

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SERVICE-LEARNING: THE CASE OF COMMUNITY-BASED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

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The impetus to develop a service-learning program may come from any number of sources. It may be driven by pressure on your institution from the surrounding community for your school to take an active, positive role as a citizen in the community. Perhaps some of the faculty at your institution are seeking an innovative strategy to improve their ability to engage students in learning. The president or other administrators might be prodding faculty toward more authentic learning to improve student academic and civic skills and to increase their employability. A crisis in your immediate surroundings may precipitate increased action by the college in the neighborhood. Whatever the stimulus to service, the keys to building a sustainable high-quality service-learning program are in the planning of the program and in the significance of the needs it is designed to address.

This article has three parts. First, we present an outline of effective practices for sustaining service-learning programs over time. Following these recommendations, we have provided a case study of a well-developed service-learning program that focuses efforts on community-based watershed management; these programs are operated through the University of Oregon's Community Service Center of Oregon. Finally, we leave you with additional resources that will provide support should you pursue service-learning as a strategy in community-based watershed management.

GETTING STARTED

With careful forethought and strategic planning, you can make great strides in ensuring your service-learning program is successful before it is ever launched. From the outset, defining the meaning of service-learning for your program and ensuring that your program follows practices that make for high-quality service-learning experiences will help to ensure its acceptance and longevity.

The Corporation for National Service¹ uses the definition provided in the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which defines service-learning as an educational method:

- “under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- which is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community;
- which helps foster civic responsibility;
- which is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participant is enrolled; and
- which provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.”

While the definition is useful and comprehensive, recent research indicates that high-quality service-learning programs build on this by employing one or both of the following strategies:

- engaging students in sustained service – service of high frequency and significant duration;
- relating student service directly to their academic coursework.²

In practice this means that service activities for students should take place throughout the semester, or for longer if possible. Courses in which students spend two-thirds of the semester on library research alone will not provide the direct benefits that a more equitable blend of research and service can provide. In addition, students' service and coursework need to be aligned – students in a Communications course, for example, might engage in service to a watershed management

project by writing a brochure, creating a web site, or producing a film about the project. Communications students should not be testing water quality or tracking fish populations as a part of their Communications coursework. Using these strategies to engender high quality service-learning will enhance the outcomes for all parties – students, community and faculty.

Making certain that your service-learning program is academically rigorous and engages students in significant service is not sufficient to sustain your program. Successful programs make use of multiple practices and strategies, tailored to their own circumstances. There are a variety of effective practices that can help you to develop, maintain, and grow these high-quality service-learning programs. Many of these effective strategies follow.

Ensure that your program’s mission aligns with your institution’s mission. Nearly every college and university mission statement includes language that will support your program. Institutions of higher education are generally founded on the tripartite mission of research, teaching, and service and this is precisely what your service-learning program is designed to do. As you craft the mission of your program, review the institutional mission and if possible, make certain that your program’s mission mirrors the broader institutional mission. A program that speaks to the mission of the institution is easier to sell to the president, faculty, and students.

Involve students in the planning and implementation of your program. Students should have an integral role in all levels of decisionmaking in the program. They can assist with preliminary research of the needs of local watershed groups, help to establish relationships with local agencies, or have a role in the coordination of service activities. Remember that a program developed in conjunction with students will be more likely to receive their support. Explore multiple avenues to gain student involvement. Students may become involved through academic courses, work-study jobs, student environmental organizations, as individual volunteers, or through fraternity, sorority, or other organized groups.

Work closely with your community partners to involve them as equals. A reciprocal relationship with the community in which students serve is an integral part of any high-quality service-learning program. The beauty of this authentic partnership is that it can become a vehicle for sustainability as well. If the community partner involved in your program has an equal role in its implementation, your program is more likely to meet community-identified needs, thus becoming more

valuable to your partner. Programs that “do service to” the community rarely last; programs that work together with the community to solve problems do. Plan your program with an eye on being there for the duration. Strong partnerships take time to build and to grow, and the community needs to know that the university will be there after one or two semesters in order for them to fully invest in the program. Strong partnerships require that faculty or staff make the effort to develop trusting relationships with their partners in the community. While students are essential players and need to develop their own relationships in the community, faculty and staff have (or are believed to have) institutional authority and resources.

Faculty also needs support. Carefully designed faculty development activities are a cornerstone of a high quality program, so you need to involve faculty in the planning. What is the best way to give them the information? What do they need to know, and what do they already know? Are there faculty seasoned in service-learning who could mentor the less-experienced? Do they have the resources they need to understand this teaching methodology? Do they need help determining placements that coincide with course objectives? All these questions need to be answered, and some faculty development activities planned, before you launch your program.

Clear communication is critical. You must be able to describe and market the value of your program in 50-100 words or less without the listener’s eyes glazing over. The ability to concisely communicate information about your program in clear terms using dynamic language, free of jargon, will do wonders for you as you market your program to people on your campus, your community, and potential funders. If you need help, consider working with students in marketing classes to develop your “spiel.” Be sure to include your key partners so that they are given due credit, and your efforts with them are publicized. Once developed, encourage your partners to use it. Be sure your dean and department are kept abreast of the progress you are making, and don’t be afraid to spread it beyond your campus.

Evaluation is the key to determining and being able to communicate your success. Use evaluation not only as a way to understand what is working with your program, but to gather data on the impact your program is making on your students and in the community. Formative evaluation can give you valuable information on the process of your program, and point out areas to improve. Be sure to involve all stakeholders in its design and implementation. There is a wealth of tools, instruments, and information on evaluating service-

learning programs. No need to reinvent the wheel. Summative evaluation will help you determine what your program actually did in the community. Utilize university resources when possible, and remember that undergraduate, masters, and doctoral level students all have something to gain by conducting the research. Remember that to isolate your program's impact may require some effort up front in the evaluation design; but the results will be well worth it, for you will have real results that you can clearly communicate to your president, faculty, board, and the community. The results of your summative evaluation will tout your program's success.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. This is an old line, but it holds true for anyone seeking funding for a service-learning program. While many programs begin with one grant, it is critical to diversify your funding base as your program develops. Look to local businesses and corporations to become a partner in your program. When you approach them, note that there is something for them to gain: positive publicity in the community as a partner in your important project. Remember, too, that all campuses have to allot seven percent of their work-study budget for community service activities, which could pay for student coordinators for your program, and give you an ongoing source of staff. Plot your strategy for the institutionalization of your program within the university budget, perhaps through the use of student activity fees, or through alumni support.

Finally, start small and build on your strengths. It is natural to want to roll your program out on a large scale right away, but if you are just starting out, beginning more modestly allows you the luxury of determining what works and being able to fix it with less scrutiny and risk. It may be that you begin with one class, one faculty member, and one project, gradually increasing the faculty involvement within the department. Or, begin with one of the hard sciences departments, and involve other departments over time. Systematically and honestly review what is working and what isn't, and adjust accordingly. By building on your strengths, and allowing yourself time to learn the best way to run your program, you will build in an easier path of growth and success, and ultimately, sustainability.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

In this next section, we describe service-learning efforts that address watershed health in Oregon. We begin by describing Oregon's unique context in terms of environmental issues and new emphasis on service-learning. We then describe a particular organization addressing community issues through service-learning,

and the key partnerships needed to achieve this. Finally, we provide several lessons learned as a result of this work.

The Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds

A driving force behind the integration of watershed planning and service-learning in Oregon is the "Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds" and its response to environmental conditions in the state of Oregon. Since the early 1990s, there have been a series of petitions to list various runs of salmon along the entire west coast as endangered or threatened. Even as these petitions weave their way through a series of legal and bureaucratic decisions related to the federal Endangered Species Act, the state of Oregon, under the leadership of Governor John Kitzhaber, has taken proactive measures to address the conditions leading to the decreased populations of salmon.

This effort, called the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (the Oregon Plan), has several components. First, it utilizes grassroots, community-based watershed councils as key implementers and local decisionmakers. Therefore, volunteers are essential to the successful implementation of the Oregon Plan. Second, assessment of the health of each watershed and sub-watershed is being conducted in order to prioritize restoration activities. Third, restoration projects are being completed. Fourth, to assess the success of actions, monitoring of restoration efforts and water quality is being conducted. Finally, coordination of efforts is being conducted at the local and state level to ensure that agencies' efforts are comprehensive and effective.

The Oregon Plan addresses a great need in the state and has set forth a comprehensive multilevel strategy to address that need. Implementing the Oregon Plan requires collaborative efforts among government agencies at all levels; citizens, both adults and youth; and institutions of higher education. Service-learning in support of the Oregon Plan clearly meets several key features of successful service-learning programs:

- University of Oregon students are addressing a true need that stakeholders have identified, and ³
- the students are working to complete projects in collaboration with local citizens and stakeholders.

The Oregon University System and Participatory Learning

At the same time that the state has been developing the Oregon Plan, the Oregon University System has been

reviewing its role and support of “participatory learning experiences,”⁴ a general term used to describe a variety of applied learning opportunities. Participatory learning experiences describe a range of experiences, including internships, studios, and practica. The focus on applied learning throughout the Oregon University System has resulted in the development of standards, and for the foreseeable future, is providing additional funding for participatory learning experiences. In many ways this legitimizes service-learning.

In addition to the participatory learning experience efforts, the Oregon University System conducted a survey of employers in Oregon to establish the key needs in Oregon’s workforce for the new century. While technical skills are still needed, the research found that most employers are more concerned about “softer” skills: teamwork, communication, project management, and the ability to see the big picture. Most of these are tested and honed while interacting in the field, as opposed to pure classroom study. Indeed, exposure to critical, complex issues like watershed management is a key aspect of service-learning.⁵

COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER OF OREGON

The preceding information sets the context for significant work being completed at the University of Oregon to support the Oregon Plan’s strategy to address the complex watershed health issues. By its very nature, watershed planning addresses all components of the watershed to ensure healthy systems. As a result, it allows for a broad array of projects to fit the learning needs of many students. Students wishing to learn specific technical skills, such as geographic information systems (GIS) or stream surveying find a role in watershed planning. Students interested in outreach, public relations, and education have a significant role in the implementation of the Oregon Plan. Those interested in developing facilitation and community process skills can do so while addressing watershed issues. Because of the great need addressed by the Oregon Plan, there is no shortage of opportunities for students to learn.

The Community Service Center of Oregon is based at the University of Oregon. The Community Service Center’s origins can be traced back 25 years to the development of an applied team project for graduate students in planning. It is just one of several examples of higher education supporting the Oregon Plan. While the following projects were all implemented through the University of Oregon’s Community Service Center, campuses across the state are providing assistance in Oregon to address watershed issues, including water

quality and salmon listings under the Endangered Species Act.

Community Planning Workshop

The Community Service Center’s Community Planning Workshop origins can be traced back 25 years to the development of an applied team project for graduate students in planning. Over the years this project has evolved. Each year, 30 graduate students in the Community and Regional Planning Masters Program engage in this course in six month, team projects that address community needs across Oregon. Since 1975, Community Planning Workshop has completed over 250 service projects for cities, counties, state and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

Rural Land Use and Development

In 1999, Community Planning Workshop worked with the Lane County Land Management Division to address land use in rural areas along the McKenzie River. The McKenzie is an important river in Oregon because of its role in providing habitat for several significant fish species, as well as the fact that it provides the municipal water supply for Oregon’s second-largest urban population. Development pressures on the McKenzie are threatening the health of the river and its water quality. Statewide planning rules require all areas designated as communities and counties to develop comprehensive land use plans and implementing ordinances.

Community Planning Workshop’s (CPW) role in this project required a team of six graduate students to conduct a land use inventory and assess community perspectives on development within the McKenzie basin, which covers over 1300 square miles. This included conducting focus groups, public meetings, and a survey. The CPW team, comprised mainly of Community and Regional Planning graduate students, developed a series of technical memoranda to provide key information to Lane County decisionmakers. In addition to the planning students, the team engaged Landscape Architecture students to provide site analysis support. The team also provided a significant link between the citizens of the watershed and the decisionmakers.

The students on this project gained several technical skills: survey development and implementation, technical writing, understanding of Oregon’s complex land use system and inventorying. But at the end of the project, while conducting their final presentation, the students discussed at length other valuable learning they

experienced: the challenge of translating land use issues in ways that citizens can address; balancing the needs of residents of the watershed with the needs of the environment; and understanding community skepticism of government efforts.

Flood Planning and Mitigation

Many Oregon communities have areas that are subject to flooding and land slides. Communities commonly allow development within flood and slide prone areas; however, such development is subject to certain regulations. Through a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development has supported the efforts of Community Planning Workshop's students to develop technical resources for communities to address flooding and land slides. These serve as a resource and planning tool for local governments in developing land use strategies that reduce the risks posed by flood and land slide hazards.

The tools include information on flood and land slide hazards, information on state and federal laws that address these hazards in Oregon, and technical information and data sources on reducing the risks. The resources are designed to help local governments and watershed councils address flood and land slide hazard issues through effective comprehensive plan inventories, policies, and implementing measures. The Community and Regional Planning students were joined by a law student who provided the legal analysis, as well as a geography student who assisted with geographic information systems. Students on this project have gained significant understanding of hazard issues as they relate to both human and fish and wildlife populations. They have gained knowledge on mitigation efforts, tools for assessing risk and restoration measures.

Resource Assistance for Rural Environments

In 1995, Community Planning Workshop initiated Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) with the assistance of the Corporation for National Service's (CNS) Learn and Serve America Higher Education Service-Learning Corps program. CNS's Service-Learning Corps programs unite the goals of academic service-learning activities with those of AmeriCorps' direct service programs. Community Planning Workshop's RARE program differs from the pre-existing Community Planning Workshop in that its members are AmeriCorps participants who live in the communities in which they serve for a full year. RARE members work less often in a student team, and more frequently work directly with community members than

the students in Community Planning Workshop. RARE was developed to provide students with a more intensive service-learning opportunity, and because many community needs – particularly those in rural communities and those distant from the University campus – are addressed better through providing full-time, on-site service. In the past six years, RARE has successfully placed over 150 members in communities across Oregon. The RARE participants come from a variety of disciplines – the majority of the participants are in Community and Regional Planning. In addition, the RARE program engages students in Resource Geography, Environmental Studies, Landscape Architecture, and Water Resources and Forest Management.

RARE has worked across Oregon in addressing watershed issues. Over 70 of the RARE AmeriCorps members in the past six years have addressed these issues through their activities in their placements with watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, cities, and counties. The efforts of RARE participants fall into three categories: watershed monitoring and assessment; education and outreach; and volunteer coordination

Watershed Monitoring and Assessment

As discussed in the overview of the Oregon Plan for Watershed, monitoring and assessing watersheds are critical steps for determining watershed health because it allows for the prioritization of projects. RARE members have developed citizen water quality monitoring programs in over ten watersheds. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board has developed a protocol for conducting watershed assessments. Because the Oregon Plan relies on citizen-led watershed councils to develop local watershed restoration plans, the protocol was developed so that watershed councils can assess current conditions and identify protection and restoration opportunities. While the guide has been developed so that citizen councils can undertake the assessment, it has become clear that having a full-time project manager is needed. This need is being met through the RARE Program.

Linking graduate students, who are RARE members, with the assessment process is clearly a win/win situation. The RARE members conducting assessments offer significant technical skills, while at the same time learning about facilitation, project management, and communication. Because the assessment protocol is laid out through the manual, members are able to focus on their specific assessment and the watershed it addresses, and are not as concerned with the development of methodology. Councils are receiving

key assistance on a foundational component of their efforts. While the relationship between the assessment process and service-learning was not initially a conscious decision, it has turned out to be significant for both students and the communities they are serving.

Education and Outreach

A second key component of the Oregon Plan is the engagement of citizens in implementation. Government alone cannot conserve and restore salmon across the landscape. Education is a fundamental part of community-based action. People must understand the needs of watersheds in order to make informed decisions and to implement projects. Further, the implementation of projects, from monitoring water quality to assessments, requires a significant commitment from many volunteers.

University of Oregon RARE members have worked across the state to provide education and outreach regarding the Oregon Plan. Audiences for this education have ranged from school children to agricultural landowners to city councils. In the Umatilla watershed in northeast Oregon, a RARE member worked with both the Umatilla Basin Watershed Council and the Umatilla County Soil and Water Conservation District to develop a series of field days for school children. Through this effort, the RARE member worked with the classroom teachers to develop curriculum, collaborated with staff of more than twenty natural resource management agencies to establish field projects for students, and coordinated with landowners to find sites for projects. Through this project, the graduate student gained essential professional skills in project management, public speaking, curricula development, and project implementation.

Volunteer Coordination

Recruiting and nurturing the interests of volunteers has been another key effort of RARE. An effort of this magnitude cannot be achieved through government alone; it requires a cadre of committed volunteers with the skills to implement projects. Through RARE, many watershed councils have engaged members to develop volunteer programs. In several watersheds, RARE members have worked with landowners and citizens to implement streamside planting and fencing projects. This is done in cooperation with the local watershed council, local soil and water conservation district, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition to the specific technical skills associated with these projects, RARE graduate students develop skills in volunteer recruitment

and management and outreach tools, as well as in building partnerships and coalitions.

Student Originated Studies (SOS)

In 1997, the Community Service Center initiated its Student Originated Studies program that provides graduate level students with funding for applied projects that directly serve a community of need. Student Originated Studies enables students on all of Oregon's public university campuses to provide service while more deeply exploring and understanding a community issue.

Student Originated Studies provide graduate level students opportunities to develop applied thesis projects that address specific community needs. Because the needs of the Oregon Plan require a variety of skills, the Student Originated Studies program engages students from a range of disciplines across all state university campuses in Oregon. This is one of the key differences between SOS and the other two programs discussed, CPW and RARE, which are more discipline-specific or confined to a single campus. Because the SOS program reaches out to students in other programs and on other campuses, faculty members who have not previously been regularly engaged in service-learning are becoming involved as they advise students. This has been a key outreach tool for the Community Service Center in its efforts to increase the number of faculty involved in service-learning. Recipients of SOS grants come from Community and Regional Planning, Marine Resources, Geology, and Environmental Studies.

Over half of the Student Originated Studies projects completed since 1998 have involved watershed management and health. One project assessed the possible policy mechanisms and business strategies that can be employed to generate local sources of revenue for watershed stewardship in coastal communities. This is key to assisting communities currently facing economic adjustment as a result of lost jobs in both the timber and fishing sectors. Through Student Originated Studies, another student began a stakeholder involvement process in the Sutherlin Creek watershed. Following the completion of his Student Originated Studies project, this student continued his service-learning activities as a RARE member completing the watershed assessment in the same community.

Advanced Community Grantwriting

In 1997, the Community Service Center initiated Advanced Community Grantwriting that provides students an opportunity to take a course in grantwriting

and to hone and test their skills by writing a specific grant for a community or organization. This course was developed specifically to address the needs of Oregon's rural communities – who identified grantwriting as their greatest need.⁶ The increased pressure on local, volunteer watershed councils to implement the Oregon Plan has exacerbated this need.

Developing a system to link students interested in learning about grant writing with local organizations in need of assistance has occurred over the past year. Through a call for projects, the Community Service Center receives information on specific community needs. In the Advanced Grantwriting class, students are linked directly with those organizations that have need and in which the students have interest. This course allows students to interact with community members directly. Students research the grants, develop the structure, and under the guidance of community members and Community Service Center faculty, write the grant. These grants are then submitted to funding sources.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The watershed approach to planning and restoration is by its very nature multidisciplinary. Many state and federal agencies administer laws, policies, and management programs that have an impact on both water and salmon. Salmonid life cycles and watershed boundaries cross the jurisdictions of many agencies. Under the Oregon Plan, all government agencies that impact salmon are accountable for coordinated programs in a manner that is consistent with conservation and restoration efforts.

State and Federal Partners

The cornerstones of the Oregon Plan are also the foundation of successful service-learning. Coordinated efforts and multiple partners are needed to ensure that environmental outcomes are appropriate and sustainable. These are also required to ensure high-quality academic learning outcomes. The Community Service Center has worked with a variety of state and federal agency partners. These partnerships have provided four key benefits. First, the Community Service Center has been able to utilize the expertise of agency staff to identify key projects. Second, agency staffs provide key technical support to students as they complete their projects. Third, it ensures that the efforts of higher education do not replicate services provided by existing programs. Finally, it allows the agencies to become stakeholders in the program and in service-learning.

The strength of this university-agency partnership leads to two additional benefits: agency acceptance and support of higher education institutions' role in implementing the Oregon Plan and, ultimately, agency investment of funds in service-learning. Agency staff buy-in has been key to moving projects forward. The service-learning projects implemented by the Community Service Center would be impossible without the personal relationships between students, faculty, and agency staff. Ultimately, this is as important to the success of projects as agency funding.

Local Partnerships

Throughout this paper, we have noted the key role local councils and organizations play in the implementation of the Oregon Plan. This is no less true in the case of higher education's efforts. Without the partners at the local level, students' learning would not have the richness, the benefit of experiential knowledge, and the "teachable moments" it has. These partnerships truly make for improved community problem solving and improved student learning. Community members and agency staff bring experiential and practical knowledge of the issues and students have a theoretical knowledge base to offer. The students' knowledge of current theory and cutting-edge practices are resources to agencies. And the agencies' knowledge of how things really work is indispensable to the students. This mutually beneficial relationship leads to improved outcomes for the watershed as well as for related community issues. Local partnerships ensure that the projects are meeting the pressing community needs. In addition, as with the state and federal agency staff, the community commitment to projects ensures strong mentoring relationships and service-learning. Ultimately, community members become as committed to the education and development of the students as they are to the implementation of their projects.

The Community Service Center places a strong emphasis on quality control of all projects being implemented by students for communities. While recognizing that this is a learning opportunity for students, the Community Service Center ensures that the efforts of students are ultimately high quality. When students know their schoolwork has a real-world impact, the stakes are higher and they perform accordingly. Nevertheless, Community Service Center staff and faculty work closely with students and partners in the development and implementation of projects. Students are taking risks and using new skills; however, there is always a safety net for them. This high level of quality control ensures that federal, state, and local partners continue to experience benefits of working with higher education.

Funding

Beyond strong buy-in from partners and high quality work, the Community Service Center has utilized two main tools to ensure sustainability of the funding of its programs. First, multiple sources of funding support the programs. This is the foundation of any sustainable effort or community: make sure that you are not dependent on one source of revenue. The Community Service Center receives funding from federal and state agencies, as well as the university. Community Service Center staff works continually with agency staff to identify new sources of funding and explore new partnerships. The communities with which the Community Service Center works are dynamic and ever changing. Therefore, it is necessary to remain creative and flexible in identifying and developing funding relationships.

Second, the Community Service Center requires some financial support as a match for any project it implements. The amount of match varies for each project. However, by ensuring that each community receiving assistance from the Community Service Center provides some cash towards implementation of the project, true community support and – literally – ownership is ensured. Prior to implementing this policy, the Community Service Center found that communities identified projects, but once implementation began, the support and commitment to the activities undertaken by the student waned. Many students were left with a project for which there was little community support in the form of mentoring, staff involvement, technical advice or even simple answers to questions. However, if a community is making even the smallest of financial commitments to the implementation of a project, perhaps as simple as paying for the printing of maps, there is much stronger commitment to the implementation and completion of the project.

Coordinating Community Need and Student Learning

The Community Service Center uses several tools to identify community need, and to provide students with information on the potential projects. The Community Service Center regularly sends out a call for projects to which communities can respond and describe the projects they would like support in implementing. Through this mechanism, the Community Service Center is constantly assessing the needs of communities, trends, and new opportunities for collaboration. The Community Service Center uses worldwide websites to provide information to communities and students. Projects identified in the process described above are publicized on the website so that students and faculty

across the state can identify potential projects and so communities and agencies can access the information to share ideas and resources.

Projects are then developed with student learning as one of the key outcomes. Intensive, collaborative project development ensures that the project will meet both the students learning objectives and the specific needs of the community.

LESSONS LEARNED

Ensure High Quality

As discussed earlier, it is key to establish standards for students' work and to make sure that any interaction with or product for a community partner is professional. This involves both the specific products students produce, as well interactions they have with community members. The latter requires students to have a sensitivity and understanding of the community they are working with, and to understand and appreciate local knowledge. In a presentation to the National Gathering of College Educators and Service-learning, Mulling described various myths that individuals in higher education carry with them into communities; for example, faculty are wiser than students who are wiser than community members.⁷ This attitude will doom service-learning efforts. Faculty and students must enter communities with the perspective that the learning occurs in all directions.

Utilize Multiple Tools

The Community Service Center coordinates several different programs, from campus-based teams of graduate students working on projects for six months (Community Planning Workshop), to members living in communities for a year (RARE), to one-term classes (Advanced Grantwriting). The variety of program types was developed primarily to respond to the diversity of community needs. In addition, student needs vary. Some students are interested in the more intensive experience of RARE, while others are interested in a more limited time commitment. Using one strategy to meet all these needs would be impossible. Community Service Center staff works closely with both communities and students to identify the best program for meeting and balancing the needs of all involved.

Do Not Be Everything to Everyone and Coordinate Between Programs

While the Community Service Center uses a variety of tools, it cannot serve all needs. Because it is important to ensure high quality, it is more important to do a few

things well than to do many things poorly. This is especially difficult when the community need is great and demand for support is high, as it is in the implementation of the Oregon Plan. The number and variety of projects and the geographic range of need is so great, that no single university or agency can serve all. Therefore, it is imperative that universities, and departments within universities, coordinate their efforts. This, of course, requires the universities and the departments within to drop traditional walls that may interfere with this cooperation. It also requires a coordinating structure or entity such as the one provided through the Community Service Center that can reach out to all stakeholders – within and outside the university – to include them in effective decision-making.

Most Importantly, Ensure the Balance Between Service and Learning

In the past, many efforts under the flag of service-learning have provided students with an immense learning opportunity, but no community need was met. Conversely, many communities have had important projects completed, but the students involved did not gain much skill or knowledge. Balancing the two – service and learning – is a key role of faculty in these efforts. Many of the issues discussed above (ensuring high quality, developing strong partnerships and mentoring opportunities) are examples of ways faculty and staff engaged in service-learning efforts can help to achieve this balance.

We hope that the foregoing discussions will be of use to you as you embark upon service-learning as a strategy in community-based watershed management. The next section provides an overview of selected resources to support service-learning.

SERVICE-LEARNING RESOURCES

For additional service-learning materials, bibliographies, weblinks, a program database, and other resources, anyone may contact the Learn and Serve America National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at:

- serve@tc.umn.edu;
- umn.edu/~serve/; or
- 1-800-808-SERV.

To seek assistance from other higher education environmental service-learning practitioners, contact the Learn and Serve America Training and Technical Assistance Exchange at:

- 1-877-LSA-EXCH; or
- www.lsaexchange.edu.

Environmental Education Organizations

Give Water a Hand

216 Agriculture Hall, 1450 Linden Drive,
Madison, WI 53706

Phone: 800-928-3720; Email: erc@uwex.edu, URL:
<http://www.uwex.edu/erc/index.html>

Give Water A Hand is a national watershed education program designed to involve young people in local environmental service projects.

The Student Conservation Association (SCA)

PO Box 550, Charlestown NH, 03603

Phone: 603-543-1700; Email: ask-us@sca-inc.org;

URL: <http://www.sca-inc.org/>

SCA is America's largest and oldest provider of national and community conservation service opportunities, outdoor education, and career training for youth. SCA volunteers and interns annually perform more than one million hours of conservation service in national parks, forests, refuges, and urban areas in all 50 states.

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)

is a network of professionals, students, and volunteers working in the field of environmental education throughout North America and in over 55 countries around the world. Since 1971, the Association has promoted environmental education and supported the work of environmental educators. There are many environmental interest groups, and many organizations dedicated to improving education. NAAEE uniquely combines and integrates both of these perspectives, and takes a cooperative, nonconfrontational, scientifically-balanced approach to promoting education about environmental issues. <http://naaee.org>

NAAEE, Suite 800, 1825 Connecticut Ave NW,
Washington DC 20009-5708 USA

(202) 884-8912; fax (202) 884-8455; E-mail us at:
email@naaee.org <mailto:email@naaee.org>

EE-Link (<http://eelink.net>) is a guide to internet resources in environmental education. EE-Link is a participant in the Environmental Education and Training Partnership (**EETAP** <<http://www.eetap.org/>>) of the North American Association for Environmental Education (**NAAEE** <<http://www.naaee.org/>>)

EPA's Environment Education Center on the web. Robust guides to educational resources.

<http://www.epa.gov/teachers/>

Service-Learning or Experiential Learning Organizations

Campus Compact

Campus Compact is an organization of college and university presidents joined together in their commitment to the development of personal and social responsibility as integral to the educational mission of their campuses. Campus Compact presidents strongly advocate the participation of students, faculty, staff, and higher education institutions in public and community service. Such service may range from individual acts of student volunteerism to institution-wide efforts to improve the social and economic well-being of America's communities. Campus Compact, Box 1975, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912-1975; Ph: (401) 863-1119; Fax: (401) 863-3779; <http://www.compact.org>

The National Society for Experiential Education

The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) is a membership association and national resource center that promotes experience-based approaches to teaching and learning. For over 25 years, NSEE has developed best practices for effectively integrating experience into educational programs. Experiential education encompasses a wide range of teaching and learning methods, including service-learning, which engage the learner actively in whatever is being learned. NSEE's membership includes faculty, administrators, and directors of experiential education programs at colleges, universities, schools, businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. National Society for Experiential Education; 1703 North Beauregard St.; Alexandria, VA 22311-1714; Ph: 703-575-5475; Fax: 603-250-5852; Email: info@nsee.org; <http://www.nsee.org>

Specific resources identified by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse include:

Environmental Service-Learning Publications

Ward, Harold. (1999) *Acting Locally: Concepts and Models for Service-learning in Environmental Studies*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

This volume contains sixteen articles from practitioners from a range of colleges, universities, and one community college, who are involved in Environmental Studies Service-Learning (ES/SL) programs. The authors describe the programs and/or courses in their schools by including a brief history of the program,

class objectives and agendas, and impacts on students, teachers, and the community. Many authors also address more practical considerations such as student assessment and timelines. The appendix includes a bibliography and biographies of contributing authors.

Vue-Benson, Robin C. and Robert Shumer. (1994) *Topic Bibliography on Sources Related to Service and the Environment*. St. Paul, MN: Learn and Serve America National Service-Learning Clearinghouse.

This bibliography lists resources providing information about service-learning in environmental education.

Publications on Service-Learning Sustainability in Higher Education

Pickeral, Terry and Karen Peters, Eds. *From the Margin to the Mainstream: The Faculty Role in Advancing Service-Learning on Community Colleges: Models, Lessons from the Field, Case Studies*.

Prepared as part of a project to promote service-learning activities at community colleges, this sourcebook presents essays by college faculty detailing service-learning models and strategies.

Serow, Robert C. et al. 1996. "Institutional Support for Service-Learning." *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, v29 n4 p220-25.

This study identified factors associated with support for service-learning (SL) among institutions of higher education. Surveys of SL programs in North Carolina indicated that institutionalization of SL was closely associated with such institutional characteristics as a degree of faculty involvement and emphasis on academic goals in SL courses.

Bucco, Diana, Ed. *Building Sustainable Programs: A Guide to Developing & Maintaining Service-Learning at Community Colleges*. Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges.

This guide is designed to foster the development of service-learning programs at community colleges and presents experiences, ideas, and lessons learned from existing programs. First, reasons for supporting and developing service-learning programs are presented, indicating that such programs meet the community college mission, help develop student self-esteem, and build relations with the community. Programmatic, administrative, and financial strategies are then presented for developing and sustaining service-learning programs. Next, brief descriptions are provided of 19

exemplary practices or beneficial outcomes from existing service-learning programs.

Ward, Kelly. (1996) "Service-Learning and Student Volunteerism: Reflections on Institutional Commitment." *Michigan Journal of Community Service-learning*, v3 p55-65.

A study examined how five colleges and universities with stated commitments to public service incorporate volunteerism and service-learning into organizational structures. Results suggest that institutions that make centralized decisions and share governance are more apt to institutionalize service-learning than are more loosely coupled systems. Faculty participation, integration of service-learning into curriculum, presidential support, and adequate funding are key elements.

AUTHORS

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ENDNOTES

¹ The Corporation for National Service is a small, independent federal agency whose mission is to support opportunities for individuals throughout the United States to engage in service to their communities. The Corporation has three primary program streams: The National Senior Service Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. The National Senior Service Corps programs involve individuals age 55 and older in service to the nation through three programs: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). AmeriCorps programs involve citizens of all ages in intensive terms of service to meet local community needs. In return for their service, AmeriCorps members receive a post-service education award, which can be used to help pay their post-secondary school expenses. Learn and Serve America programs make service an integral part of the education experiences of students from Kindergarten through graduate school. Learn and Serve America makes grants to schools, higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations to implement, operate, and expand service-learning programs. To learn more about the Corporation for National Service and how you can access Corporation resources, please visit our website: www.nationalservice.org.

² Gray, M.J., Ondaatje, E.M., Zakaras, L. (1999) *Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education*. Rand: Santa Monica, CA. See <http://www.cns.gov/learn/research/index.html>

³ Kendall, J.C. and Associates. *Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service, Volume II*. Raleigh, North Carolina: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 1990.

⁴ *Participatory Learning Experiences and Internship Catalog*, University of Oregon,
<http://uocareer.uoregon.edu/ple/>

⁵ Eyler, J. and D.E. Giles. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

⁶ Povey, D. et al., *Rural Needs Assessment*. Eugene: Community Planning Workshop, University of Oregon. 1997.

⁷ Mulling, C. "Do No Harm." Presented at the National Gathering of College Educators and Service-learning. Providence, RI: 1995.