Successful Workshop Gives Faculty Great Ideas and Resources

On October 16th, Mr. Chris Skrable, Program Manager of Service Learning for Loyola University’s Center for Experiential Learning, gave a very engaging and interactive two-hour workshop on “Creating Depth and Rigor in Service Learning Syllabi.” Despite busy schedules, a number of faculty members from three of the four colleges attended the event. Initial feedback has been very positive.

Mr. Skrable offered numerous print resources that we intend to make electronically available in the very near future. The resources covered various topics. We discussed deepening reflection, making more intentional course interconnections, and enriching the actual service experiences. We explored the importance and challenges of accompanying our community partners more effectively through sustained collaboration, consultation with partners about their actual needs, and education of both students and community agencies about expectations and hopes.

Also of interest to the faculty from assorted disciplines were the diversity of configurations that service learning can take in the field and in the classroom, as well as vital and effective methods of service learning reflection, assessment, and presentation (oral, visual, and written). Helpful tools that can also be used to ensure that we are going progressively deeper in our service learning course construction were disseminated, such as a “Service-Learning Course Design Worksheet,” a “Service-Learning Guidelines Template,” and a very thorough “Service-Learning Course Syllabus Rubric.”

Chris has offered to send his PowerPoint as well as electronic versions of the above-mentioned useful tools to include on our webpage. We will be sure to post these as soon as they become available. There are many other resources already on the webpage, found at www.lewisu.edu/servicelearning. We think you will find the new Lewis University Faculty Handbook particularly interesting. Find out more about that on the last page of this newsletter.

We look forward to offering an equally useful and engaging workshop in the Spring semester. Keep your eyes open for this and all future opportunities to learn more about service learning. Your ideas and suggestions for timely, relevant workshop themes are always welcome. The Office of Service Learning is happy to accompany any faculty member who would like to examine ways to incorporate service learning into new or existing courses to stimulate learning and interest in our students and serve real needs in the community.
Service Learning in Adult, Accelerated Programs

In response to the distribution of the Strategic Plan for Lewis University 2012-2017 and the charge to create distinctive learning experiences, the adult, accelerated Business programs began exploring service learning as part of our curriculum. Over the past months, a variety of discussions, brainstorming and lamentation sessions have occurred centered around the questions of what value a service learning component might provide adult students and how we could ‘make it real.’ While we have not yet reached any conclusions, the sessions have been engaging! Below is a sampling of our thoughts.

Value

This is a great idea because...

- Using the course LB 300 Business Communication in the Digital Age as a vehicle for engaging in service learning gives us broad reach (more on this later)
- It complements the Lewis Mission (i.e., Section II of the Strategic Plan, Part C - Increase Social Responsibility, Item 1 – Increase service learning opportunities with a particular focus on addressing the economically poor)
- Research suggests service learning is a ‘high value’ learning experience for students
- Collaboration across the University is always good

This is a huge challenge because...

- Collaboration across the University is often a difficult to achieve
- Adding another component to the course could just “Pile on” to a group that is already ‘stretched’ (i.e., full-time work, full-time school, families, mortgages, bills, etc.)
- Given the accelerated course time frame (8 weeks), it may be difficult to complete a meaningful service learning experience in this timeframe
- We need creative measures of learning and the impact of service learning as well as effective rubrics for assignments related to service learning experiences.

Make it Real

It appears that the adult business program does have a place where service learning can be integrated: the course “Business Communication in the Digital Age.” This course serves as the upper division writing course in the College of Business and is required for all students pursuing one of the three accelerated business programs: Business Administration, Management, and Information Technology Management. With a bit of course revision, we would be able to have service learning impact all of our programs. In addition, many of the current assignments would require minor adjustments to accommodate service learning (e.g. short report, reflection, persuasive presentation).

While these creative responses are encouraging, a key challenge to ‘making it real’ is to secure a service learning placement. This is where the discussion has taken on added complexity. Suggestions have included:
LEWIS FACULTY: PERSPECTIVES ON SERVICE LEARNING

- Students' leverage current volunteer activity to make it relevant to course material and objectives.
- Require students to find a service learning placement on their own (with faculty approval).
- Partner closely with the Office of Service Learning for placement opportunities.

Conclusion
As you may have concluded, we are still in discussion and grappling with how service learning will add value to the course and curriculum. In addition, we continue to investigate where service learning is a marketable addition to the curriculum that could be connected to increasing enrollment. While we haven’t arrived at definitive answers, we continue to explore the possibilities.

Dr. Mike Cherry (COB), cherrymi@lewisu.edu

PR Writing Reaches the Community
What great things happen when 33 Public Relations Writing students join forces with an equal number of local non-profit organizations? Simply stated, a win-win situation results. Public relations students gain real-life experience applying both interpersonal and written communication skills while becoming more aware and engaged in their community. Simultaneously, the community-based organizations advance their mission by being the recipients of a wide variety of useful communication tools.

Students in Associate Professor Robert G. Nulph and Assistant Professor Lisa O'Toole’s spring 2012 communications classes served social service agencies, animal welfare organizations, health groups as well as local youth sports organizations. While each organization embraced a different mission, all of them welcomed the support of the Lewis University public relations students.

Beginning early in the semester, O'Toole and Nulph worked with students to select a community organization that reflected their personal values and interests. Students met with their clients on a regular basis and became immersed in the organization’s value to the community. They prepared a public relations plan and produced news releases, brochures, newsletters, blogs, public service announcements and advertisements. Several of the students assisted with the creation and implementation of fundraising and other special events.

By the end of the semester, students had acquired a genuine portfolio of their work as well as empathy and a sense of giving back to their community.

Lisa O'Toole (CAS), otooleli@lewisu.edu and Dr. Robert Nulph (CAS), nulphro@lewisu.edu
Nutritious Networking

What to make for dinner? The decision can be hard enough, but when your cupboard is bare or the only items to which you have access are unhealthy options, the decision is made even harder. With the collaboration of the Spanish Community Center in Joliet, Sodexo Food Services at Lewis University, and Lewis’s College of Nursing and Health Professions, a unique program is planned to help make that decision easier and healthier.

The Spanish Community Center supports those in the community who are in need of basic resources from their own pantry and by networking with other area agencies. Melissa Brown of the Spanish Community Center notes that even though fresh food options are sometimes available, participants frequently choose the more convenient prepared meals. These pre-packaged meals often lack the variety and nutrients offered by fresh foods and can be high in sodium and sugar.

Lewis’s Office of Service Learning and its coordinator, Dr. Christie Billups, worked with Juan Perez, manager of Sodexo, to bring together the cooking expertise of Sodexo services and the health promotion focus of one group of junior Lewis University nursing students. The idea is to provide a cooking demonstration that highlights basic ingredients and healthy methods of preparation. The demonstration will be partnered with educational presentations by service learning nursing students on the importance of healthy eating habits, portion control, providing a colorful plate of food, and the consequences of poor nutrition. The enthusiasm of the coordinators, Melissa Brown of the Spanish Community Center, Juan Perez of Sodexo, Nanci Peek from the College of Nursing and Dr. Christie Billups of Service Learning has helped this project to come together well. Trying to choose a date and time that would meet the needs of all concerned proved to be the only challenge, but working through that fundamental issue brought a better sense of support and mutual goal setting for all involved. Our primary hope is that it will benefit all of the participants.

The event will be held the afternoon of Tuesday, November 20, 2012. Spanish Community Center participants will be invited to observe a food preparation demonstration along with opportunities to hear more about healthy nutrition. They will be able to try their hand at cooking techniques and sample the results. They will also be able to take home the ingredients for replicating the meal that was demonstrated by the Sodexo chef. We hope that participants will recognize that being on a limited budget and using local resources for food supplementation doesn’t mean that their diet can’t be good tasting and healthy.

Nanci Peek (CONHP), peekna@lewisu.edu
Dr. Christie Billups (OSL), billupch@lewisu.edu

Dr. Christie Billups, OSL
THE OFFICE OF SERVICE LEARNING UPDATES

Students Voice Value of Service Learning in COE

Response to Intervention (RTI) requires that schools administer academic proficiency monitoring three times a year. It is a new way to begin the process of helping students suspected of having a disability and to bring the problem to the attention of a team so gaps may be identified and skills may be re-taught first before giving them a label of a disability (Friend & Cook, 2010). It is a more clearly data-driven and structured procedure for analyzing students' learning problems (Friend & Cook, 2010). We have created partnerships with Mokena School District and a Lockport Elementary School to assist with either their data collection or assisting with intervention for students.

What have the students in the College of Education learned from participating in their service learning experiences?

Jennifer Buss interviewed students and asked this simple question which gave us some profound responses. A theme within these statements is that Lewis students are gaining valuable knowledge and experience through service learning opportunities in the College of Education.

- Sara Dastice (combined major) stated, “When working on my service learning project with a school’s Response to Intervention program, I learned that whatever the level is you need to bring the students up-to-date. “Through RTI, I was able to bring them up to date, when seeing them fall through the cracks.“Having this hands-on experience gave me the opportunity not to just read about it but actually apply it.”

- Tiffany Peters (combined major), “I learned to apply the RTI practice through my service learning project. It was good to do and practice instead of just reading about it.”

- Stephanie Oswald (combined major), “Through going into the community and working on this service learning project, I learned how to implement RTI and gained first-hand experience on strategies to use in the classroom.”

- Megan Coglianese (combined major), “I learned how to administer the RTI test and how the students feel about taking the test I would not of had this experience if Lewis University did not have service learning in our courses.”

- Ashley Reynolds (combined major) “I learned through service learning that it is better to have first hand experience instead of just learning about it from the book. The service learning opportunity taught me that I was able to apply my knowledge.”

- Patricia Kotsiovos and Alex Pokorny (combined majors), “We learned how to get involved in the community and help others with disabilities and gained a better understanding of the adult disabled population. It gave us an experience of working with a population that we were not exposed to before and allowed us to learn and grow through these experiences. Note: Their experience was with the Best Buddies Program.

Jennifer Buss (COE), bussje@lewisu.edu
On October 16, 2012, the Office of Service Learning released the first edition of the Service Learning Faculty Handbook. The OSL staff is excited to announce the release and reach another important benchmark for the office. The handbook addresses syllabus construction, reflection, assessment ideas, and much more. This resource is available primarily via the Service Learning website under the “Faculty Resources” tab. The handbook is also available in print by contacting the OSL staff.

A direct link:


Service Learning Team Members
Dr. Christie Billups (OSL)
Beka Flanagan (OSL)
Dr. Julie Krahl (Provost’s Office)
Robert Bergman (COB)
Dr. Bonnie Bondavalli (CAS)
Jennifer Buss (COE)
Dr. Stacie Elder (CONHP)
Dr. Gail Gehrig (CAS)
Dr. Clare Lawlor (CAS)
Dr. Robert Nulph (CAS)
Dr. Anne Rapp (SPCE)
Chris Swanson (Study Abroad)

Community Engagement Cooperative
Dr. Christie Billups (OSL)
Beka Flanagan (OSL)
Martha Villegas Miranda (UM)
Sean Fagan (SL&D)
Kristi Kelly (Career Services)

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

Beka Flanagan
ILCC AmeriCorps*VISTA
Assistant to the Office of Service Learning
Phone: 815-836-5023
Fax: 815-838-4614
E-mail: flanagbe@lewisu.edu

The Office of Service Learning is located within LARC.
Benilde Hall BE-181
1 University Parkway, Unit 270
Romeoville IL, 60446-2200
www.lewisu.edu/servicelearning