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Developing a Service-Learning Student Facilitator Program: Lessons Learned

Jerri Kropp
Georgia Southern University

Nancy McBride Arrington
Georgia Southern University

Veena Shankar
Georgia Southern University

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Abstract

The Service-Learning Student Facilitator Program originated from the first author who was engaged in service learning and sought to transform her ideas into a sustainable project that could be reproduced annually. The purpose of this program was to train and certify students as facilitators so that they could assist faculty members in implementing service-learning experiences in their courses in various disciplines across the campus. Student participants became effective leaders of service-learning projects, developed great respect for the methods of service-learning, and expressed a desire for a deeper understanding of its theoretical basis. Their feedback, along with lessons learned, helped shape training in subsequent semesters. These lessons, which are shared, are valuable to those planning to develop similar programs in their universities.

Introduction

The Service-Learning Student Facilitators Program at Georgia Southern University was born from an idea from the first author who was already engaged in service learning and wanted to turn her ideas into a sustainable project that could also be beneficial to other faculty members across campus. As part of a larger service-learning initiative, this program was created to train a cohort of students from our institution that would assist faculty members with their service-learning projects. As a result of the training, these students would be able to speak intelligently about service learning, know the elements that constitute service learning, and manage communications between the classroom, the community partners, and their faculty mentors.

In addition to elucidating our program, the purpose of this article is to provide an overview of service learning, demonstrate how both communities and students benefit from its implementation, explore the history of utilizing student leaders in higher education, and to investigate the effectiveness of training student leaders to serve as facilitators alongside their faculty mentors during service-learning projects.

Service Learning

John Dewey, early 20th century progressive educator, shared beliefs that align with contemporary academic service learning, including that one's actions directed toward the welfare of others can stimulate both their academic and social development (Dewey, 1938). President Kennedy's famous words from his inaugural address of 1961 (U.S. Congress, 1989), "…ask not what you can do for yourself, but ask what you can do for your country," sparked a notion which re-emerged four decades later in the education realm as service learning. Public laws such as The National and Community Service Act (1990) and The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (2009) provide money and encouragement for young people to serve their communities and schools. As a result of these influential acts, many high schools and universities require a service credit for graduation.

Service learning has been defined in many ways. The National Community Service Act of 1990 established the basis of the definitions that are used by various organizations today. The definition adopted for this study resonates with the definition of service learning offered by the Berea College Center for Excellence in Learning through Service (CELTS):

> Service Learning is an educational experience based upon a collaborative partnership between the college and the community. Learning through service enables students to apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to meet genuine community needs. Through reflection and assessment, students gain deeper knowledge of course content and the importance of civic engagement (Berea College, n.d.).

Additionally, this project recognizes and embraces the six key components of service learning that are outlined by Schoenfield (2004). They are: (a) Connection between the service and the learning aspects–not just volunteering; (b) Reflection on personal changes and changes to others; (c) Reciprocity in which the student offers time, ener-

gy, knowledge, and creativity to address a specific need in the community and in turn receives professional advice and direction from the community, mentors, and faculty; (d) Critical thinking in which students utilize reflective and analytical thinking, and in which they develop creative and effective problem solving skills as they work in various situations; (e) Social responsibility as the students' multicultural environment allows them to expand their compassion and civic awareness; and (f) Experiential learning in which the students learn to take initiative and assume responsibility through their hands-on experiences.

Community Outcomes

Because of limited resources, low population, isolation, and a loss of job opportunities, the schools in many small, rural communities , especially in rural communities, have come to "symbolize the identity and survival" of those communities (Miller, 1997). Youth, through service-learning activities, have been engaged in community planning and development and have contributed to improvements in the environment, such as cleaning up a park or designing a new face for the city square. They have brought the community together through newly-established community shelters focusing on projects aimed at alleviating poverty in the community, tutored children on finances, supported low-income residents by planting a community garden, and organized food drives (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Henness, Ball, & Moncheski, 2013; Miller, 1997). Ross' (2012) nursing students impacted their elderly community center by providing one-on-one interactions with residents that were not formerly possible, and by bringing new and innovative ideas to provide solutions for issues in the program. In describing the community development approach to service learning, Hennes et al. (2013) note that a sustained focus is desired over a one-shot project in order to make a difference in issues such as hunger, environmental quality and literacy.

Student Learning Outcomes

The move to implement service learning into university coursework is further propelled by the results of numerous studies documenting benefits of service learning. For example, enhancement of student learning outcomes and increased citizenship skills have resulted from participation in service-learning experiences (Ehrlich, 2005; Meaney, Griffin, & Bohler, 2009; Strage, 2000). Insightful reflections on service experiences have contributed to increased self-efficacy, communication skills,

and acceptance of cultural diversity (Eyler & Giles, 1997; Lattanzi, Campbell, Dole, & Palombaro, 2011; Sipe, 2001). Schoenfeld (2004) also notes that through service learning, students have opportunity to become self-sufficient and improve deliberative, collaborative, and leadership skills.

With the many benefits of implementing service learning in coursework being validated, many professors are willing to embrace the methodology in their classes. However, one of the primary barriers to faculty members in planning and implementing the service activities is time–an element which is paramount in facilitating the community partnership, preparing the students, and implementing the service.

Several alternative approaches have been implemented to conserve faculty members' time. For example, one strategy is to use internal community members as potential partners. Using this model at Truman State University (Heckert, 2010), the definition of community is broadened to include staff, administrators, and students. The benefits of providing service to internal community members are that faculty time is preserved, and site problems and transportation issues are avoided. The primary drawback is lack of external connection. Another strategy applied at the same institution, with similar benefits and limitations, is to provide indirect service-learning opportunities in which students develop products/materials in their classes to share with external community members.

Student Leadership

One approach to directing service-learning experiences feasibly in university coursework includes training and using student leaders alongside faculty mentors.

Over the past several decades, campus activities have been transformed into intentional learning opportunities with peer leaders playing a significant role in enhancing the student experience in these settings (Wooten, Hunt, LeDuc, & Poskus, 2012). Historically, student leaders in the university have been involved with orientation and residence life activities (Ganser & Kennedy, 2012). In recent years, however, more opportunities have arisen for student leaders to provide services to meet the needs of diverse populations on today's campuses. Additionally, the roles now extend to academic support. The influence of effective peer leaders has been documented to show significant influence on students' success as undergraduates (Astin, 1993; Shook & Keup, 2012). Benefits to the institution have been cited to include providing a "cost-effi-

cient and yet high-quality alternative to better accommodate the large number of students who need services" (Shook & Keup, 2012, p. 12). Additionally, student leaders are more effective when their training includes the areas of self-esteem, problem solving, decision making, and interpersonal relations (Cuseo, 1991).

Several student leader models in service learning have been identified in recent literature. For example, at California State University at Monterey Bay (CSUMB), student leaders are prepared in a four-week intense training course and through a summer retreat. This training program for Student Leadership in Service Learning, (sl)2, allows students to focus on self-discovery, social justice, and team building. They form cohorts of fellow leaders who trust and understand each other. These leaders serve as a resource for campus and community. In addition to providing faculty assistance, one of the benefits touted by their student leaders is that "having a student leader in class shows that service learning is not just a bogus requirement" (Mitchell, Edwards, Macias-Diaz, & Weatherbee, 2006, p. 75). Other programs, such as Azusa Pacific (Hutchinson, Gurrola, Fetterly, & Fonts, 2006) and North Carolina State (Clayton & McClure, 2006), also have training for student leaders in service learning. North Carolina State offers a full graded honors course for their leaders in contrast to Azusa Pacific's three-month time-frame in which rising trainees complete a list of competencies.

Supporting the idea of student leaders in service-learning opportunities, Des Maria, Yang, and Farzanehkia (2000), assert that students who are simply assigned a teacher-designed service-learning project miss an opportunity for decision-making, action planning, and leadership development. Other interrelated themes that have emerged from previous studies with student leaders include positive contributions to academic performance, values, self-efficacy, leadership, and plans to participate in service after college (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, &Yee, 2000; Hecker, 2010).

Students taking a role in guiding the service-learning experiences are able to make decisions and develop leadership skills. The evidence suggests that this leadership is a great contributor to student learning, and their leadership roles serve as key to the successful implementation of large-scale reform (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Finally, Lattanzi et al. (2011) suggest that further research should focus on the peer mentorship experience and its ongoing effects on communication skills, initiative, and cooperation.

Based on the literature supporting the utilization of service-learning experiences in higher education courses, the benefits to the communities and students participating in the projects, and the exhortation of training student leaders, we implemented a program for preparing students as service-learning facilitators to work with faculty in implementation of various service-learning projects. The subsequent study describes the implementation of our Service-Learning Student Facilitators pilot program and the accompanying lessons learned from its successes and challenges.

Method

Participants

There were two cohorts of students ranging from freshmen to non-traditional undergraduates – four sophomores, five juniors, one senior, two non-traditional undergraduates who were juniors at the time of this program – and one post-baccalaureate student. Six students were in the fall group; seven in spring. Of the 13 students, 11 were female; two were male (one in each cohort).

Faculty members were very instrumental in initiating the program, as they nominated students for the training, or requested trained student facilitators for their projects. Each of the service-learning student facilitators worked closely with a faculty member, who became his/her service-learning faculty mentor.

Materials and Procedures

The participants evaluated the training program at three points during the semester–beginning, middle, and end. The first evaluation was given at the end of the initial training, which included two multiple choice questions; two questions, from which participants could circle up to seven statements indicating goals accomplished; six open-ended questions, and one rating scale to assess to what extent the training program had met their needs. (see Appendix A for the questions, statements, and scales used for the initial training program data collection).

At the mid-point, students completed a qualitative survey with eight open-ended questions asking them to reflect on their progress, support system, rewards, challenges, and relationships with faculty mentors. (see Appendix B for the questions used in the midpoint evaluation data collection).

At the end of the semester, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Students responded to a rating scale in which they evaluated four components of the program. They also

responded to ten open-ended questions. An additional question asked students to choose five of ten statements about theoretical knowledge or topics about service learning which they considered most useful for the next cohort. The rating scales included Likert items using ratings of 1-6, strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) (see Appendix C for the questions, statements, and rating scales used in the final evaluation data collection). All three of these data collections are outlined in Figure 1, Data Analysis Flow Chart. The questions, statements, and scales used for training and evaluation are available from the authors upon request.

Service-Learning Student Facilitator Training Procedures

Because the pilot program's fall cohort training began several weeks into the semester, it was very streamlined. The training program focused on ensuring they had the paperwork completed for their stipend, which was available for this introductory cohort; and making available the resources and the knowledge to successfully manage a semester-long service-learning project. We offered them multiple resources that came from our university's Office of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement (OSLCE), along with examples of service-learning programs at other universities. We explained to them how to best work with their faculty mentors, and we also created the Project Binder. Due to the time constraints, we were not able to discuss service learning from a broad theoretical perspective.

The Project Binder was a compendium of everything we had to give the new student facilitators, including multiple forms that they could use in the classroom. The first author and her student facilitator created many forms for their two service-learning classes which we chose to include for everyone to use, if they wished. Forms developed included a service-learning contract, dress code, a student learning measurement which examined learning that occurred both prior to and after the experience, and a student information sheet for community partners (these forms are available from the authors upon request). Many of these things seemed like common sense but were important to address. For instance, students needed to be trained in the proper attire for a community organization which can be different considering the diverse nature of the work for each organization. Also, the information sheet was particularly useful because it gave the community partners a chance to learn about the students who would volunteer with them.

For the pilot program, training was completed

Figure 1. Data Analysis Flow Chart
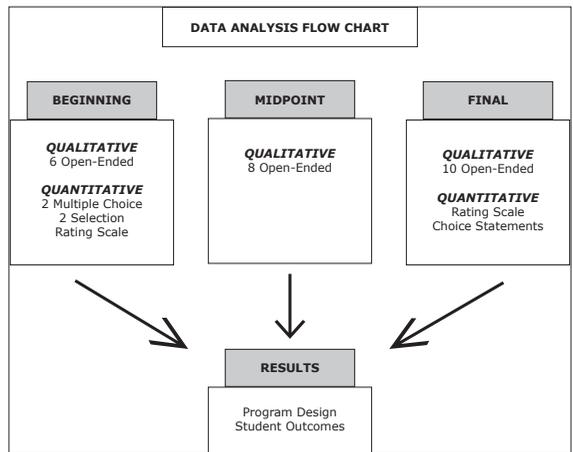
in two meetings. The first meeting consisted of introductions, and students received their Project Binder. Students were also introduced to Georgia Southern University's OSLCE website which contains the service-learning handbook with many ideas for reflection and assessment, as well as links to journals about service learning. Utilizing the feedback from the program, this handbook is continually updated with new information.

We instructed the participants about the stages of service learning. Multiple sources cite this differently, but for the purposes of this program we have created a model we call PERA which includes Preparation, Experience, Reflection and Assessment. Other sources also include celebration and publication as part of service learning. At the end of the first meeting, we gave facilitators a worksheet to complete describing what their project looked like using the PERA model. For the second meeting, they came with these worksheets completed and the time was exclusively used to brainstorm each project with the other facilitators. This interaction provided them greater understanding about service learning; and it allowed them opportunity to troubleshoot problems with any part of their action plan, and to coordinate collaborations with other students and classrooms. After this meeting, we informed them that we were available for support and assistance, but we would not formally meet with them again until the midpoint and final evaluations of their project.

Data from the pilot semester were then used to shape the training program for the spring semester. The training varied in content and what we wished to accomplish with the facilitators. It also varied in the preparation for the facilitators in that, unlike the fall cohort who were awarded a stipend, the spring cohort volunteered to be fully trained and hired in the next semester.

Student Project Descriptions

There were a variety of projects that spanned multiple disciplines and departments on campus. Examples of student involvement in class projects included creating children's books in Spanish for the local Hispanic community; working at the local food bank to understand the effects of unemployment and the recession on homelessness, poverty and hunger; teaching computer skills to older adults at the local library; and improving access to a community garden for improved nutrition. (see Appendix D for a description of all of the projects). A comprehensive list and description of the projects are available from the authors upon request.

Results

Initial Evaluation

A majority of students thought the appropriate amount of time was spent on training with Student #10 saying that she would have been willing to receive more training. We also asked students about multiple benchmarks that they reached after the first meeting and the second training meeting. The students were given a list of goals after each of the two meetings and were asked to check all of those that applied to them. By the end of the first meeting, student facilitators indicated on their lists that they gained an "awareness of variations between other projects" and "clarified elements of their own project." This was agreed upon by all of the facilitators. They also agreed with the statement that they "were able to meet other facilitators." They felt moderately prepared with the elements that allowed them to "develop a timeline of personal due dates, get introduced to resources from the OSLCE, and leave with an understanding of what to

do for the second meeting." Some students felt that what was missing from the first meeting was a complete understanding of the four elements of service learning as it was taught. However, after the second meeting, a hundred percent of those who answered the post-second meeting analysis agreed that they were able to fully meet and know the other facilitators, they were aware of the challenges of their project, they fully understood the four elements, they clarified their own elements of the project, they developed a timeline, and they became comfortable with all of the resources they had. There was a slight decrease with an understanding of what to do for their next meeting, which would be their midpoint evaluation meeting. Table 1 indicates the number of students who perceived each of the specific goals accomplished. The ratings (1-6) of the training program overall were similar with mean scores of 5.17 and 5.43 for fall and spring cohorts, respectively.

Midpoint Evaluation

At the midpoint of the Service-Learning Student Facilitators Program, students in both cohorts were asked eight open-ended questions. For the first question, the students were asked, "Please succinctly define service learning for someone who knows nothing about this topic." The raters examined all definitions of service learning submitted from both cohorts. Through inter-rater reliability conducted among two service-learning faculty mentors and a service-learning graduate assistant, the definitions were grouped into three categories: good, average, or poor. Each of the three authors independently rated the students' definitions of service learning. A good definition included the idea that service learning is different from volunteering and is related to

Table 1. Number of Goals Accomplished

Number of Goals Accomplished	Fall	Spring
Goals Accomplished after First Meeting		
Met other student facilitators	5	5
Awareness of variations between other projects	6	6
Developed understanding of four elements of s-l	2	6
Clarified elements of own project	6	3
Developed timeline of personal due dates	4	5
Introduced to resources from office	4	5
Left meeting understanding what to do for next meeting	4	7
Goals Accomplished after Second Meeting		
Gained clear understanding of other projects	5	5
Awareness of key challenges of s-l projects	5	6
Developed understanding of four elements of s-l	5	5
Clarified elements of own project	5	6
Developed timeline of personal due dates	5	4
Became comfortable with the resources from office	5	4
Left meeting understanding what to do for next meeting	4	6

the course, an average definition of the service included one of these components but not both, and a poor definition did not link the ideas of service, learning, and the relationship to course content. A total of 13 student definitions of service learning were rated at the midpoint of the program. In the fall cohort, one was rated as good, three were average, and two were poor. In the spring cohort, two were good, four were average, and one was poor. Examples of a good definition are, as follows:

> Service learning is community service that also includes specific learning objectives that are incorporated into coursework. Unlike volunteering, S-L allows students to connect community service to classroom objectives and critically analyze what was learned (Student #1).

> Service learning uses service as an important aspect of the educational experience. It provides an opportunity to link theoretical academic understandings in a practical, real world setting through service. The individual is learning about him/herself and the local community. A good service-learning experience is well integrated into the course rather than seeming disjointed from the rest of the course (Student #2).

Examples of average definitions included:

> Service learning is a way to teach students that integrated community service into the curriculum" (Student #3), and "Service learning bridges the gap between the community and the classroom through service opportunities with reflection and assessment" (Student #4).

Definitions ranked as poor were:

> Service learning is using your skills in your area of study to serve the community with needs they could not currently meet themselves" (Student #5) and "Volunteering for a cause and learning at the same time (Student #6).

When asked, "At the midpoint, which aspect of your individual service-learning project has taken the most time and attention," all of the responses mentioned planning or scheduling, including contacting students, creating a calendar and organizing project groups. One student cited researching and learning about the topic as the most time consuming.

The next question asked, "At the midpoint, which aspect of your individual service-learning project has been the most challenging (not necessarily the most time consuming)?" Responses included communication (2), managing/planning/coordinating (3), legal aspects, and working with multiple community partners or large groups of individuals. Three comments focused on the attitudes of the college students: "negative reaction of students re: SL," "students do not care and commit," and "encouraging students to get excited."

The next question was, "What aspect of the service-learning project has been the most rewarding?" Answers were varied and included making a difference/giving back (4), seeing dedication, enthusiasm, and excitement (4), spreading awareness, and seeing relationships develop (including developing a relationship with a faculty mentor).

The importance of the faculty mentor was evident in answers to the next question: "In what ways has the Faculty Mentor supported you and your ideas?" All 13 respondents voiced positive comments, including: "wonderful" (2), "great" (2), "very supportive" (2), "open and easy to work with," " guided me but empowered me to do a lot on my own," "allowed me to take the reins and lead the class," "showing me different ways to manage my time." According to one student:

> My faculty mentor has supported me by giving myself the leeway to oversee the project in the way that I best see fit. She has afforded me a lot of respect and wiggle room to truly lead this project and that kind of confidence is apparent to the student volunteers. She has also been with me every step of the way in terms of guidance, advice and strategic direction which has been invaluable (Student #7).

Regarding the question, "What information do you feel you lack, or could have used, in getting to this point of your project," four student facilitators responded, "None." Two people in the fall cohort said that they suggested starting earlier in the semester. Three respondents named more clarification on what students need to know, knowing more about the project, and that students need to have a clear definition of what service learning is. One person stated that they lacked time management skills, and two people named issues specifically with their project (legal aspects, basic knowledge about gardening).

The last two questions pertained to "advice for future student facilitators, and advice for program administrators to help improve the program for future cohorts." For future student facilitators, early and constant communication was mentioned three times; one respondent suggested a communication log. Flexibility was suggested twice. One person admonished "to stay on top of things" and another suggested "arranging a time to talk to the class without the professor present so that student concerns could be aired." Two pieces of advice were to "be dedicated and believe in the course," and "stay excited about the work you are doing; remember what a great impact it can and will have."

When asked if they had advice for program administrators, two students stated, "None." Six people suggested a combination of meetings (less on group meetings, more individual meetings, weekly or bi-weekly meetings), and "have a social or two to improve networking and motivation." One respondent suggested considering the student's enthusiasm for the project, and to focus efforts on upper division classes. One person suggested clarification on how involved the student facilitators should be in the actual community service events, or if their role is pre-post planning and evaluation. Two people suggested more information on financial issues (funding for group projects as well as the payroll process).

A final word of encouragement came from Student #7: "Plan, plan, plan. Your plan will fall apart so be flexible and look for opportunities instead of obstacles."

Final Evaluations

The final evaluations submitted by the service learning student facilitators in both spring and fall groups included rating scales and open-ended questions. The rating scales of 1-6, strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6), included questions about their training and binders. In both semesters the students rated their training very highly; no students scored any items about their training below four. Mean scores were derived for each of the ratings.

The fall cohort rated the extent the training "helped me accomplish my goals" slightly lower than the spring cohort (fall M = 5.17; spring M = 5.67). The fall students unanimously assigned a "strongly agree" rating of six for item three (fall M = 6; spring M = 5.5), "The Student Facilitators program coordinators communicated frequently and effectively with me."

The students consistently rated the third item, "The Student Facilitators program helped me ob-

tain the necessary resources to complete my project," at a five or six, indicating that they were given the appropriate tools to execute their projects, thus leading to the success of the project (fall M = 5.5; spring M = 5.67).

The item related to their project binder received the most diverse ratings (fall M = 5.33; spring M = 4.75). No students rated this item below a four. The mean ratings are shown in Figure 2.

Although no students rated the item related to their project binder below a four, there were several comments on the open-ended item, which allowed them to express their suggestions for modifications or improvements. Some of the comments included, "(the binder) was not particularly helpful; it was easier to look at everything online/electronically and organize my own system," "(needs to be) less intimidating," "larger than necessary and could probably be condensed to five solid tabs," "physical notebook did not jive with my style." More positive notes included that most students found forms and materials helpful, and it was suggested to create a guide instead.

When asked about their primary roles working with the community partners, most of the student facilitators saw themselves as liaisons between the university and the community partners. They coordinated the events, scheduled the activities, and helped develop the service opportunities. In one of the projects, the student did not actually work with the community—the professor communicated with the partners. The challenges for working with community partners included scheduling issues and constructing feasible projects given the needs/requests of the community partner. One facilitator had an issue with students photographing sensitive populations, and had to work to correct the problem and regain the trust of the community partners.

The most strengthening aspects of working

Figure 2. Mean Score of Ratings on Final Evaluations
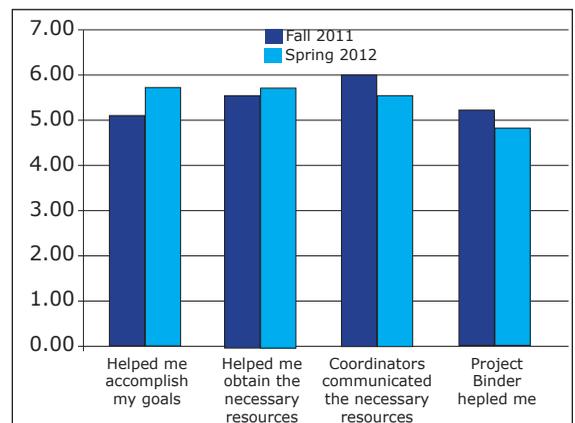
with the faculty mentors, for some of the facilitators, included being part of the class. For others, being able to keep one another accountable and focused on the project was strengthening. One student reported, "We were opposite, so we could work to our own strengths" (Student #8). One student faced a challenge with communicating with the faculty member and felt that this breakdown hurt the credibility of the facilitator's position. On a positive note that demonstrates a strong relationship with the faculty mentor, another student wrote, "When students can see a trusting relations [sic] between professor and facilitator, they lend a great deal of authority" (Student #7). Student facilitators indicated that they received respect from their faculty mentors, who also made sure the students respected them. They also developed a sense of ownership and confidence from the faculty mentor—allowing them "to make executive decisions," "present to the class without being interrupted," and "write freely." Several of the facilitators felt they were treated as equal by their mentors in the project, which boosted their motivation to maximize the experience for the participants. Others were appreciative of the faculty mentors' guidance, step-by-step through the project.

Working with peers presented both rewards and challenges. The facilitators felt they were liaisons between the faculty mentor and the students participating in the projects, were instrumental in enriching student behaviors, were able to address student questions/concerns, and were the "face of service learning" for the participants. They felt they were bringing structure and organization for the experiences, were creative influences and approachable resources, and aided in focusing the efforts of the students. One student reported, "I was able to get them excited about being engaged" (Student #9).

Another facilitator's only communication with the students in the project was by phone. The challenges included how to remain professional when working with peers, communicating to the group with so many individualized projects and specific needs, and time management.

When answering, "How did your faculty mentor give you, the student facilitator, validity in the classroom (when leading and/or teaching students)," it was evident from the student facilitator responses that they felt like this experience contributed to a high level of respect and responsibility. One student felt treated as equal in the project, and two other comments included, "(The faculty mentor) gave me leeway to make executive decisions, giving me a sense of ownership and confidence that is evident to the students;" and "(The faculty mentor) allowed me to have the floor, take control, and speak directly to students." One student was glad that her faculty mentor allowed her to teach, and then just filled in missing pieces rather than interrupt her.

In reflecting on what resources, beyond what was provided, would have aided them during their semester, the students had quite a variety of suggestions. Some of those include: how to apply for grants; training in getting IRB approval; releasing student work/publications; gaining more knowledge about the community partner; legal aspects such as of photographing and releasing personal data; more examples of service-learning; and training on Google docs, calendars, and other scheduling templates/resources.

Some of the other recommendations for improvement included the following: more bonding time with faculty mentor, more focus on real world situations vs. theory, and differentiation between what is or what is not considered a service-learning project.

When asked to select the five most useful topics from 10 suggested, the students chose, What Is Service Learning (definition and the four elements of service learning)? Defining the Roles of the Student Facilitator, the Faculty Mentor, the Community Partner; Communication Expectations and Issues Within Service-Learning Projects; Impact of Service Learning (versus volunteerism or community service); and Problem Resolution and Managing Divergent Goals.

Final remarks from the student facilitators about their experience demonstrated the connection between the service and learning in their own content areas. For example, a marketing research student gained valuable knowledge and application through her project; another student stated, "My experience in the project (writing boilerplates) was beneficial in my class work (developing a sales pitch)."

Discussion

Lessons Learned

As we progressed through the two training sessions, we learned various lessons regarding the process. These lessons are shared below.

Make program decisions based on the data. Students trained in the spring were better prepared to address issues faced by facilitators due to the experiences accumulated from data from the fall cohort. As in all programs, it is beneficial to pay attention to the feedback and data from participants in order to make informed decisions for modifications and improvements.

Immerse the students in the definition of service learning and ensure that they develop understanding. After two semesters of conducting the program where students were trained and certified to be service-learning student facilitators during the same semester, the lessons we learned and the feedback we obtained showed us that facilitators still did not have a comprehensive understanding of the definition of service learning. In order to ensure that our student facilitators were fully equipped to intelligently speak about all that service learning entails, we further developed and clarified the definition of service learning that we wanted students to use during this semester, including the understanding that service learning's first benefit must be to a non-profit or public agency. To measure how much students learned about the definition of service learning and how they implemented this knowledge through the project, we added a reflection paper relating their understanding, what they learned, and what they thought about the whole process.

Provide for adequate communication on the status of the projects. For the spring cohort, we asked for a chronological timeline of events and notes to demonstrate how facilitators managed and ran the projects. This allowed our students to better manage their time with projects, keep the professors up-to-date on the progress, and allowed the OSLCE to be informed in the event that an intervention was needed.

Provide training in professionalism. We realized that many of our students encountered situations which were new to them as they worked with peers, professors, and community partners. Although dress code expectations were covered, we recognized that the topic of professionalism needed to be more fully developed in subsequent training sessions to better equip our students to deal with the various situations that may arise. For example, one student didn't understand that permission was needed to share photographs of the project, and another requested mentoring in professionalism in working with peers.

Incorporate "bonding" time. We heard from the facilitators that they needed more social activities and interactions from which they could form friendships and glean from each other's experiences. Additionally, we discovered that the facilitators and faculty mentors had little time to meet and get to know each other before beginning their work together.

Design/allow user-friendly materials. The actual materials that they used, and the materials from the experience they designed are no longer restricted to the project binder, allowing participants to turn in their materials in various formats. We determined that the students' various learning styles were not always conducive to a binder, and that it was more ecologically and economically sound to provide resources in a variety of formats, such as electronic versions.

Discourage students from being facilitators in a course in which they are enrolled. In the fall cohort two student facilitators were enrolled in the course which they were facilitating. The perception from other students was that the student facilitator may have had an advantage in the course. As a result, we felt that in future projects the student leaders should not be enrolled in the class while facilitating.

Develop sustainable programs which are not dependent on stipends. We learned that awarding a stipend was not sustainable, and we discovered that students were willing to work in these leadership positions as volunteers. As a result, the student leaders developed a deeper understanding of service as they participated in this capacity, as is evidenced in reflections shared in the results section. Additionally, they were able to apply their skills from this work to their own coursework/career paths.

Embrace the rewards and benefits. An overarching theme that resonated was that the student facilitators' relationships with the faculty mentors were very rewarding. Beyond their service-learning projects, the research, networking, and employment opportunities for the students were added benefits. In fact, one student was hired by her community partner, and another got a job working with the exact population as her initial project. One of the most striking outcomes of this program, as in other student leadership programs (Mitchell, Edward, Macias-Diz, & Weatherbee, 2006; Clayton & McClure, 2006), was the fact that we were able to create teaching colleagues, and enable student leaders to work in partnership with faculty on campus.

Limitations

One limitation in this study includes the small sample size—faculty from various colleges nominated facilitators to be trained for the service-learning components. This study is unique for our campus; therefore, it is important for future research to consider other programs and contexts at other universities. Despite the limitations of this small study, the attempt to reach the didactic goal in this project helps inform other universities interested in implementing similar programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This project resulted in a successful Service-Learning Student Facilitator Program being established at our university, evidenced by the fact that faculty members utilized the student leaders as they successfully implemented service-learning projects in their courses. The lessons learned during this pilot training period are beneficial not only to our program as it continues to operate and expand, but also for other institutions as they explore the idea of training student leaders for service-learning projects.

In addition to the implications from our lessons learned, the recommendations for the Service-Learning Student Facilitators Program include expanding program marketing beyond faculty recommendations to other means of recruiting students, and building the program to a point that faculty from any department who are interested in obtaining a student facilitator can be matched up with a trained student from their department. Additionally, we recommend furthering students' knowledge and understanding of service learning by expanding the non-credit course piloted in the last semester, Leadership Through Service-Learning, to a two-semester commitment with the first semester including a 12-week course covering multiple topics related to volunteerism and service learning, and the second semester including a certification project.

Many lessons were learned from this pilot project, contributing substantial improvements to the Georgia Southern University Service Learning Student Facilitator training program. It is the hope of the authors that this student leadership program will continue to expand the awareness and understanding of service learning and permeate in courses across all disciplines on our campus. It is also our desire to add to the broader service-learning community by encouraging faculty in other institutions to embrace this model of student leadership as they implement service-learning experiences in their courses.

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About the Authors

Jerri Kropp is an associate professor in the School of Human Ecology at Georgia Southern University. Nancy McBride Arrington is an assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Georgia Southern University. Veena Shankar served as a graduate assistant in the Office of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement during the development of this manuscript.

Appendix A. Training Program Evaluation Questions

1) The initial training for your pilot cohort was approximately 4 hours long, divided between two meetings. How much time do you think should be spent on training the next cohort of students?
   a. More than 4 hours
   b. The same: 4 hours
   c. Less than 4 hours

2) The first meeting included faculty, and focused on the broad goals and requirements of the program.

Please circle items on the list below that you feel the first meeting accomplished. Leave items that were not thoroughly accomplished in the first meeting un-circled.

   a. I got to know the other Student Facilitators in my cohort
   b. I developed my awareness of variations between service-learning projects
   c. I developed my understanding of the four key elements of a service-learning project
   d. I clarified the essential elements of my own service-learning project
   e. I developed a time-line for my Facilitator training, and a sense of what elements are due at what time
   f. I was introduced to the resources I will need from the Service-Learning office
   g. I left the meeting with a clear sense of what to do next, and what to prepare for the second meeting

3) The second meeting had reduced faculty participation, and focused on developing the four key elements of your individual service-learning projects.

Please circle items on the list below that you feel we had thoroughly accomplished by the end of the second meeting. Leave items that were not thoroughly accomplished by the second meeting un-circled (in other words, that you feel remain to be fulfilled).

   a. I gained a clear understanding of the other projects being accomplished in my cohort
   b. I developed my awareness of key challenges in service-learning projects
   c. I developed my understanding of the four key elements of a service-learning project
   d. I clarified the essential elements of my own service-learning project
   e. I developed a time-line for my Facilitator training, and a sense of what elements are due at what time
   f. I became comfortable with the resources I will need from the Service-Learning office
   g. I left the meeting with a clear sense of what to do next, and what will be required for the mid-point review.

4) Please recommend improvements we can make in the content and organization of the initial trainings:

_____
_____
_____

5) How much time do you think students should set aside for meeting with their professors during the initial 1-3 meetings at the beginning of the semester?
   a. 2 hours
   b. 3 hours
   c. 4 hours
What items/issues do you think are most important for the faculty mentor and the student facilitator to discuss during this time?

_____
_____
_____

6) What other information did you wish you had known before, during or after the training sessions? (Maybe this was something that you had to search for the answers independently, but might be useful for all students to know during training.)

_____
_____
_____

7) What did you like best or least about the methods of communication between the Student Facilitator program coordinators and yourself (e-mailing, OrgSync, etc.)? Was there anything that could have been improved regarding how you were given information?

_____
_____
_____

8) What did you like about the Project Binder? Was there anything else about the binder that needed to be included, changed or organized differently?

_____
_____
_____

9) Based on the program overall, at this point in time, do you think the Student Facilitators program has met your needs in helping you accomplish your goals for your service-learning projects, and this student leadership position? Choose 1-6 based on the scale below: _____ (your response here)

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Agree

10) Please provide any other comments or suggestions to help improve this program in the future:

_____
_____
_____

Appendix B. Mid-Point Evaluation Questions
1. Please succinctly define service-learning for someone who knows nothing about this topic.

2. At the mid-point, which aspect of your individual service-learning project has taken the most time and attention?

3. At the mid-point, which aspect of your individual service-learning project has been the most challenging (not necessarily the most time consuming)?

4. At the mid-point, which aspect of your individual service-learning project has been the most rewarding?

5. In what way(s) has your faculty mentor supported you and your efforts?

Appendix C. Final Evaluation Questions

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly Agree

a. The Student Facilitators program successfully helped me to accomplish my goals for my service-learning project. _____ (Choose 1-6)

b. The Student Facilitators program helped me obtain the necessary resources to complete my project. _____ (Choose 1-6)

c. The Student Facilitators program coordinators communicated frequently and effectively with me. _____ (Choose 1-6)

d. The Project Binder requirement helped me organize my project and will make the project more easy to reproduce in the future. _____ (Choose 1-6)

The following questions are free response or choosing from a selection of choices:

e. What was your primary role when working with the community partners? What was the most important or challenging aspect of this relationship?

f. What was your primary role when working with your faculty mentor? What was the most strengthening aspect of this relationship?

g. What was your primary role when working with the students in your classroom? What was the most important or challenging element of this relationship?

h. How did your faculty mentor give you, the student facilitator, validity in the classroom (when leading and/or teaching students)?

i. Can you suggest resources, beyond what you were provided, that would have aided you this semester? This might include a reading on a particular topic, or a form or hand-out you developed during the project. Feel free to make a suggestion without providing specific resources (i.e. "a reading on peer leadership" or "a Google calendar template").

j. What theoretical knowledge or topics about service learning would be useful to know at the start of the project? (Please choose the five that you think are the most important)

a. What is service-learning? (Definition and the four elements of service-learning)

b. Define the roles of the Student Facilitator, the Faculty mentor, the Community Partner

c. Personal Identity/ the student's identity as it pertains to doing service-learning work

d. Cultural differences and how differences might impact service-work

e. Communication expectations and issues within service-learning projects

f. Peer Leadership and being a teaching colleague

g. Impact of service-learning (versus volunteerism or community service)

h. Inclusion in service-learning: non-traditional students and students with disabilities

i. Problem resolution and managing divergent goals

j. Power and privilege as it pertains to service-learning

k. Please suggest modifications/improvements to each aspect of the training:

a. The Training Program:

b. The Mid-point evaluation:

c. The Final evaluation:

d. Communication during the Program:

e. The Project Binder:

Appendix D. Description of Service-Learning Projects

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences — *Introduction to American Government*
The student facilitator assisted the Atlanta Mexican Consulate with their Mobile Documentation Program during the Consulate's five day visit to Statesboro. Students served approximately 1000 people, assisting with parking and directing people, providing Xeroxing support for the consulate staff, providing childcare to families, assisting with English language interpretation, and cleaning the church at the end of each day. Students in the course first learned reasons for Mexican migration to the United States, the value of immigrant workers to Georgia and about the services foreign consulates provide to their citizens in other countries.

College of Health and Human Sciences — *Community Nutrition*
The student facilitated a course where students investigated the available food resources provided by the local Farmer's Market and created recipes and informational flyers as educational materials for the public.

College of Science and Mathematics; *Environmental Biology*

The student facilitated a varied selection of service learning with two sections of Environmental Biology and hundreds of students. Each student completed at least one three-hour shift at one of the many locations, such as … …..the students then submitted a comprehensive paper, containing both reflection and assessment, which provided connections to the course material.

College of Education; *Methods I Practicum*

The student piloted a personal service-learning project in her first grade practicum field placement in order to validate using service-learning in that setting. Her project included mentoring an advanced first-grader with enrichment activities in order to address the needs that accompany the challenge of the young students' sixth-grade reading level. Based on results from this experience, she helped the COE faculty mentor revise the syllabus of another course with a field placement to include an optional service-learning component. Additionally, she visited the class with the revised syllabus at the beginning of the following semester, presented results and successes of her service-learning experience, facilitated a discussion of possibilities for implementing service-learning in their setting, and encouraged them to select the optional service-learning component.

Provost Office & College of Business Administration — *First Year Experience: Global Citizens and Economics in a Global Society*

The service-learning student facilitator helped students to understand the effects of unemployment and the recession of the economy on homelessness, poverty and hunger as related to macroeconomics. The facilitator organized students to work at the Food Bank and the Mexican Consulate for at least one three hour shift.

College of Health and Human Sciences — *Children in Hospitals and First Year Experience: Animal Assisted Therapy*

The student coordinated students in two classes. In the Animal Assisted Therapy class, students spent ten hours either working with a therapeutic horseback riding program for children with disabilities or with therapy dogs and their handlers. In the Children in Hospitals class, students spent ten hours working with one of four sites devoted to raising awareness and funding for programs such as the Ronald McDonald House or Special Olympics. The student facilitator and the faculty member also developed the forms described earlier that all facilitators in the program now use.

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences — *Elementary Spanish I and Spanish Culture*

Students in this Spanish course created children's books in Spanish for the local Hispanic community. The student facilitator prepared students for the project, and facilitated the binding and distribution of the books.

Provost Office — *First Year Experience: Global Citizen*

This class focused on "how access to education around the world was related to happiness (or life satisfaction)". The service learning project asked the students to work two hours per week at the local Boys and Girls Club in their afternoon program serving children from disadvantaged homes where educational attainment is not always a priority. Students could choose the activity they liked to supervise, such as helping with homework or leading a play activity. A goal was for college students to realize that there are populations here locally who need help and encouragement in achieving their educational goals. This facilitator also worked with another Global Citizens course with a separate theme. This course involved learning about the cultural differences of minority groups, which is a necessity of learning to adapt in a global environment.

College of Health and Human Sciences, *Community Health Nursing*

The student facilitated ten groups of students who investigated a spill in the Ogeechee River and the resulting effects on health for different populations living along the river. She served as a point person for communication, mediation and information.

College of Business Administration, *Principles of Marketing*

The student facilitated a marketing needs assessment project with students who completed multiple hours during the semester working to find data to assist a new community agency non-profit called University Entrepreneurship Zone. They helped house and incubate new entrepreneurs by providing meeting spaces and office equipment at their facility. The students assisted in conducting market research and find potential contacts to expand their outreach.

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences — *Aging in America*

The student facilitated students who worked one on one to teach computer skills to older adults at the local library. This service learning opportunity allowed students to develop relationships with older adults and see course content come to life in through their interactions, helping to break down unrealistic stereotypes of older adults as frail individuals with limited capacities for learning new skills and allowing them to see that older adults can be active and interested in learning new things.

Provost Office — *First Year Experience: Global Citizens*

The student facilitated a variety of community events that students could choose from involving awareness and education, as well as some fundraising, for global issues. Events included Heifer International Promotional tables, The Great American Cleanup and a benefit dinner hosted by Barberitos, a local restaurant.

College of Health and Human Sciences — *Nutrition & Diet Therapy and Meal Management*

The student facilitated two nutrition courses about improving access to locally grown produce through community gardens for improved nutrition.