Exploring Community/Civic Engagement with Dr. Marshall Welch

It is with pleasure that Lewis University welcomes Dr. Marshall Welch to campus on Monday, March 25th. Dr. Welch is the Director of the Catholic Institute for Lasallian Social Action (CILSA) at St. Mary’s College of Moraga, California. He will provide in-servicing and dialogue facilitation for those Lewis offices and units involved with various forms of community engagement and experiential learning.

Dr. Welch comes to us with a wealth of experience and expertise in areas of community engagement, service learning, civic engagement, and the spiritual dimensions of action with the community. He has been the director of CILSA for over five years. He has published and edited various works in journals and books. Most recently, he and Dr. John Saltmarsh, a pioneer in the sphere of community engagement, completed and will soon publish a book chapter entitled “The Center of Community Engagement.” The chapter is based on extensive research of best practices among institutions which have attained the Elective Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation. This study and Marshall’s in-service will help Lewis University to continue to strive toward growth in various areas of community and civic engagement, as set out in our Vision and Strategic Plan 2017.

The in-service addresses Strategic Directions.

II.C. Distinctive Learning Experiences:

3) Centralize and strengthen experiential learning activities
4) Promote civic knowledge and engagement activities

IV. Strategic Partnerships: exploring the wealth of expertise and resources in the ‘Worldwide Lasallian Network’

A few of the stakeholders who will be gathering throughout the day on March 25th are the Community Engagement Cooperative (CEC) (as well as representatives of the offices within the CEC – see p. 6), the Service Learning (Advisory) Team, Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, and the Center for Ministry and Spirituality. Some members of the administration hope to be present as well thus enriching the discussion and visioning. We believe this in-service will be a valuable step toward reaching key goals for our respective initiatives and Lewis University as a whole.
“Be the change you want to see in the world” (Gandhi) are words we should live by in today’s world. These words are especially important if you are a student at Lewis University and plan to enter into a tight employment market. Although the economy may be getting better and we might believe that there will be more employment opportunities when we graduate from Lewis, there is still a backlog of recent graduates waiting for jobs to become available since the recession in 2007. So, what is the answer? One answer is to build your resume by becoming the change we want to see.

Although the basics are extremely important, a resume includes much more a high GPA and a degree. It is important to participate in a variety of activities while a student. There are many opportunities at Lewis University to get involved. I am well aware of this since I have spent the last 3 years studying at Lewis University after working 17 hard years in the corporate world. During recent years, it was nearly impossible to find employment even with a great resume. I am a senior Public Relations and Radio/TV Broadcasting student who knows the value of service learning and being engaged in co-curricular activities at school. I implore my fellow students to go out and get involved especially when it comes to service learning and community engagement of all kinds.

In my Public Relations Writing class (10-330-1), Lisa O’Toole, the instructor, gave the students the real world task of choosing a non-profit organization on or off campus with which to develop a PR communication plan. I chose Noté Karacel Uganda (Unite Together). I have been working on the public relations communication plan alongside Dr. Christie Billups who is on their board of directors. Here at Lewis University, Noté Karacel partners with certain classes that benefit the Uganda projects. In addition, some students hope to go to the parish in Uganda for a hands-on experience there in May 2014 (pending trip approval). Our service learning communication plan for Noté Karacel includes creating, implementing and measuring different communication elements. I will help to target those specific groups of people who can best help the project grow in both awareness and action. Some of these communication elements will include radio public service announcements, press releases, brochures, newsletters and fact-sheets. These are developed to target different audiences such as enticing students to sign up for the trip to Uganda when that becomes approved. This is one of the amazing aspects of public relations: finding an audience to target and focusing your communication on that audience.

I believe that the partnership of the class and Noté Karacel will result in exceptional resources for the non-profit and valuable insights for Lewis University and the region.

I have also been involved in the formation of a new organization on campus called Enactus. Enactus is comprised of a community of passionate like-minded individuals with passionate ideas who can translate their ideas into measurable actions to build a healthier, more prosperous and peaceful world. Enactus engages in competition that takes implemented ideas and results and presents them at regional and possibly national and/or world cup levels. The organization implements concepts of service learning and uses group scholarship to participate in real competition which engages students more fully in service learning.
Service learning and Enactus are related in that regard; they are focused on helping others through education and action. Enactus has accepted the initiative with Noté Karacel Uganda as a project which will benefit the people of Alenga, Uganda as well as the students involved in this service learning initiative.

Because Enactus is an international organization, it will bring an added competitive edge to the group’s work and over time that will lead to more student participation. This will bring a larger audience to awareness of the Noté Karacel project.

You have one life. It is your responsibility to pitch in, to act, to engage, and to make a change. The time is now, and Lewis is the place. If not for yourself, do it for someone in need. Enactus meets every Thursday in AS-222L from 10-11 am and is open to everyone including faculty, staff and business leaders in the community. www.enactus.org

Jodi (JoEllen) Steinberg
Enactus Lewis Chapter Vice President
WLRA Director of Promotions
Public Relations major

Service Learning in Public Relations Writing

I have had the amazing opportunity to meet with Dr. Billups and Beka Flanagan from the Office of Service Learning at Lewis. It’s been a pleasure to meet these women and witness their great energy and passion toward community engagement. They have done an incredible job to make the office a great resource for everyone at Lewis. I first learned about Service Learning through a Public Relations class. Beka and Dr. Billups shared about the office’s services that allow students to explore academic achievement while obtaining life lessons through community service as well as bringing forth their expression through faith in action. I was intrigued by all the great benefits they provide, and I wanted to learn more about Service Learning.

I was lucky enough to have the option to work with an organization of my choice and I was happy and excited to work with the Office of Service Learning for my Public Relation project. The Office of Service Learning is a unique organization that offers both professors and students a variety of resources. In turn, students are offered an opportunity to explore community service work, to learn hands-on, be part of projects and discover skills such as team work and leadership. For some it could become a new passion or career. Not only do students gain knowledge and enjoy the experience, but we earn academic credit in the process. This allows us to reflect upon what we have learned and apply it to our lives. I believe it’s a wonderful course to take advantage of for those who are looking to gain hands-on, real world experience, be part of community change, or explore new career paths.

I would recommend students take the time to find out more about Service Learning and how it can change your life and others’ lives through community engagement. It’s an opportunity to take challenges and step outside the ordinary college course!

Mayra De La Rosa
Mass Communications/Public Relations major
Service Learning and Contextually Relevant Professional Abilities as a MSN Program Outcome

Kathryn E. Stefo

In the process of earning a Masters of Science in Nursing with an emphasis in education at Lewis University, a semester long practicum is required. Even though I have been practicing as a nurse for many years and as staff educator or clinical instructor for the last seven years, I felt anxiety related to the what, how, and who of a nursing practicum. Fortunately, during an Educational Theory and Scholarship of Teaching course, the professor, Dr. Elder, encouraged students to identify a subject area in which to focus. I realized I had identified my subject area during a stint as the director of an apprenticeship/service learning component of a university course, and as I participated in medical mission work locally and internationally. At Lewis, the service learning model is used for BSN student involvement in Salsacize at Will Grundy Medical Clinic and I was able to revisit the study of that service learning model as a Graduate Assistant.

The idea of doing a nursing practicum via service learning has transformed anxiety into excitement. Dr. Elder spoke to several interested MSN students and has encouraged our interest in pursuing a practicum project to study increased application of service learning in masters level nursing education. Two other MSN students, Cheryl Eadie and Laura Kirman, have also been captivated by the potential that service learning offers. When we met with Dr. Billups to further investigate service learning as a subject for our nursing practicum, it was exciting to hear about the many disciplines that are using this pedagogy. Our hope is to study how service learning is currently being applied in masters level education in the U.S. and in MSN programs. Through our practicum, we hope to gain a better understanding of best practices for service learning’s application in MSN programs.

For Master in Nursing Science programs, collaborative skills, contextually relevant decision making, and servant leadership (or scholarship of teaching, and service [Boyer]) are important outcomes. According to Iwasiw, Goldenberg, & Andrusyszyn (2009), in nursing education, a contemporary organizing strategy which is consistent with service learning is creating program curriculums based on outcomes. Service learning can be used by students and educators to gain insight into concepts learned online or in the classroom. This actualization of knowledge promotes the development of professional abilities and characteristics needed to understand what variables and dynamics cause and exacerbate health disparities and other social ills. Service learning also has important applications in MSN education for the increased development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary health professional programs. Service learning is a tool that many disciplines and professions can use for building upon shared educational and service oriented objectives associated with health or social care needs. It is my hope that our nursing practicum on service learning will provide opportunities for MSN students and faculty to actualize classroom concepts, support individuals and communities, while developing the professional abilities and qualities to be contextually relevant professionals.

References


Service Learning Project Helps Local School District

For the past three years, the Office of Service Learning at Lewis University has provided students and professors ways to facilitate connections between local community agencies, businesses, organizations and course objectives.

Through their commitment to contribute and serve our local community, the Office of Service Learning works with classes on campus to organize “service-learning projects.” These projects allow professors and students to work with an outside organization to apply the course objectives while providing valuable service and assistance with the community.

“The idea for service learning is that it is integrated throughout the course as a way to enrich learning through applications and integration of course skills and materials with the community,” said Dr. Christie Billups, Coordinator of Service Learning at Lewis. “It’s intended to be mutually beneficial for course participants and community members.”

Currently, students from marketing professor Robert Bergman’s two public relations classes are one group of students who are in the midst of a service-learning project.

The 43 students from two of Bergman’s public relations classes are working in coalition with the Lemont-Bromberek School District 113A. They are working to create an integrated communication strategy that will be implemented within the district’s three schools.

Students from both classes are divided into five teams in order to create the communication plan for the district. To prepare for the project, the classes held a strategy meeting at the end of January with members of the Lemont-Bromberek school board and administrators. Students were also given an optional tour of the three schools in February.

For a class that may usually rely heavily on a textbook, this project allows students to gain hands-on experience in their prospective field.

“The service learning programs gives you a taste of different areas in the real working world and helps you decide which career path you want to follow in your given field,” said senior marketing major and student in Bergman’s class, Gabriella Lamorte.

At the end of the semester, the students will be able to compile the pieces they created for the school district to create a portfolio. “One of the benefits this project provides for students is that when they finish the project, they actually have something tangible they can show that can be used as a portfolio for future employers,” said Bergman.

The end result of a service-learning project is really twofold; it gives students real, hands-on experience while assisting a community partner on a professional level. In today’s intense job market, projects like these can greatly improve a student’s professional resumé.

“The partner can put the products of the class to use, the students can list their work on a resume, and the experience is far more satisfying for student and faculty because they can see growth, learning and development in multi-faceted ways,” Billups said.

Alyssa Cicero
Copy Editor, The Flyer Newspaper
The Community Engagement Cooperative (CEC) is something of an enigma at Lewis University. The group has existed for three years, yet unavoidably the question arises in conversation, “What is the CEC?” Admittedly, when I joined the CEC I did not know what to expect. Now after having been a member for over two years, I have a clearer understanding from which to paint this picture.

The CEC was formed out of a perceived need. The Office of Service Learning had observed a lack of communication between different departments on campus that worked with service in the community. The potential for duplication of efforts ran high amongst these groups and something had to be done. Simply put, it was founded to foster communication and collaboration among its members related to community service and civic engagement. The offices that make up the CEC are Service Learning, Career Services, University Ministry and Student Development & Leadership. Each of these units brings something a little different to the table. Service Learning works with community partners and faculty to offer service experiences integrated with coursework. Career services works with service agencies that may be potential employers and internship sites for Lewis students. University Ministry and Student Development & Leadership coordinate service opportunities for individual students and student organizations. Since its inception, the Community Engagement Cooperative has increased the collaboration between these areas.

In Student Development & Leadership, community service is an integral part of our work. Each student organization is asked to hold at least two community service events per academic year. Additionally during Welcome Days and throughout the fall semester, SDL and University Ministry coordinate the “Soar into the Community” experience for incoming first-year students. Being part of the CEC has benefited our programming in numerous ways.

“Soar into the Community” is a massive undertaking. In its current form, approximately half of the incoming class is sent into the community to serve as part of Welcome Days. Finding service sites for 400-500 students at the same time on the same day is a challenge. The CEC has provided us with resources to contact community partners to make sure that each student has the opportunity to serve.

As a team, the CEC stays in regular contact with one another. If one member is contacted about an opportunity to serve in the community, that request is swiftly disseminated to the rest of the group. In Student Development, I have been able to pass along several opportunities to student organizations looking to complete a service project. While it may not seem like such, the act of reaching out to a student organization for help goes a long way towards increasing participation.

Whether visible or not, the CEC is working toward raising the culture of service on campus to the next level. Since its founding this team of interdisciplinary faculty and staff have utilized new and creative approaches to foster collaboration. From the Service Fair each September to earning a place on the Presidential Honor Roll for Community Service in 2012, the CEC continues to foster collaboration and build partnerships both on campus and in the community.
COE Strengthens Partnership with SOS Children’s Village

Within the College of Education, our future teacher candidates are asked to participate in a service learning activity as part of our program expectations. Our combined and straight special education candidates are introduced to this concept in their Foundations for Teaching and Learning Course 54-242. The candidates were given some options and this spring semester our candidates have committed to the SOS Children’s Village of Lockport.

“SOS Children’s Village of Illinois provides a viable alternative to traditional foster care. Children who come to live at SOS stay with their biological brothers and sisters in a private home. A full-time, professionally trained foster parent lives with them, and the whole Village gives them support, compassion and strength” (SOS, website 2013).

“In America more than 518,000 children are in foster care. Three in four children are separated from their siblings. Most will live in six or more foster homes. Once the children age out of foster care:

- 40% live on public assistance
- 46% never finish high school
- 84% have a child within 18 months
- 25% are homeless at some time” (SOS, website 2013)

With these staggering statistics found on the SOS Village website, we felt that our service to this organization was a natural fit.

At the beginning of this semester, our teacher candidates in Foundations in Teaching and Learning went through an orientation and training session to begin their service for the Village. Our teacher candidates will be tutors, event planners, and recreation and leisure coordinators. We in the College of Education are excited about this new-formed partnership and the service opportunities that our students will be able to explore.

References: Lockport Village, http://www.sosillinois.org

GROWTH UPDATE ~ OFFICE OF SERVICE LEARNING

![Number of SL courses working with the OSL](chart.png)
As my second and final term as an AmeriCorps VISTA at Lewis comes to a close, I wanted to take a minute to express my gratitude to my colleagues, supervisors, and the community of Lewis friends I have become immersed in during the last two years. I will finish up my time at Lewis at the end of July 2013, just in time for you to welcome another VISTA and another school year.

These two years on staff have been an incredible time of learning, development, and growth. I have found Lewis to be both an academically nurturing atmosphere as a student, but also a close knit working community. I am grateful for the community at Lewis, and the campus wide support that I have received since beginning in my position. In terms of Institutional support, I would like to express my gratitude to our president Br. James Gaffney, the Provost. Dr. Stephany Schlachter, and the Associate Provost, Dr. Julie Krahl. The Staff in LARC, where my office has been located, has been incredibly kind and welcoming. I have been received warmly by each of the committees I have had the privilege of working with, the Veteran’s Support Team, Community Engagement Cooperative, and the Service Learning Team. I would like to thank Maggi Pfommer for her support and collaboration on Veteran’s Issues who has been a joy to work with. Last but not least, a deep breath of gratitude to my acting supervisor at Lewis. To Christie Billups, Coordinator of Service Learning, thank you for your unwavering support, teaching spirit, creative collaboration, and your humor. This year of service has been one of both personal and professional growth; I have thrived with both your partnership and leadership.

☞ Beka Flanagan, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Assistant to the OSL

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