



## Contents

- ♦ From the UCF Service-Learning Office
- ♦ Building Social Capital Through Service-Learning
- ♦ Creating Space for Dialogue; An Informal Conversation on Service-Learning in the Humanities
- ♦ Structured Reflection: It's Not Just a Journal
- ♦ The Cornerstone Mission: Lessons Learned
- ♦ Creating a Community of Learners through Service-Learning Poster Fairs
- ♦ Student-Driven Sustainability: Students as Co-Leaders in Service-Learning
- ♦ Service-Learning Assessment: A Look at Outcomes
- ♦ Girls Go Global: Service-Learning and Women's Human Rights
- ♦ What Makes a Good Service-Learner? Preliminary Results from a Statewide Study

## Special Service-Learning Issue

### From the UCF Service-Learning Office

#### Linda Hargreaves



Linda Hargreaves is the program director for UCF Service-Learning and the campus liaison for The Washington Center internship program. She has been helping to develop service-learning at UCF since 2003.

She has taught in the English Department at UCF and at Rollins College.

Almost every Service-Learning (S-L) faculty member, director, and student knows this quote by Margaret Meade: "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." At UCF we have many committed faculty, staff, and administrators who have, indeed, changed our campus world: Service-Learning is established at UCF. With 86 approved courses, regular inquiries, stable attendance at the S-L Track of the Summer and Winter Faculty Conferences, participation in the Community Partners Breakfast in August and Service-Learning Day in October, and enthusiastic support for the S-L Student Showcase, our UCF faculty have indicated that Service-Learning is definitely a teaching method that they consider when preparing their coursework.

In 2004 a group of educators met at the Wingspread Conference Center on Lake Michigan and determined that "The promise of engagement lies in its potential to rejuvenate the academy, redefine scholarship and involve society in a productive conversation about the role of education in a new century. University-wide, institutionalized and sustained commitment to engagement is a necessity and a priority if American higher education is to continue its global leadership role. Engagement is higher education's larger purpose." Last academic

year at UCF, over 9,800 students were introduced to the notion of civic engagement in S-L classes by giving more than 147,000 hours of service to over 400 community sites and reflecting on the process. I am delighted that we are, indeed, an engaged campus.

The S-L committee announces the following projects, events, and programs for the coming year:

**The Ivey Lane Dream Center:** in conjunction with Martin Luther King Day, this campus and community-wide drive collects items for the Ivey Lane Elementary campus "store" where students who demonstrate good behavior, leadership, and compassion for their classmates can shop for items that they and their families want and need.

**The S-L Certificate:** all students who complete 12 hours of UCF-approved S-L courses with a GPA of 2.5 or better will receive the Service-Learning Certificate at graduation.

**International S-L:** Mary Ann Eastep and a sub-committee of S-L faculty are working on developing an International S-L course.

**Student Reflection Leaders:** Kelly Astro's LEAD Scholars' course is integrating a training program for peer reflection leaders. In fall 2006, trained Student Reflection Leaders will be available to S-L faculty to help with curriculum-based reflection exercises.

**S-L Student Showcase:** the third annual S-L Student Showcase will be held on April 6 in the Pegasus Ballroom. All S-L students are invited to submit their displays and vie for over \$5,000 in scholarship awards.

**Faculty Development Summer Conference:** if you have a course you'd like to transform into an approved Service-Learning (S-L) course, apply to the S-L Track of the Faculty Development Summer Conference, May 1-4, 2006.

## ***Building Social Capital Through Service-Learning***

**Naim Kapucu**



Naim Kapucu is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Administration at University of Central Florida. He is a Faculty Fellow from COHPA at the Faculty Center. His main research interests are homeland security and crisis management, decision-making in complex environments, and organizational learning and design. He teaches nonprofit management and analytic techniques for public administration courses. He can be reached at [nkapucu@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:nkapucu@mail.ucf.edu).

“A different world cannot be built by indifferent people.” — Horace Mann

### **Service-Learning: definition and characteristics**

Service-Learning is defined as a teaching method that uses community involvement to apply theories or skills being taught in a course. Service-Learning furthers the learning objectives of the academic course, addresses community needs, and requires students to reflect on their activities in order to gain an appreciation for the relationship between academia and civic responsibility. Service-Learning is a program that seeks to promote student learning through experience associated with service in the community. Service-Learning also gives the community the opportunity to address its needs through the Service-Learning courses. In addition, community organizations use the expertise of the Service-Learning students to develop or implement their programs and objectives. This short paper uses the concept of social capital to understand the partnership between universities and community organizations through Service-Learning activities.

Civic commitment has been a major emphasis of education around the world since ancient times. In the United States, public education was founded on the notion that people need to be trained in basic skills in order to serve their communities as effective citizens and leaders. The more recent roots of Service-Learning in the United States can be traced to the 1960s, when political activism among students was a major cultural influence. In that time, students began to demand a connection between their civic commitments and their educational experiences. Since then, the movement has grown steadily. It surged in the late 1980s with the formation of the Campus Compact, a nationwide organization of university presidents who pledge to emphasize service on their campuses. Today, over 860 institutions of higher education are part of the growing Compact, and on average 28 percent of the students at those institutions participate in Service-Learning.

### **Benefits of Service-Learning**

The University of Central Florida defines Service-Learning as “a teaching method that uses community involvement to apply

theories or skills taught in a course. Service-Learning furthers the learning objectives of the academic course, addresses community needs, and requires students to reflect on their activity in order to gain an appreciation for the relationship between civics and academics.” Service-Learning has a profound effect on both faculty and students. Faculty members view Service-Learning as a new or alternative pedagogical approach because it expands upon traditional teaching methods and encourages learning through experience with non-profit agencies. By incorporating Service-Learning into their curriculum, faculty members are able to offer students the opportunity to apply classroom theory to real-life situations. Students view Service-Learning as a way to integrate what they have learned in the classroom with a real-world environment. By assisting in non-profit organizations, students are giving back to their community, while also learning several attributes which will be beneficial in the future.

Service-Learning enhances student learning, connects theory to practice, explores majors and careers, fosters civic responsibility and a sense of making a difference, encourages life-long commitment to service, enhances employability, provides scholarships, and develops self-esteem. Service-Learning engages more students, reinvigorates teaching, improves relationships with students, offers professional development, and creates research opportunities for faculty. Service-Learning helps the university fulfill its mission, creates true partnerships, produces higher quality graduates, increases community support, and fosters public relations. Service-Learning provides an infusion of people-power for the community, meets agency needs, accesses university resources, produces more involved citizenry, explores new ideas, and generates energy.

The Service-Learning committee at UCF worked to identify potential civic partners to be future sources for student placement as well as to be vocal advocates in the community for Service-Learning at UCF. To this end, a variety of experiences were organized: the Civic Partners Advisory Board, civic partners’ presentations, Civic Partner Day, and a civic partner database. A Community Partners Service-Learning Advisory Board was assembled in January 2003 to connect Service-Learning at UCF to the community. The Office of Service-Learning hosts Community Partners Breakfasts in appreciation of the Advisory Board and encourages communication between university and community.

In my Nonprofit Administration courses, I utilize a request for proposal (RFP) for Service-Learning projects. I do send the RFP two months before a term starts. Community agencies prepare viable Service-Learning projects. I list the projects online for students’ selection. In the first week of the term, agencies are notified if they are selected for the Service-Learning project for that specific term. I also provide the 211 community resources webpage and Easy Access to Better Community Data (<http://www.library.ucf.edu/abcd>) if they did not find any interesting projects from my list.

The Service-Learning Coordinating Committee meets monthly. They have defined Service-Learning at UCF, discussed

Service-Learning theories, models, and practices, planned events, proposed ways to promote Service-Learning on the UCF campus, and established the criteria and procedure to be used in approving Service-Learning courses. Currently, 83 courses are approved as Service-Learning courses at UCF by the course approval committee.

### The Perspective of Social Capital

What is important is the goal that the university pursues, which is the main goal of Service-Learning programs: to civically engage students in community-based work by addressing and helping to solve real-life community issues through service. By engaging students and solving community issues, these Service-Learning programs promote social capital development. What is actually done through Service-Learning is the promotion and sustenance of the common good. And this is called civic engagement. Civic engagement, in turn, builds social capital. Social capital is a kind of relationship with resources embedded in human, group or social networks. In the case of UCF, we see the social network being formed by faculty, students, university administration, and the community at large.

Social capital is also conceived more simply as trust among citizens that allows for the effective pursuit of mutual goals. UCF is building this trust and looking for effective ways to pursue the two main goals: educate students and serve the community. The trust-building process is illustrated by the attention given by UCF to developing relationships with the community. The quest for effective means is exemplified by all the activities organized to educate the faculty and students, and to involve the community in Service-Learning projects.

Campuses with an active and well-staffed office for Service-Learning are seen by the community as being better equipped to collaborate and form partnerships with community agencies. UCF Service-Learning is perceived as beneficial not only for the academic community, but also for the general community. Service-Learning requires the cooperation of both the university and the community. The entire community benefits from the cooperation of all its parts.

*"Too many of us have become passive and disengaged. Too many of us lack the confidence in our capacity to make basic moral and civic judgments, to join with our neighbors to do the work of community, to make a difference. Never have we had so many opportunities for participation, yet rarely have we felt so powerless. . . . In a time that cries out for civil action, we are in danger of becoming a nation of spectators."*

A Nation of Spectators: How Civic Disengagement Weakens America and What We Can Do About It (1998 Report of the National Commission on Civic Renewal)

## Creating Space for Dialogue; An Informal Conversation on Service-Learning in the Humanities

Megan Alrutz, with Terry Thaxton and Suzy Spraker



Megan Alrutz is an Assistant Professor of Theatre and coordinator for the MFA program in Theatre for Young Audiences. She has been at UCF since 2004. Megan's creative and scholarly interests focus on using drama to teach across the curriculum, directing theatre and digital storytelling with and for youth, and investigating drama-based pedagogy for the university classroom.

Terry Thaxton is Assistant Professor of English. Her research interests include literacy through creative writing, women's studies, and Service-Learning.

Suzy Spraker is an Instructor in the English Department. She teaches creative writing and specializes in fiction.

In working with K-12 teachers around the country, I am reminded again and again of the isolation that often comes with working in a classroom. The culture of our educational system does not lend itself to observing other teachers or to partnering with colleagues to explore new teaching techniques. And while perhaps isolation proves a bit less rigid at the university level, I believe that professors face a similar need for time and space to dialogue about what we do in our classrooms. This short article grows out of that need, and more specifically from the energy and inspiration I recently gained from sitting around the table with colleagues involved in Service-Learning.

Last October, Terry Thaxton, a colleague in the English department, invited me to participate in a panel at the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. She focused the panel on Service-Learning in the humanities and brought together faculty from Theatre, English, and Film who offer designated S-L courses. While the panel session proved informal in many ways, the creation of the session itself designated a formal time, place, and space for collaborative conversations on teaching. We discussed project logistics and assessment, student responses to work, and how we negotiate community partnerships. But in the end, simply sharing the heart of our various Service-Learning projects proved the most interesting for me.

For those of you who haven't found time for such indulgent conversations, I offer you this taste of the Service-Learning projects that energized our dialogue:

### *Theory and Practice of Fiction*, Suzy Spraker

Focused on how stories and drama are constructed, Suzy's class addresses characterization, tension, pacing, scene, and dialogue. Over the course of the semester, students examine works by contemporary writers and apply learned terminol-

ogy to their own stories. By participating in Service-Learning projects, students also practice developing scenes and studying dramatic moments in stories by working with sixth grade students at Stonewall Jackson Middle School. Suzy's students introduce, brainstorm, draft and facilitate Reader's Theatre sessions to adapt specific Sunshine State Books into scripts that grade school students then read and perform.

*Creative Writing in the Community*, Terry Thaxton

Terry's Service-Learning course connects the techniques of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction to public action in the greater Orlando area. As part of an innovative partnership called "UCF's Literary Arts Partnership: Autobiography of a Community," this course asks students to apply their knowledge of poetry, fiction, and/or nonfiction to design and lead creative writing workshops, and serve as writing mentors, at social service agencies such as Crooms Academy High School or The Center for Drug-Free Living. With their site group, students design and publish a booklet of work by participants from their social service agency. Finally, students coordinate a public reading where the site participants share their creative work.

*Methods of Teaching Drama*, Megan Alrutz

This graduate course offers students techniques for facilitating drama and theatre for youth. Students learn creative ways to engage young people in theatre activities, as well as how to employ drama as a teaching tool across the curriculum. Through Service-Learning partnerships, students facilitate short-term drama residencies with young people in the community. In the fall semester, students created and performed an interactive TIE (theatre-in-education) piece for the Orlando Science Center to help young people problem-solve around the issue of co-habitation between alligators and humans, while another group of students worked with foster kids, employing drama to explore tales from around the world and increase students' self-confidence.

On my way to participating in this panel, I repeated to myself "I don't have time to do this." On my way out of the panel, I smiled, knowing that I need to make more time for conversations about our everyday efforts in the classroom. After all, our informal dialogue proved an exciting opportunity to break out of "isolation" and learn from each other's work.

As this next semester gets crazier by the moment, let's carve out "official" time for conversations that often feel peripheral, if not indulgent. In an attempt to circumvent isolation in our profession, and start some new conversations, I invite you to email us about what you are doing in your classroom. Perhaps you will inspire someone to make more room for dialogue.

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Terry Thaxton: tthaxton@mail.ucf.edu

## ***Structured Reflection: It's Not Just a Journal*** Terry Thaxton



Terry Thaxton is an Assistant Professor of English. Her new book of poems, *Getaway Girl*, winner of the 18th Annual Frederick Morgan Poetry Prize, is forthcoming from Story Line Press. She received a Teaching Incentive Program Award (2004-2005), and an Undergraduate Teaching Excellence Award in 2005. Her research interests include literacy through creative writing, women's studies, and Service-Learning.

"Our institutions of higher learning might certainly take heed, not only by encouraging students to do service, but by helping them stop and mull over, through books and discussions, what they have heard and seen. This is the purpose, after all, of colleges and universities—to help one generation after another grow intellectually and morally through study and self-scrutiny such study can sometimes prompt" (Coles 148). Robert Coles, a Harvard child psychiatrist, has been involved in community service since childhood. In his book *The Call of Service*, which I require in my Service-Learning courses, Coles "mulls over" his purpose for continuing service. But how do we make this "mulling over" rigorous enough to call service an academic venture?

Service-Learning courses aim to develop students academically, personally, and civically. Quite naturally my course objectives address academic learning goals. Personal goals, it seems, come about if I successfully connect the civic to the academic objectives. I aim, then, to show students, through reflection how civic engagement connects to academics. Structured reflection provides me with evidence of learning. For structured reflection to be successful, I must also determine its frequency, the form it will take, and how to provide feedback.

Depending on the course, I may require reflection once a week, once every two weeks, or once a month. I've had students turn in research papers, discuss their experiences in class discussions, and turn in "journals." I've settled on a combination of class discussions and online weekly reflection. I use WebCT Discussion Forums. Each student has his/her own space labeled "[Student Name] Service-Learning Research Notebook." Students begin to see reflection as applied research, rather than warm and fuzzy journaling. I provide direction, through a once-a-week prompt that requires students to compare, analyze, describe, and so on.

One skill that I can not teach in a writing workshop is observation. I can tell them that a writer must observe the world in detail, and the writer must use these details to evoke responses from readers. But telling students this isn't enough. Last semester I taught "Creative Nonfiction Workshop." My course objectives, specifically related to Service-Learning, included

that students 1) identify social issues that affect our community, 2) incorporate personal observation into their writing, and 3) describe how service provides a broader view of self. Had I not included these objectives, their service would have been helpful to community agencies, but without purpose for the students.

This semester, I'm teaching "Creative Writing in the Community," a course that, among other academic goals, evaluates the connection between literacy and creative writing. The first few weekly prompts help me contextualize students' experiences and understanding of service, one of which was "How does what we're setting out to do fit in with the university's role in its community?" UCF Senior Bridgete McKenna responded:

I feel that the university has a responsibility to its community in the sense that it is responsible for its students' education, education that is not only scholastic but for the purposes of life. The university is after all what partially prepares us for working in a community of people. [ . . . ] The university is mere preparation. The student brings [ . . . ] knowledge to the community. Knowledge makes a community stronger.

Students enjoy reading and responding to other students' reflections, and they like others looking in on their thoughts. I provide them weekly or bi-weekly narrative feedback and a mid-term grade. Structured reflection provides a way for students to "mull over" what they see and hear. Throughout the semester, it shows me and my students how they've grown intellectually, personally, and civically. This is, I believe, why we're here.

## ***The Cornerstone Mission: Lessons Learned*** **Sandra Neubaum**

Sandra Neubaum is an Instructor in the Management Department in the College of Business and has been at UCF since 2001. In addition to being the Coordinator for GEB3031—The Cornerstone Course, she regularly teaches MAN4701—Business Ethics and Social Responsibility.

Three years ago, a group of instructors in the Department of Management embarked on a mission to transform GEB 3031—Cornerstone into a Service-Learning course. Cornerstone is a junior-level class required for all business majors. Each year, approximately 2,000 students take this 6-hour class that emphasizes four competencies: teamwork, communication, creativity, and adapting to change. The course is divided into two weekly sessions: a 3-hour lecture and a 3-hour lab, in which the principles and theories of the lecture are put into practice.

Each semester, the class is composed of approximately 25 lab sections, each with 40 students. Students self-select into teams of 5 or 6 and each team is tasked to develop and implement a Service-Learning project. These projects, requiring a minimum of 40 hours of effort from each student, must be done in partnership with a local not-for-profit agency. Each year, Cornerstone completes over 300 Service-Learning projects and provides approximately 80,000 community service volunteer hours to the local community. This represents a contribution of over \$1.4 million to the Central Florida economy (Bureau of Labor Statistics), making it by far the largest Service-Learning course at UCF and, perhaps, the largest in the country.

Early on, we recognized we could not have 2,000 students hounding every non-profit agency in Central Florida trying to line up a Service-Learning project. We therefore decided to work with the agencies ahead of time, outline the basic parameters of the projects, and then assign the projects to the student groups on a first-come, first-served basis. Before each semester, we contact dozens of local not-for-profits and create a list of about 150 projects involving approximately 60 different partners. Projects include raising funds and in-kind donations to build a shelter for an injured Florida panther living at a wildlife refuge or teaching Junior Achievement classes at a middle school while helping those students plan and build a butterfly garden.

Initially, our efforts were not uniformly successful. In some cases, projects were either too large or too small; in others, our students were ill-suited to meet our partners' needs. In such cases, students, faculty and community partners grew frustrated by the lack of progress and success. Through trial and error, we realized the most successful projects shared a few key characteristics. In the paragraphs below, I would like to share a few lessons we learned along the way.

### ***Upcoming Service-Learning Events at UCF***

#### **Service-Learning Student Showcase**

April 6, 2006  
Pegasus Ballroom, Student Union  
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

#### **Service-Learning Track**

May 1-4, 2006  
Faculty Development Summer Conference  
Classroom 1 Building

#### **Community Partners Breakfast**

August 8, 2006  
Key West, Student Union  
8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

#### **Service-Learning Day**

October 12, 2006  
Key West, Student Union  
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

## Six Steps Before Contacting a Community Partner

- 1) **Understand the key objectives and deliverables of your course.** The Service-Learning component must be driven by the goals of your course, the skills and knowledge of your students, as well as the learning outcomes you expect in your class. Service-Learning projects must be integrated with the content of the class. In the Cornerstone course, we stress four pillars of knowledge—teamwork, creativity, communication, and adapting to change. By placing “project management” at the center of our Service-Learning component, we enable students to hone skills and gain experience in each of these competencies. What better way to have students learn the trials and tribulations of teams than to have them plan and implement a major project, with real deadlines and real outcomes? Creativity is tested as teams are required to develop novel and innovative project plans. Groups must learn to adapt to change as scheduling problems arise and the needs of community partners change over the course of a semester. Communication skills are developed as students must provide written progress reports and present the results of their final project at the end of the semester. Through its tight integration with course content, the Service-Learning component becomes a key piece of the learning experience, not just an awkward “community service” appendage to an existing course.
- 2) **Define what you can offer the Community Partner.** In short, you have to sell your Service-Learning opportunity to your community partners. When initially contacting a potential partner, you will have to explain the benefits or resources you can reasonably offer your partner. Some partners will consider your offer with the same interest they would give a telemarketer’s call, thinking they are the one doing you a favor by allowing your students to work with them. Not-for-profit agencies are well known for being under-staffed and over-stressed. In our experience, we found many partners initially thought “managing” our students would make their jobs even more difficult. In the face of these obstacles, it is critical you identify the problems your students can address. What resources can your class bring to the table? What solutions can you provide? Without a clear sense of these issues, you won’t have much success in convincing your community partners to work with you.
- 3) **Define what you can’t offer the Community Partner.** Once you pique a potential partner’s interest, they might start thinking how they can use your students to fill a gap in a project or program they have already started or considered undertaking. They might say, “We could really use some help doing this....” Don’t let your students get pigeon-holed into a bad experience. It is, therefore, important you know, up-front, what you can not offer your partner. For example, in Cornerstone, we can’t work on projects that extend beyond the end of a semester. Further, we won’t offer volunteer work (e.g., working on a Habitat house, or joining a beach cleaning project). In Corner-

stone, we help PLAN and execute projects—we don’t just offer sweat equity to help other groups implement their projects. By knowing what you can’t offer, you are less likely to enter into a partnership that is poorly suited for your class needs.

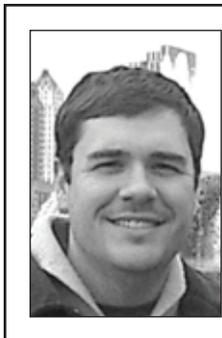
- 4) **Define exactly what you need from the Community Partner.** In order for any relationship to be successful, each side must understand the other’s expectations. Thus, it is imperative you tell your potential partner exactly what you need from them. For example, we request our partners be willing to return phone calls to our students within 72 hours. We ask they commit to at least three face-to-face meetings over the semester. We ask them to sign a client agreement form, detailing the parameters of the project. The more defined the terms of the relationship, the more likely all sides will find the success they expect.
- 5) **Prepare Your Students.** Remember, your students are representing you and UCF. You must prepare them for the experience. This can include a wide variety of trainings, safeguards and policies such as: a) professionalism (e.g., don’t wear “Budweiser” t-shirts to middle school functions or send emails to partners from accounts like UCFpartygurl@yahoo.com), b) safety (e.g., don’t meet community partners in non-office settings), or c) responsibilities (e.g., build in penalties for students that fail to fulfill their obligation). We tell our students that our community partners are their “clients.” In effect, the students are working for them.
- 6) **Have a Plan Should Things Break Down.** Sooner or later, projects will fall apart. Be sure to have a plan if: a) students fail to complete the project, b) the partnership breaks down, c) student or partners behave in an unprofessional manner, or d) students or partners don’t follow established safety guidelines. Be prepared to step in and salvage the relationship with your community partner. Saving an existing relationship is often far easier than trying to build a new one.

*“My first experience with Service-Learning, a literature of AIDS class, had a major impact on me. I read memoirs and fiction, and then directly witnessed the issues that people living with HIV face. Creatively raising awareness on campus and organizing a fall festival for children living with HIV also provided me with more skills than simply reading the text. Actually working in the community helped me understand the impact of AIDS outside of literature.”*

Meagan C. Arrastia  
Research Assistant to Dr. Bowdon

## ***Creating a Community of Learners through Service-Learning Poster Fairs***

**Trae Stewart**



Trae Stewart is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Studies. He joined UCF in 2003 from the University of Southern California where he completed his Ph.D. His research interests include Service-Learning and issues of sexual orientation in education.

**P**rofessional Teaching Practices (EDG 4323) is the general methods course required of most undergraduate education majors. In this class students are exposed to various planning approaches, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques. To practice the course methods in an authentic setting, while helping to alleviate pressures from teacher shortages, students are required to complete a 15-hour Service-Learning assignment in K-12 classrooms.

Because the impact of Service-Learning is not centralized in the sole completion of field hours, students are required to participate in a meta-reflective poster fair at the end of the course. The poster fair parallels those at academic conferences, which offer an alternative to traditional panels where scholars orally summarize their research. In contrast to conference poster sessions, students present analyses using tri-fold cardboard posters. Although reminiscent of science fairs, this decision was made with consideration for student finances, and the practical application of creating a visual teaching artifact.

### **Preparations**

Most students are not familiar with academic posters. For this reason, some class time is devoted to familiarizing students with the process. First, students are oriented to the Curriculum Materials Center and the multitude of software, machines, and realia that can be used for lesson planning and poster preparation. Students are subsequently provided with several examples of former students' posters, with a portion of time used for open critique using a rubric, and against which students' classmates will score their presentations and posters later in the semester. From this activity, students realize the instructor's expectations, learn assessment by rubric, and visualize "good" and "bad" poster design.

Following this discussion, students are challenged to conceive of three unique ways to present their poster data. Creativity is paramount as a teacher, and this exercise urges students to think outside of the methodological box in order to address myriad learning styles. Lastly, posters require a summary and presentation of research analyses. In line with Service-Learning best practices, students' experiential activities are discussed throughout the semester. Students are advised to use this discussion to guide their summative analyses vis-à-vis course concepts and topics.

### **Poster Fair Logistics**

The Service-Learning poster fair replaces the course final. Instructors place students into an even number of groups; each group is then paired with another for presentation and assessment purposes. Each student is allotted 5 minutes to present to his/her group. After the presentations, groups separate to assess collaboratively their partners' posters using the rubric. This configuration ensures a more balanced and objective assessment of the posters. The instructor assesses the posters during the presentation period. However, s/he remains available during group assessment to clarify requirements.

### **Select Student Advantages**

- Students learn vicariously via their peers' experiences
- Students improve professional communication skills by articulating essential information in a limited amount of time
- Students develop self-confidence in subject matter knowledge, and ability to share that knowledge
- Students envision themselves as professionals and scholars by becoming informed on a unique academic discourse
- Students experience the process of creating a community of learners

### **Poster Fair Suggestions**

*Space and Time.* Students have complained that they felt cramped during poster fairs. Furthermore, students have continuously commented that they would like to have heard all students' presentations and/or had an opportunity to view all posters. When a change of venue is impossible, instructors should at minimum arrive early to shift classroom furniture for better flow.

*Academia.* Students should be expected to prepare for the Service-Learning poster fair just as they would for a professional conference. Having students draft a 2-page handout not only helps to establish an academic atmosphere, but also simultaneously provides better insight into students' work.

*Acknowledgement.* Effective Service-Learning includes an opportunity to "celebrate" or "acknowledge" student experiences. By inviting community partners, UCF administrators and staff, and friends, students have an opportunity to share and celebrate their work and possibly motivate others to engage in service-oriented experiential learning as well.

*Service-Learning Student Showcase.* Poster fair participants feel that they spend countless hours designing, preparing, and sharing creative, analytic posters; yet, their hard work is cursorily noticed. Instructors can ease this anxiety by encouraging students to participate in UCF's Service-Learning Student Showcase where they compete against other service-learners for prizes based on Service-Learning criteria and poster presentations. The Service-Learning Student Showcase will be held in the Pegasus Ballroom on April 6, 2006. An online application for the Showcase can be accessed at <<http://www.servicelearning.ucf.edu>>.

## ***Student-Driven Sustainability: Students as Co-Leaders in Service-Learning***

**Blake Scott**



Blake Scott is an Associate Professor of English and has been at UCF since 2002. His research and teaching are in the areas of technical communication and the rhetorics of HIV/AIDS and public health policy.

As evidenced by the forthcoming Campus Compact collection *Students as Colleagues: Expanding the Circle of Service-Learning Leadership*, a growing number of teachers and administrators are inviting students to co-lead various Service-Learning efforts, including course design and teaching, program and institutional development, teacher training, and public relations. Here at UCF, for example, the Service-Learning Coordinating Committee (open to all interested faculty) now includes four student members, graduate and undergraduate, who co-lead such initiatives as Service-Learning Day and the Student Showcase (if you have a student who would make a good addition to this committee, please encourage them to apply with Linda Hargreaves). Starting this Fall, a number of students trained by the Office of Service-Learning will assist in the teaching of several Service-Learning courses as reflection leaders (contact Linda if you want to participate in this new initiative).

Such efforts are important extensions of typical student-oriented efforts that tend to celebrate students' achievements but stop short of inviting them to be co-leaders, co-developers, and co-implementers of Service-Learning. According to research by the American Association of Community Colleges, robust student participation and leadership is one of the key indicators of Service-Learning's successful institutionalization and sustainability. In this piece I want to briefly outline and discuss additional opportunities for student leadership.

The following list presents just a sample of additional leadership roles that students are taking here and at other places, roles that we might expand at UCF with additional institutional support (of course, students themselves are the best source for refining these roles and developing new ones):

- Service-Learning Fellows at the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, where faculty come to get help with designing, running, and evaluating courses; these students could also participate in the Center's development of faculty conferences
- Community assistants (similar to TAs or GAs), sponsored by the Office of Student Learning or Office of Undergraduate Studies, who help faculty (and students) develop and manage community partnerships and who help train community partners

- Peer tutors at the University Writing Center (including the online component) who specialize in helping students with Service-Learning writing assignments (including reflection-based ones)
- Educational (rather than just inspirational) presenters at faculty workshops and conferences and at university-community partnership events
- Research associates who help plan, conduct, write up, and present on assessment-based or other types of Service-Learning research on the course, program, and/or university level

Expanding such leadership roles will require more than good ideas, however; it will also require administrators and faculty to invest in these ideas with substantial resources and energy. For example, students will need to be recruited, trained, and financially supported for their work. In addition, all involved must be diligent about ensuring that students work on committees, faculty development teams, teaching teams, and research teams as colleagues rather than token voices or assistants relegated to menial tasks. We must also be careful not to exploit students in the other direction, using them to avoid our responsibilities in such activities as developing community partnerships, integrating and teaching reflection, assessing the impact of our courses, and educating others about what we do.

As Service-Learning continues to flourish at UCF, I hope we continue to thoughtfully experiment with student leadership efforts, keeping in mind the abovementioned concerns and collectively asking ourselves such questions as, "What leadership roles are students already taking in our courses, and how might these be applicable to other types of courses?" "What new or expanded student roles are most promising for ensuring sustainable and quality Service-Learning, and which institutional structures are best positioned to support these roles?" and "What are the funding and other institutional constraints of developing student co-leadership roles, and how can we creatively dismantle or work around these constraints?"

*"As I continue to research Service-Learning, I am drawn to issues that concern community partners. Through their service-learning experience, students change their future educational and professional trajectory after the 'real-life' experience in what they had imagined to be their chosen life's work. In other words, they can change their mind about their goals before they leave the academy with a degree in a field that doesn't really match their interests. The life lessons, the academic skills gained and applied, and the contributions to the community happen only because of community partners."*

Margaret Boreman  
Research Assistant to Dr. Bowdon

## ***Service-Learning Assessment: A Look at Outcomes***

**Diane Wink**



Diane Wink is a Professor of Nursing and has been at UCF since 1987. She has integrated community based activities in courses since coming to UCF and has taught both undergraduate and graduate Service-Learning courses.

The usual standards of academic rigor must be applied to Service-Learning (S-L) activities to determine if course outcome objectives are met. S-L activities also require two additional forms of evaluation: examination of outcomes for the community partner and appraisal of student outcomes in the area of civic engagement.

### **Planning for Evaluation**

The evaluation process starts when the community partnership is established. There must be a relationship between the activity proposed and course objectives. If such a link is not present, achievement of objectives through the S-L activity is impossible no matter how worthy the activity.

For students in a Cornerstone course in business management, the design, implementation and evaluation of a fund raising event for a community group providing health care to uninsured individuals may be an outstanding match of course objectives and partner need. The same activity for nursing majors would not meet course objectives. However, if the nursing majors carried out a quality assurance review of the health services provided at the clinic, the match could be outstanding.

Closely related is verification that the project planned meets the community partner's needs. The Service-Learning office at UCF sends out requests for partnerships from community agencies. Contact Linda Hargreaves at lhargrea@mail.ucf.edu to get on the S-L listserv.

### **Formative Evaluation**

Student journals and reflection activities offer formative evaluation data. Reflection activities, particularly when students are guided to analyze specific aspects of the experience or the ramifications of what they have learned, can help tie the activity to civic engagement and promote optimal learning. Review of reflection papers also enables faculty to monitor the project itself.

Discussion of S-L activities in class or on the web also provides evaluation data. An example comes from an engineering course where students consulting on renovation of a community clinic discussed funding sources (and the community values these reflected) on the project budget and the final reno-

vation plan. This discussion could then be connected to core elements of the consulting process where the "wish list" of the client is considered in light of resources available to accomplish those goals.

### **Summative Evaluation**

Summative (final) evaluation of S-L, as well as student learning outcomes, includes the usual course outcome evaluations—examinations and formal papers. A sample exam question might be: Critique research on the treatment of individuals with substance abuse disorders and discuss its applicability to the clients of the substance abuse treatment facility whom you met while doing your Service-Learning activities with that group.

Written, verbal, poster, and web-based reports on the project can document activities and learning outcomes. Such reports also help students develop essential written and verbal communication skills. An example is a formal paper in which students describe the partner (addresses civic engagement objectives), the project and its value to the partner and the student's learning, (connection between course objectives and the S-L activity), identify objective and goals for project (develops students' ability to clearly set goals), describe and evaluate outcomes and relate to objectives for course and project (develops evaluation, analysis and synthesis abilities). Course presentations and poster sessions allow course members to learn from their peers and develop an ability to evaluate and critique others. At the university level, such presentations can occur at the annual Service-Learning Student Showcase.

Surveys also provide useful evaluation data. The UCF S-L office has both a Beginning-of-the-Semester Student Expectations Survey and an End-of-the-Semester Student Experiences Exit Survey. These surveys can be tied to an individual course and section to provide faculty information on the S-L activity as a whole. To maintain anonymity of the student, outcomes are reported as an aggregate for the course.

Faculty designed surveys can also examine the S-L activity and its relationship to specific course objectives. This can be done on WebCT (using the survey function) or via a simple paper-based tool.

Evaluation of outcomes from S-L can also occur through submission of student work for review at a level outside of the course. While the timing of such events may make them less useful when it is time to assign an end of course grade, award programs can help the faculty verify-the-value of the activity and the quality of the students work. At UCF this validation is possible through the Service-Learning Student Showcase.

Numerous regional and national organizations also have student competitions appropriate for S-L project. These include the Office of Secretary of HHS Secretary's Award for Innovations In Health Promotion And Disease Prevention, the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, the Campus Compact Awards Programs and the Florida Campus Compact.

Outcome evaluation must include determination if the S-L project met the needs of the partners. Sometimes outcomes are very clear, as when a strategic plan developed by the students is implemented by a partner, a research proposal is submitted, or some product developed by the students (a teaching tool, web site, promotional materials) is put into use.

Phone calls to partners, evaluation tools mailed to partners or sent in with students, and requests for input as to the quality and quantity of student work can be effective ways to obtain this information. The UCF S-L office has an evaluation tool which can be used by community partners.

For some agencies, an essential S-L outcome is documentation of participation of students in the work of the agency. Documentation of this student work may be needed by the agency when they seek grant funding or other support.

This article provided an overview of the evaluation strategies. For further and more in-depth information, faculty are encouraged to go to the assessment and evaluation sections of two websites: the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse <[http://www.servicelearning.org/lib\\_svcs/bibs/assess\\_eval](http://www.servicelearning.org/lib_svcs/bibs/assess_eval)> and Community Campus Partnerships for Health <<http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/servicelearningres.html>>.

## ***Girls Go Global: Service-Learning and Women's Human Rights***

**Lisa Logan**



Lisa Logan is an Associate Professor of English and Director of the Women's Studies Program. She has been at UCF since 1996. Her research interests include women's writing and feminist theory and action.

Women comprise over half the world's population, perform two-thirds of the world's labor for one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one percent of the world's property (Aryonne Fraser, 2001). Despite these dire realities, many men and women in our classes believe that feminism's battles have already been fought and won. Service-Learning is a vital strategy in navigating student misconceptions about and indifference to feminism and the global situation of women.

Human Rights as a field of inquiry typically is the purview of international relations, political science, public policy, and law. Faculty outside of these disciplines may balk at teaching global women's human rights because the academy has traditionally defined expertise narrowly. Similarly, students are anxious about their own lack of knowledge and sense of powerlessness about women's global situation. The modes of critical analysis used in Women's Studies and humanities

classes—the understanding and critique of language and arguments—fit the study of human rights. In LIT 3383H, Women's Literature of Social Justice, I used literature and critical thinking, Internet resources, and Service-Learning to teach about women's global human rights and extend students' sense of responsibility beyond the classroom and the Orlando area to the global community.

Through the lenses of literature, language, and feminist theory, students examined the definitions of words (rights, human, social justice, women, sustainability, ideology, cultural imperialism, etc.), global discourses about women, and narratives written by women themselves about their lives under war, censorship, imprisonment, social, economic, and political oppression, patriarchy, and violence. As Audre Lorde argues in "Poetry is Not a Luxury," in listening to the words of women, "we recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives." Recognition of our responsibility to these voices is the first step to making change.

Two foundational assignments raised students' critical consciousnesses about women's human rights. The first week of class, students assessed the situation of global women by visiting Human Rights Watch <<http://hrw.org>>. They compared their findings and educated one another about issues such as women workers, domestic violence, sexual violence, HIV/AIDS, women and armed conflict, international justice, trafficking, refugee and internally displaced women, gender-based asylum claims, women's status in the family and legal status, women in state custody, and sexual autonomy. Throughout the semester, the first five minutes of class were spent on the "Global Awareness Beat," informal student presentations about different women's human rights issues; by the end of the semester, we were exposed to twenty-five or more important global issues.

The Internet also makes working with global partners possible. Last spring students worked with community organizations in Cape Town, South Africa, including Planters of the Home, a sustainable development agency that assists heads of townships (usually women) in building community gardens. Once I established contact with Planters, students visited the organization's website to determine needs and goals and then worked with agency head Rob Small to generate an awareness and fundraising campaign in Orlando. Students held a fundraiser at Natura Café, where they showed Planters' informational DVD and presented a short PowerPoint presentation on the global situation of women with a focus on contrasts between South Africa and the U.S. Attendees received an "activist toolkit," which encouraged them to take action. This project taught students that Service-Learning is not just about feeling good about filling a need; they learned how to organize, the value of raising awareness as well as funds (although their work would build five more community gardens), and the importance of their work to their campus community. Several students from a South African History course attended as well as those enrolled in a study abroad trip to Cape Town. With Dr. Mary Van Hook (School of Social Work), those stu-

dents visited with Planters of the Home—all because of Service-Learning.

As one student explained, “Before this class, I never even considered my position as a global citizen or what I can do to make a difference. I now read the Amnesty International website on a regular basis . . . I’m not sure what the future will hold for me as a citizen of the world, but I do look forward to making a difference.”

## ***What Makes a Good Service-Learner? Preliminary Results from a Statewide Study***

**Melody A. Bowdon**



Melody Bowdon is an Associate Professor of English and has been at the University of Central Florida since 2002. She was the 2005 recipient of the Gulf South Summit Award for Outstanding Contributions to Service-Learning in Higher Education and a 2005 finalist for the national Thomas Ehrlich Award for Faculty Engagement in Service-Learning. Currently she is conducting a statewide assessment of collegiate Service-Learning activities through her role as Florida Campus Compact Senior Faculty Fellow.

As Senior Faculty Fellow for the Florida Campus Compact, I’m executing a multi-phase research project called “The State of Collegiate Service-Learning and Civic Engagement in Florida.” My work on the project includes outcomes assessment of funding projects, focus groups, interviews, document evaluation, and survey work. In this short piece I’ll share some preliminary insights gleaned from the research so far. This is a tiny glimpse of a large study and an even larger project, but I hope it inspires readers to a) consider participating in research related to Service-Learning or other pedagogical activities; b) encourage Service-Learning students to reflect on the traits that they feel cause them to be effective in the community as a formative reflection activity; and c) consider developing learning activities that draw on a wide range of learning styles and personal characteristics.

In December of 2005 my research team and I piloted a survey of Florida Service-Learning students. The pilot was designed to test our collection process, identify faculty members interested in participating, and identify areas to emphasize or de-emphasize in the “official” run, which will take place this April.

The survey featured 69 items, which covered six main areas:

- Demographic information
- Education and Work Experience
- Service-Learning Attitudes and Perceptions
- Ways in Which the Course Affected the Student
- Service-Learning and the Student’s Future
- Benefits of Service-Learning

In designing our pilot survey we drew on desired and predicted outcomes of Service-Learning as suggested by many researchers in the field, but relied in particular on the groundbreaking 1990s work of Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles as we identified benefits, attitudinal changes, and other impacts that we might expect to see among the students. Beyond those issues, my research team and I wanted to ask questions about what makes good Service-Learning good. We wanted to ask students what, if any, traits they felt made them well suited to Service-Learning work.

Based on interviews and focus groups with approximately 20 undergraduate students, we compiled a preliminary list of possible personality traits of Service-Learners. We incorporated some of the traits from this conversation as well as from several other student focus groups into a survey question.

For this pilot version of the study, we asked the question in this format: What personal characteristics make you well-suited for S-L courses? (Mark all that apply.)

Ninety-four percent of students, the largest proportion in the study, indicated that they believed their enthusiasm made them well-suited to Service-Learning. Major or minor course work received a 93 percent positive reaction, and 87 percent marked their interest in the course matter. Communication skills was marked by 83 percent; previous work experience by 78 percent; age and maturity by 74%; previous volunteer experience by 72%; organization skills by 64%; initiative by 62%; flexibility by 60%; and family background by 49%. Less than one percent indicated that they did not consider themselves well-suited for Service-Learning.

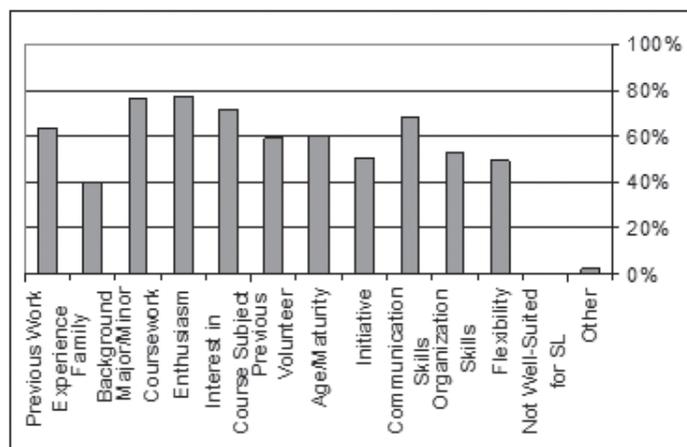


Fig. 1. Personal Characteristics Possessed by Participants Conducive to Service-Learning

As we move into the official statewide launch of this survey in a couple of months, my research assistants, funding agency representatives, and I will refine this question and others related to it to improve the usefulness of the results for program leaders and faculty members around the state. If you have questions or comments about this topic, other results of this survey, or Service-Learning research in general, please email me at [mbowdon@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:mbowdon@mail.ucf.edu).

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## ***Submissions***

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full- and part-time faculty at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. This represents an opportunity for faculty to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at <<http://www.ftcl.ucf.edu/publications/focus/guidelines.htm>>. Publication dates will be the middle of the first and last full months of each semester, and submission deadlines will be the Friday of the week prior. MLA format is preferred. Please send your submissions to *Faculty Focus*, [ftcl@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:ftcl@mail.ucf.edu).

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