann O’Brien, Instructor, Elementary Education (COE)
Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) is a nutrition and fitness program created to prevent childhood obesity and encourage children to live healthier lifestyles. CATCH has been implemented and evaluated for over 25 years in over 10,000 schools and communities. The Lewis University College of Nursing and Health Professions received a community grant to implement the CATCH program at two local grade schools, St. Dominic’s in Bolingbrook and St. Andrew’s in Romeoville. This program is being implemented by nursing students during the second semester of their senior year for their Community Health Nursing clinical. Being a part of the CATCH program has given nursing students the opportunity to work together to educate grade school children about the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. The nursing students seek to make exercise and healthy eating fun and the CATCH curriculum provides the tools needed to do just that.

“This is a great opportunity for us. The kids get so excited to tell us about activities they did and healthy foods they ate. It is super rewarding for us, and I think it is fun for them too,” said senior nursing student, Ashley Bohr.

“I am so fortunate to be a part of the CATCH program this semester, as I feel it is a great tie into community nursing. We learn so much about chronic illness such as heart disease and diabetes in adults, all of which can be prevented with the help of healthier lifestyles. I think this program is proactive to target such a young population, as it is never too early to start taking care of your body” said another senior nursing student, Patricia Fear.

The nursing students have implemented the curriculum twice a week for five weeks and will continue for a total of eight weeks this semester, with hopes of continuing the program in the Spring of 2016. Community nursing faculty and St. Dominic site clinical supervisor, Nanci Reiland, state, “It is exciting for the nursing students to see how community collaboration can impact a population’s health. They are using the nursing process to assess, plan, implement and evaluate a program. Their weekly reflections highlight the learning that is going on, even while playing soccer with the kids!”

Ashley Bohr, Class of Dec 2015, (CONHP)
The Community Engagement Cooperative (CEC) was proud to host the Fall 2015 Service Fair for the Lewis University community on September 9th to help facilitate collaboration and networking between students, faculty, and organizations in our community.

The fair welcomed 26 different partners who were available to explore collaboration with Lewis University constituents to determine the most effective way to serve our community while offering meaningful and educational experiences for the students.

We were very excited to welcome seven new community partners to the service fair this semester. Students and faculty will want to take advantage of partnering with these eager organizations.

The growing list and variety of community partners is evidence of the successful interactions and quality work that the Lewis community is providing our community partners. Keep up the exemplary work!
Hello to all of you wonderful supporters of Service Learning at Lewis University! My name is Laura Wilmarth Tyna and I am thrilled to join the Office of Service Learning team as Community Partner Liaison.

In my role, I hope to bridge the gap between responding to real community-identified need, and creating meaningful and engaging ways for students to learn deeply through their coursework. I believe that community involvement is a rich and exceptionally valuable way for each of us to learn about ourselves, challenging us to consider our identities and privilege. It is also an amazing opportunity to experience connection with others, moving beyond stereotypes, fears, and apathy to build real relationships. This work inspires and encourages me and I hope that I can assist in empowering communities and future community leaders.

I come to Lewis by way of Elmhurst College where I served as Director of Leadership, Service and Engagement for eight years. There, I worked with co-curricular community service, coordinating one-time and large-scale projects, in addition to advising multiple service-based student organizations. I had the opportunity to work closely with Habitat for Humanity, leading groups domestically and internationally for alternative break experiences, in addition to focusing a lot of energy on developing reflection activities for service outside of the classroom. My role also encompassed leadership development with an emphasis on creating a more “just, caring, and thriving world” through programs such as the 6-day LeaderShape Institute. If you’re not familiar with the program, definitely check out their website at leadershape.org!

Outside of work, I have a wonderful husband, Joe, who works at McMaster-Carr in Elmhurst and is an avid health enthusiast, and two little ones. Julia (6) is in first grade. She loves to read and recently became a Daisy Girl Scout. Owen (3) enjoys all things Spider Man and minions, including shirts, hats, sunglasses, and every known toy that he can convince a grandparent to buy for him. We live in Wheaton and have been in the Chicago suburbs for almost eight and a half years.

I feel privileged to join the Lewis University community and have already enjoyed a warm welcome from so many people on campus. I am also really pleased to be out in the community each week, meeting partners and learning about the difficult and necessary work that they are doing to serve their communities. I look forward to contributing to the great momentum for service learning that has been building here on campus due to the great work of Christie, Tiffany, and others who have come before me!  

**If you are interested in designating your class as service learning**

Please Contact Christie Billups at billupch@lewisu.edu or 815-836-3829

Please note that the course syllabus should include:

- Twenty (20+) service learning hours expected of students within the semester
- Community engagement provides applied learning of the course content
- Assignments and evaluation process that provides for effective reflection and integration of learning experience and other course material
- Course content objectives, assignments, and service learning outcomes align (e.g. working in groups, class presentations, class discussions, etc.)
- Indication that this service learning course helps meet needs in the community as co-determined by faculty member and community partner(s)

http://lewisu.edu/servicelearning/courses.htm

Next time that course syllabi will be fielded for designation will be April 1, 2016
Community Partner Spotlight

Center for Economic Progress

This summer, the Office of Service Learning was contacted by the Center for Economic Progress (CEP), a community organization which “helps low-income, working families as a trusted provider of tax and financial services.” While based in Chicago, the organization has a satellite tax preparation location in Joliet at the Spanish Community Center on Eastern Avenue.

Founded in 1990, CEP offers programs and services which help individuals and families improve their financial stability through direct service and advocacy efforts to inform public policy. Initiatives include:

- Tax help – providing low-wage workers – with an income of less than $50,000 a year for families and $25,000 for individuals – with free, high quality tax preparation.
- Tax clinic – providing free, professional representation to low-wage taxpayers facing an IRS controversy. Additionally, they support small businesses in establishing sound business practices, especially related to record keeping and self-employment tax law.
- Financial services – providing financial education through workshops, one-on-one financial coaching, and information about safe and affordable bank products.

In 2015, CEP helped clients to receive over $30 million in tax refunds with the help of over 24,000 volunteers. They also helped clients save more than $3 million dollars by utilizing their free resources.

CEP staff are very interested in partnering with Lewis University through academic service learning and would be happy to explore possible opportunities for collaboration. From connecting students with their existing programs, to developing new ways for students to engage with CEP clients, the organization is motivated and ready to train capable LU students about how to serve in both skilled and unskilled roles.

To learn more about the Center for Economic Progress, check out their website at www.economicprogress.org. To connect directly with CEP staff, contact Laura Wilmarth Tyna, Community Partner Liaison in the Office of Service Learning, at wilmarla@lewisu.edu or (815) 836-5848.

Our Vision:
The Center for Economic Progress envisions an America of shared prosperity, where all working families can access the financial opportunities they need to succeed.
Spring 2016 Designated Service Learning Courses

20-290-6 Cultural Diversity & Intergroup Relations
78-100-1/2 Introduction to Social Work
02-395-1 Neuroscience & Neurodegenerative Disease/ 26-497-3 Neuropsychology Capstone Seminar
70-193-1 Computer Infrastructure Capstone Project
10-330-1 Public Relations Writing
19-268-1 Christian Social Teaching
70-492-1 Software Systems Capstone Project

THE OFFICE OF SERVICE LEARNING CONTACT INFO

Dr. Christie Billups
Director of Service Learning
Phone: 815-836-5829
Fax: 815-838-4614
E-mail: billupch@lewisu.edu

Laura Wilmarth-Tyna
Community Partner Liaison
Phone: 815-836-5848
Fax: 815-838-4614
E-mail: wilmarta@lewisu.edu

Tiffany Nguyen
Graduate Asst. to the OSL
Phone: 815-836-5023
Fax: 815-838-4614
E-mail: nguyenti@lewisu.edu

Service Learning Team Members
Dr. Bill Chura (CAS)
Dr. Carlene Sipma (CAS)
Chris Swanson (Study Abroad)
Dr. Christie Billups (OSL)
Jennifer Russ (COE)
Dr. Kurt Schackmuth (Mission & Academic Services)
Dr. Michael Lloyd (CAS)
Dr. Randy Venzke (Dean’s Office, CAS)
Laura Wilmarth Tyna (OSL)
Mary Woods (SPCE)
Nanci Peek (CONHP)
Robert Bergman (COB)
Tiffany Nguyen (OSL)

Community Engagement Cooperative
Dr. Christie Billups (OSL)
Dr. Jordan Humphrey (SD&L)
Dr. Mary Meyers (Career Services)
Laura Wilmarth Tyna (OSL)
Mariza Rocha (MSS)
Sabrina Poulin (UM)
Sophia Barakat (SD&L)
Tiffany Nguyen (OSL)

The Office of Service Learning (in LARC)
Benilde Hall BE-181
1 University Parkway, Unit 270
Romeoville IL, 60446-2200
www.lewisu.edu/servicelearning
Get Connected: http://service.lewisu.edu
www.facebook.com/lewisuservicelearning