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Digital Media Promoting Community Work and Learning

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Abstract Title: Digital Media Promoting Community Work and Learning

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Field of Study: Interdisciplinary Studies

The purpose of our study is to develop digital media, specifically short videos, in order to improve students' service learning experience. We began by analyzing our primary audience to develop an effective visual rhetoric and style. We interviewed students, faculty, and community partners and captured video of community engagement experiences, such as service learning. This footage was edited into themed productions that were subjected to a series of formal critiques, focus groups discussions, and surveys to analyze effectiveness. The final videos highlight the value of service learning as an integration of classroom learning and what students give to the community, thereby creating mutually beneficial relationships with community partners. We then conducted focus groups to understand how students both familiar and unfamiliar with service learning perceived the videos and how these videos helped with students' understanding of service learning. The results of these focus groups concluded that students responded positively to the videos.. After watching the videos, students were able to more clearly articulate a definition of service learning. Students also said they had a stronger understanding of the purpose of service learning and that the videos were an enjoyable means to learn about service learning. Importantly, the majority of students also said that they would watch videos like this if were assigned to watch them outside of class. In the future, we hope that digital media projects such as this will further support students' understanding and involvement in community engagement, while promoting the value of community involvement beyond the classroom.