



Service Learning and Civic Engagement: Transforming the College Experience

LISA CARDEN, CASSIDY MORRIS, RACHEL TYSOR



Service Learning and its Functions

- **What is Service Learning?**

Civic engagement, engaged scholarship, active learning with instruction/ reflection, and applied disciplinary knowledge using real-world experience (Darby et al. 2013, Pollard & McClam 2014, Kalles & Ryan, 2015)

- **What are the Functions of Service?**

Increases civic responsibility and engagement, positive impact on retention, skill development and workplace experience, social change goals are established (Henrich & Anderson, 2014, Kalles & Ryan, 2015)



History of Service Learning in Academia

- **Progressive Era:** Jane Addams and Educator John Dewey were considered as pioneers of service learning.
- **1960s-1970s:** Present day community service learning programs, Peace Corps and Volunteers in Service to America were established.
- **1980s:** Higher Education programs extended their commitment to service learning through Campus Compact.
- **1990:** The National and Community Service Act added further incentives for community service participation.



The College Experience

- **Enhances** academic performance
- **Fosters** critical thinking and cooperative methods (Lopez & Kiesa, 2009)
- **Promotes** effective communication and problem solving (Jacoby, 1996)
- **Shapes** students as active leaders in communities (Longo & Marguerite, 2009)
- **Engages** collaborative problem solving (Longo & Marguerite, 2009)
- **Examines** standards of judgment (Battistoni, 1997)



Greek Organizations/Increased Service

- **Student participation:** 22.4% increase in volunteering and 29% increase in service-learning
- Service learning activities of fraternities/sororities: tutoring, community volunteer activities, and university volunteer activities
- **Reasons for increased service among students in Greek organizations:** community service is often a requirement, new channels for service learning, development of allocentric values, and greater growth/achievement during college experience



Point-in-Time Homelessness Survey

- The **Point-in-Time survey** provides counts of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night.
- The survey provides a score using the *Vulnerable Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool*, which addresses the **extent of homelessness**.
- Key players involved are the Telamon organization, WVCEH, and community networks/volunteers.



Immanuel House Soup Kitchen

- **Immanuel House** is a community-based religious organization.
- They provide valuable services to individuals, families, and the community by providing free meals, hygiene kits, and access to clinics.
- Their philosophy is to help **serve individuals and families** facing social, economic, and spiritual instability.
- Immanuel House volunteers include Shepherd University students and faculty, religious organizations, and local businesses.

Challenges: In Community/For Students

- **In Community:**
Short-term service-learning: minimal benefit for the organization or student and low levels of commitment/performance, lack of faculty participation, and uncertainty pertaining responsibilities
- **For Students:**
Time conflict with family obligations, job commitments, and academic responsibilities; issues with access to money and transportation



Methods

- The **sample** included approximately 60 students in either SOCI 203 or 411. These classes were selected due to them having a service learning component.
- The **questionnaire** included 10 questions
- Seven **questions** designed in Likert format to assess students' perceptions of participation and their beliefs
- **Statistics:** calculate mean averages, participation rates, and relationships across responses. Data included crosstabulation and Chi Square (significance)

Findings

- A majority (58%) of participants **volunteer actively** in the community [12% participate often and 45.8% volunteer occasionally]
- **Upper-class students** were more likely to participate
- 72.9% reported **positive feelings** towards service learning
- The majority agreed/strongly agreed that service learning make sociology **classes more enjoyable**