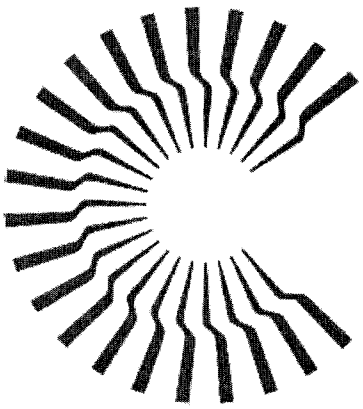
THE BRIDGING ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICE DIRECTOR ON THE ENGAGED CAMPUS



Written by JoAnn Campbell
on behalf of the
2001-2002 Community Service Director Fellows
of the Midwest Collaboration of
the Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio Campus Compacts

Community Service Directors (CSDs) are pivotal to the quality, quantity, and institutionalization of service and service-learning because of their role in supporting engaged faculty, students, and community partners. For this reason, the challenges they themselves face ultimately impact their campuses and the entire engagement movement. CSDs frequently struggle with lack of resources, isolation, lack of recognition of the importance of their work, and the fact that their chosen field is in such an early stage of development.

The Community Service Director Fellowship program was designed by the Midwest Collaboration of the Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio Campus Compacts to offer Community Service Directors an overdue opportunity for support and to facilitate the development of the field. This paper, the group project of the 2001-2002 Fellows, articulates the importance of the Community Service Director role and the need to adequately support it. It is intended to be used as a tool by advocates for service-learning, extracurricular service, and campus engagement.

The Community Service Director Fellowship program is part of a larger project entitled From Service to Citizenship: Strengthening Collaboration between Higher Education and Communities, which is funded through the Corporation for National Service Learn and Serve America: Higher Education program.

THE 2001-2002 COMMUNITY SERVICE DIRECTOR FELLOWS

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Declines in civic participation, low voting rates among 18-25 year olds, dwindling federal support for social services, and deficit state budgets have created a climate in which higher education must make a case for the value it adds to society through applications of research and teaching. National and state organizations (such as Campus Compact and state Compacts) dedicated to supporting a culture of service in higher education articulate the university's role as a collective citizen, whose priorities include linking scholarship to community-based needs, using the resources of the college faculty for professional local service, and utilizing federal work study, America Reads, and AmeriCorps programs to support the work of local schools, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based institutions. Over 800 Campus Compact member institutions have devoted attention and resources to enhanced, quality engagement with the local community by addressing current civic, economic, and social challenges through academic-based service-learning and student community service activities.

"Engaged campus" according to Campus Compact "defines the highest level of integration of service with the college or university's culture and mission. Engaged campuses have redesigned their pedagogy, research, rewards system, curriculum, policies, and role in the broader community to encourage campus institutionalization of civic participation" (Torres 10). This move is neither automatic nor easy, however, as Bringle, Games, and Malloy point out:

> Although campus-community partnerships have grown, there are serious barriers to collaborative endeavors because of the ways in which campuses are organized and a history of unequal relationships in which communities served the research interests of the academy but were not, themselves, served. The new conventional wisdom is that effective partnerships require communication, planning, and mutual decision making from the start. However, such relationships are more easily described than realized and require skilled people who can act as bridge builders. (vii)

One of these key "bridge builders" is the campus Community Service Director (CSD), and it is the purpose of this paper to outline the role of this position on a variety of campuses, to articulate the advantages to having a full-time CSD, and to acknowledge the challenges inherent in the nature of the position.

The distinctions between service-learning and community service, while important, are more relevant for administrative reporting lines than they are to students, who move fluidly between participating in co-curricular community service and enrolling in service-learning classes. Consistently, service-learning has been defined as a form of experiential learning in which students work with the community to meet genuine needs and reflect on the experience to show evidence of learning. The case for supporting and encouraging service-learning on campuses has been convincing. As a pedagogical

method, service-learning furthers students' critical thinking, improves their mastery of academic material, and foregrounds the relationship between theory and practice (Eyler and Giles). It also strengthens students' sense of social and ethical responsibility, deepens their understanding of the context of social issues, and encourages them to participate in the community beyond campus (Astin et. al.). Service-learning also can make faculty and student research more rigorous as well as more responsive to public concerns. Finally, service-learning reinvigorates the college or university's commitment to using its resources for the public good (Harkavy).

Co-curricular community service is typically done on a volunteer basis, without connection to formal coursework. Volunteering versus being in a service-learning class gives students more options for personal, career, or academic exploration, and in co-curricular service, students are the leaders rather than faculty and thus gain important leadership skills (Jacoby). Group projects, which are often the way co-curricular service is structured, increase student-to-student interaction, which increases retention (Astin et.al.). From the community partner's point of view, students engaged voluntarily, not as part of a class, can be more committed to service, providing continuity beyond a single semester.

Recent survey research of faculty motives and obstacles to teaching service-learning reveals that the top two deterrents to continued use of service-learning were the time-intensive quality of this pedagogy and "difficulty coordinating the community service component of the course" (Abes, Jackson, and Jones 10). Faculty who had never used service-learning cited the factor that they "anticipate having logistical problems coordinating the community service aspect of the course" and their lack of knowledge of "how to use service-learning effectively" as main reasons for their reluctance. The authors conclude that "a strong community service office is especially useful for -consuming logistical difficulties" (14). Thus institutions of higher education serious about incorporating service-learning pedagogy into the campus culture and community service into its ethos would do well to adequately staff and fund an office for that purpose.

"Regarding service-learning, I believe knowledge and responsibility are very much connected. I would like to see students graduate with a sense of responsibility, that the fact that they have this knowledge and they've had this experience in college is not just for them and their bank account. It's also for what can they give to their world and how can they change their world in a positive way. I think service-learning gets at that with the way it encourages reflection and the way that it's a connected way of thinking." Stephanie Veltman, CSD Fellow

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICE DIRECTOR POSITION

In 2002, 71% of Campus Compact member institutions had a community service director, an increase from 61% in 2000; 26% of Campus Compact members have a separate office dedicated to service-learning. The following facts are taken from Campus Compact's annual survey for the year 2001:

- 39% of CSDs report to Student Affairs, 5% to the President and the remainder to other units.
- 45% of CSDs were employed full-time in 2001.
- 50% hold a Masters degree, 14% a Ph.D.
- 43% have a background in Higher Education, 24% in Nonprofit sector, 10% come straight from school.
- 8% of CSDs report annual salaries of $60,000 or higher.
- 46% of Community Service Offices have a budget of under $50,000.

While sometimes a faculty member but more often professional staff member, the CSD is a partnership manager, able to broaden, deepen, and sustain campus-community partnerships in ways no single faculty member or student can. Often a long-time member of the community, they have an expertise in working with community partners that is not present in some if not most faculty members, particularly those new to the campus or to service-learning. CSDs guide student volunteers and volunteer leaders through their experiences and provide training and education for faculty, students, and community partners. By getting to know a wide array of partners, faculty, students, and programs, they are able to help match the best possible partner with the best possible courses. They can alleviate the logistical difficulties of working with classes that may not be offered every semester by finding multiple classes or sources of service for a partner. And they have the time carved out to deal with the nuts and bolts logistical issues and can systematically pool resources, such as transportation.

Where the CSD reports has an effect on the institutionalization of academic service-learning. According to a study by Bringle and Hatcher (2000), campuses with a reporting line to academic affairs were more likely to have a successful, sustained program than campuses on which the CSD reported elsewhere. Of course, co-curricular service is most firmly rooted in Student Affairs and if a separate office handles service-learning, communication between the two must be systematic and regular.

> "We felt that we really needed to move over to the faculty side, move over to the academic area and . . . without that we wouldn't be able to sustain the service-learning center on our campus or to reach some of our goals. . . .I think for faculty to see credibility you almost have to decide what area you're going to be in." Martha Cox, CSD Fellow

ROLE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE DIRECTORS IN ENSURING QUALITY SERVICE AND SERVICE-LEARNING

Any number of principles for good practice have emerged from the field of community service and service-learning. Jeffrey Howard has adapted some to an audience of faculty teaching service-learning. Others, such as the Johnson Foundation/Wingspread "Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning" primarily focus on co-curricular service programs. Evaluating the role of community service directors in light of these established principles can provide a measure of quality for the engagement of a campus with its communities. The consequences of community service done poorly or service-learning that doesn't achieve these goals can be long-term damage to campus-community relationships and alienated students and faculty. According to the Principles, an effective and sustained program of community service and service-learning (Kendall, 40):

1) Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.

2) Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.

3) Articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.

4) Allows for those with needs to define those needs.

5) Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.

6) Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.

7) Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.

8) Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.

9) Insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved.

10) Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.

Some of the ways a CSD can insure this level of quality are as follows:

"Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good. Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience."

As a problem-solver, the CSD needs to be rooted in the local community, aware of its needs, quick to point out its assets, and a participant in creating a

common vision of a healthy community. Once students become involved in specific service projects or classes, the CSD creates opportunities for reflection, informally and more formally through sample assignments and activities, to help the students harvest their learning.

"Articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved. Allows for those with needs to define those needs. Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved."

It is the CSD's job to be sure that all parties of a partnership are served well. This is trickier than may appear because of the unequal distribution of power between universities and nonprofit organizations, between the student population and the local population, and between faculty and staff. A good CSD is able to convene groups of people who would not otherwise be talking. This requires a clear strategic plan that reconciles the university's mission with already articulated needs of community stakeholders. A level of diplomacy and vision are important qualities for a CSD.

"Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances. Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment."

One concern with the current status of CSD positions is built-in transience; if the position is a graduate student assignment, only part-time, or funded by grant monies, there is a great challenge in building sustained campus-community relationships with nonprofits, schools, faith-based, and grass roots organizations as well as with faculty members. In addition, the careful matching of needs and services at the heart of the CSD's work requires a working knowledge of faculty expertise, course offerings, and emerging community projects that is best gathered over time.

"Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals. Insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved. Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations."

To insure a quality community service-learning program, someone must supervise and mentor student workers, advocate for community members not in the room, manage the risks involved, collect data and keep records for assessment, and evaluate the impact on both students and community. No faculty member has the time for this kind of work; few administrators can take on the additional tasks specific to campus-community partners. A staff member with primary responsibility in community service and service-learning can act as a clearinghouse for information and maintain the infrastructure essential to a quality program.

The above list describes the ideal role of the CSD in creating and maintaining a quality program of community engagement. The CSD may also run the America Reads program, coordinate the campus Make a Difference Day or the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of service, develop a co-curricular transcript program, advise student

organizations, sign dozens of student time sheets, serve on faculty task forces, train site leaders, work with faculty scholars, create and monitor assessment tools, write grants, and maintain a budget.

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A COORDINATOR

> "There needs to be that person on campus on a full tine basis to give it a face and to give it momentum and to be a support for the faculty." Lynn Dalsky, CSD Fellow

The following illustrations come from research on 11 Community Service Directors from the Campus Compacts of Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois who received fellowships during the 2001-2002 academic year. Of the 11 CSD Fellows, three were men and eight were women. Their years of experience ranged from two years to over ten years. Some were employed ten hours a week, others full-time. They worked at institutions of higher education with student populations ranging from 1,000 to 24,000. Five reported to Academic Affairs; 6 to Student Affairs, Residential Life, or Campus Ministry. (Nationally 21% of CSDs report to a Dean or the President, 39% report to student affairs, and 26% report to another unit.)

1. Expert Support: A CSD provides training and technical assistance to faculty who teach service-learning courses.

   At Case Western Reserve University, CSD Fellow Glenn Odenbrett coordinated a team of six tenured faculty to attend a planning institute at the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to curricular-based service, they planned co-curricular projects that have reflection built in.

   CSD Fellow Mary Bader of Dominican University used her grant to build a library of service-learning materials to serve as a resource for interested faculty.

2. Clearinghouse for Community: A CSD serves as the university's front door to community members, providing an entry point to the university's resources. CSDs write grants to fund specific projects that address local community needs, coordinate joint projects, and serve as a clearinghouse for community requests.

   At Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville an online mentoring program funded by an MCI/Campus Compact grant works to conquer the digital divide. SIUE has established an email program that matches 130 local middle school students with university students, faculty, and staff. Writing to each other at least twice a week, the pairs answer prompts from program director Becky Ritter, who reports to the campus CSD Fellow Suzanne Kutterer-Siburt. Students visit the campus and meet their mentors from time to time and learn what it takes to attend college through their weekly conversations. The grant also funds a position to rehabilitate donated computers so students can have them in their homes as well as accessing them at the community centers, which have been rewired for internet access.

   At Grand Rapids Community College, CSD Fellow Martha Cox is working with several local schools and several colleges in the area on

global education for a peace festival that connect school children to the campuses and the campuses to the community.

3. Coordination of multiple projects: A CSD can inform faculty of other projects at the same community site, thus building on existing work to created sustained, synergistic projects and partnerships.

Madonna University CSD Fellow Kevin West has helped create a partnership with All Saints Center in Detroit, building on the College of Nursing's work providing health fairs there. A Journalism professor does a virtual community newsletter at the center. A Sociology class on Social Issues and Movements has created an asset map of the area, and a Groups Dynamics class has students tutoring kids and creating a photography club. A residential summer camp at the university for teens ages 15-17 helps them learn to use the media facilities to create a documentary for their peers on being at college.

4. Grassroots Visions: While many town/gown committees exist to maintain important relationships, a CSD can create brand new programs based on immediate local needs and bring together stakeholders who might not otherwise meet or strategize together:

CSD Fellow Lynn Dalsky works with faculty and staff at Walsh University and with local schools to establish a county youth grant making council. The conversation has helped the community get a sense of the services needed and is building awareness of service-learning in the high schools.

5. Student Support: A CSD can be the crucial support for student-initiated projects to succeed.

At Albion College, CSD Fellow Erin Elder coordinated a Habitat for Humanity project involving 40 students recruited from classes who were then paired with community members. The students met the Habitat applicants in their homes, helped select the new homeowner, and then built the house.

6. Bridge between campus units: A CSD can bridge academic and student affairs through specific theme-based projects.

At Indiana University Kokomo, CSD Fellow Catherine Barnes coordinates a project on alcohol awareness that involves a criminal justice class, a science course, local law enforcement officers, addiction counselors, and several student organizations.

CSD BACKGROUNDS

There is no single educational track to this work as currently exists for faculty members in a discipline or for Student Affairs professionals. The varied backgrounds of Community Service Directors allow the position to be shaped by the needs of the campus and the local community and add richness and diversity to the enactment of campus-community partnerships. The CSD Fellows of this study had the following backgrounds:

- graduate student studying curriculum instruction
- faculty member in sociology
- ordained minister
- expert on multiculturalism
- professional in human resources
- financial analyst in private sector
- former nonprofit director

The significance of this range of backgrounds may simply be that each institution should find someone who fits that particular set of needs: i.e. research universities may need someone with a Ph.D. to direct service-learning, faith-based institutions may want to hire a minister to coordinate service, etc. Nationally, 43% of CSDs have a background in Higher Education, 24% come from nonprofits, 5% come from the corporate or government sector, and 10% enter their position straight from an undergraduate degree. The lack of a professional organization or single career path indicates the newness of this position. There is little formal coursework that prepares one for such work. The disadvantage to this lack of professional standardization can be an idiosyncratic rather than organic approach to developing quality community service-learning programs.

CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE DIRECTOR

- "'You do such good work you should have a newsletter.' Right, I'll close the office for 6 months and do this!"
- "When I first started, I felt like I was just standing there, raising my hand trying to get noticed."
- "We're doing so many things it's hard to keep track of them all."
- " I'm so busy doing the programming and coordination that I don't have the time to do the data entry. I have four years of course evaluations piled up in a box because there's no one to go through them and organize them and make sense of them. We do the day to day stuff well but for evaluation and record keeping we need more consistence and clerical support."

Interviews with the Midwest Collaboration Community Service Directors Fellows revealed the following list of obstacles to effective community service and quality service-learning.

Staffing appears to be the primary concern in creating quality service-learning. Funding of an office to support the work must be seen as a priority to the university. Nationally only 43% of CSDs are full-time, and similarly, in this sample only 5 of the 11 were full-time and three of those had significant duties beyond service-learning. As one CSD Fellow put it "A part-time community service director will never get this off the ground the way it should." Record-keeping and assessment are also dependent upon staff.

Faculty Relations: If the CSD is not a faculty member and the office is not linked to academic affairs, it is more difficult to get faculty members involved in service-learning. Abes, Jackson, and Jones report that the most influential sources of encouragement for faculty to teach service-learning were students and community members (9). Someone has to coordinate those efforts.

Newness of Field: The first national conference for Community Service Directors will be hosted by Campus Compact in June, 2003. Professionals in this field have no journal devoted to their work, no organization to identify colleagues, and few conferences focused on the wide range of their responsibilities and duties. As one CSD Fellow remarked, "CSDs need to speak many languages of student affairs, academic affairs, community organizations, students" and that makes it difficult to standardize both training and professional development. Unlike the academic calendar, community engagement and partnership building is year round, prompting a CSD Fellow to observe that "There is no season to this work so there's little down time."

CONCLUSION

> "Entering into relationships with people that maybe you normally wouldn't, just exploring people's lives who you may not naturally gravitate toward or run into on a daily basis—I think those kind of relationships can very much help society be transformed." Mary Bader, CSD Fellow

This is an exciting time nationally for community service and service-learning in institutions of higher education. The people who coordinate these efforts may not share common educational backgrounds, degrees, or experience, but they do share a vision of their institution as an engaged citizen in the local community. As CSD Fellow Martha Cox puts it, "I sincerely believe that the people that are in those positions have a passion for service or we wouldn't be involved in it. We're there night and day but it's out of

Community Service Directors believe that students are better educated when they view their academic studies through the lens of community service. CSDs understand that faculty research is more rigorous and the teaching more rewarding when genuine problems of the community have a place in the curriculum. Furthermore, members of the community, staff in nonprofit agencies, teachers in local schools, and citizens involved in local issues can be important teachers for college students. To take seriously the notion that education is not just to make a living but to make a life means inviting students into local communities through co-curricular activities and service-learning classes as a way of experiencing a civically engaged existence.

A well-supported, full-time Community Service Director can insure that these efforts are done efficiently and effectively. Without an office or personnel devoting attention, expertise, and enthusiasm to community-based education, attempts at community engagement may be scattered and individual. Even well conceived partnerships are unlikely to be sustained, grow, or have significant local and institutional impact without a CSD to follow-through, assess, and plan the next steps. In this time of difficult budget decisions, it should be clear that investing in a full-time community service director and well-staffed office of community service and service-learning will serve the campus for years to come.

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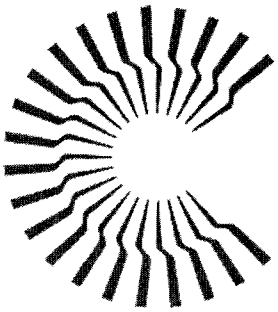
THE MIDWEST COLLABORATION



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