INDUSTRY AND SERVICE-LEARNING COLLABORATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM – MAKING IT WORK

Sharonda Bishop, College of Business Administration, Cal Poly Pomona, 3801 W Temple Ave., Pomona CA 91768, 909-815-6527, snbishop@cpp.edu

Cheryl Wyrick, College of Business Administration, Cal Poly Pomona, 3801 W Temple Ave., Pomona CA 91768, 909-869-2431, crwyrick@cpp.edu

ABSTRACT

The demand for instructors to offer highly researched, well-proven concepts while also providing creative interactive ways to relay information can be daunting.   In response, educators solicit speakers from the business community to bring concepts to life and act as coaches and mentors to synchronize learning applicability. Through effective support using the service-learning model, the intervention demonstrated here can create cognitive skill-building, reduce student anxiety, and enhance community partnerships.

Keywords: service-learning, experiential learning, community service

INTRODUCTION

As professors add coach and mentor to their plates, we sometimes lack the time, expertise, or current real-time applicability to textbook learning and actual on-the-job tasks. How can our classes be packaged to deliver lasting skills effectively? The methodology we use is based on the literature on engaging students and community engagement in higher education. Having used this class as a case study at Cal Poly Pomona, whose signature experiences are polytechnic and promote "students' discovery of the opportunities and challenges within the field," students can extrapolate their learning in all fields from accounting to human resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

From the earliest creation of the University, there has been a parallel co-existence between higher education and the local community, sometimes peaceful and sometimes at odds (Soska, 2015). In America, after the Civil War, the University gained a dual purpose to enhance knowledge of the public good and link the social and economic progress of a research university (Thelin, 2011). The relationship between the university and the local community can be seen in immediate economic and employment benefits. Still, this relationship also serves to educate local middle and low-income families who cannot travel to attend college, providing a much important cultural base (Boyer, 1994).

As higher education institutions continue to grow, especially in urban areas, the university and *town-gown* relationship are a central part of the local culture and social experiences of local communities (Rudolph, 1990). Campus activities impact the surrounding community; local tax revenue, athletics, and social justice concerns have all been emerging issues in the university and town-gown relationship. Community leadership has often sought out the support of higher education organizations to plan revitalization strategies (Stone, 1996), and there has been a shift toward the 'civically engaged' university, fulfilling Thomas Jefferson's ideal of a university (Sullivan, 2003).

In his seminal work, Boyer (1994) proposes three paths of knowledge for the engaged institution: scholarship of integration, scholarship of teaching, and scholarship of engagement. His work created a resurgence of *service-learning* approaches on university campuses (Harkavy and Rommer, 1999). "The model of a service and learning partnership with the community implies an approach of doing "with" not "for" the community (Edwards and Marullo, 2000)." Through service-learning activities, faculty, students, and the community become research partners to find ways to benefit the community, teach across differences, enhance classroom learning and create effective dialogue through practical application (Kraft, 1996).

Service Learning has evolved into a prominent form of engaged pedagogy linking university goals, student hands-on activity, and community involvement. The definition used to describe the concept most aptly is the strategic and purposeful development of experiences in an authentic community setting that facilitates students' cognitive and academic development through reflection and mutually beneficial partnerships (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996). Sometimes seen as 'charity' or 'power over others,' the detractors of service-learning emphasize the minimization of complex social issues (Crabtree, 2008) and concerns of power and privilege (Mitchell, 2008). This perspective symbolizes the criticism in the town-gown relationship as the university. . The university sees the community as a laboratory, not as a space to assess assets and capacities to build (Hodges and Dubb, 2012).

CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

Background: This class is a Senior Project required class, made up of juniors and seniors. The course was approved for the service-learning designation via a self-reporting process which required the class to be a co-education experience between the instructor and community partner. The industry partner for the course is Avanade, an IT Consulting Services company focusing on the Microsoft platform, and our community partner is Calibrate, a non-profit/501c3 organization, whose mission is to intersect the lives of young people in underserved communities to promote, engagement, empowerment, and emotional thriving.

Class Outline: The course is built on three core pillars: mentorship, leadership, and service. Through this 15-week course, students hear from guest speakers currently in leadership roles, are assigned business/corporate mentors, and receive experience connecting to our local community via activities with Calibrate. The intent of the course is three-fold as well. First, this class is meant to build successful behaviors both personally and professionally post-college life. Second, students should begin to see the impact of what they do with their citizenship roles, globally and to their local community. In addition to working with community partners, the class also discusses what they can do as individuals to assist in the UN Sustainable Development Goals of (Goal 3) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages and (Goal 11) Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable and encourage all. Third and last, this course acts as a culminating experience to their education, in that it highlights the eight CPP polytechnic learning objectives: 1) Application of Knowledge, 2) Creativity, Discovery, and Innovation, 3) Diverse and Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives, 4) Collaborative Learning, 5) Community and Global Engagement, 6) Professional and Career Readiness, 7) Critical Thinking and Problem Solving and 8) Integration of Technology.

DATA/ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

Traditionally we think about community service directly correlating to physically helping others. As university campuses have limited student activity of off-campus events throughout 2020 and 2021, in this semester's class, we have positioned our community partner Calibrate Connections, as helping students be the best of their communities by being strong and mentally capable and confident themselves to be the best part of their community. The instructor assigned an 8-week mid-course survey for students to complete. The survey was graded, and all students who completed the survey would receive full credit for answering all questions. The survey itself was anonymous, and the instructor did not know which students had which responses. Feedback from the students has been overwhelmingly positive. Student feedback included the following:

- "With skills I have learned with Connections such as emotional support, I have been able to utilize to assist me personally."
- "With the help of Connections, I have been able to become more emotionally intelligent. Being emotionally intelligent helps me communicate with others more effectively and process change in my life."
- "One of the changes I have made in my personal life because of connections is trying to do a 'check-in' with myself when I feel like I am spiraling. After doing a 'check-in,' I try to ground myself and my emotions. This allows me to slow down and breathe, which helps me not freak out when I am super stressed."
- "The growth I have seen is that I'm less shy and getting better at the speaker. Before taking this class, I would never like to talk in front of classmates because of my accent, or I was afraid to say something wrong – Connections has helped me a lot."

Students have welcomed vulnerability, mindfulness, and sharing with each other as the service-learning activity included learning/mindfulness circles with the class two times per month. Our mentor and guest speaker program allows the students to hear from leaders in their business community and create lasting connections. Feedback from speakers include the following:

- "I think business leader presentations are critical, and it's important for students to have some real interaction with professionals."
- "I enjoyed the program and would actually like more time with the students."
- "I love working with you and your students – they are always "100% present," and it is a joy to be a part of your class ~ my heart is full."

IMPLICATIONS

The primary strength of the service-learning pedagogy is the hands-on nature of the learning activities for students to link their current selves to what role they want to play professionally and personally in the future as members of their community. Students receive direct knowledge and insight into their future careers through mentoring and speaker presentations and local community interaction. Students, guest speakers, and mentors are part of a private LinkedIn group, which facilitates staying in contact, asking questions to the group, and providing updates on professional interests.

As a senior project class, the course is limited to 15 students. To analyze the ongoing impact the class may have, the students will be invited to participate in surveys at 1- and 3-year intervals regarding their perceived value of the course, perceived impact on their careers, and their career progression. The instructor will also tract students who applied for an opportunity with Calibrate, our community partner, to become Calibrate interns in the summer of 2022.

Service-Learning is a form of experiential learning, widely seen as a best practice in higher education (A.W. Astin & Sax, 1998, Eyler & Giles, 1999). The service-learning nature of this class includes desirable components of leadership efficacy, viewed as necessary skills to future employers (Ricklan, 2016). These skills include civic engagement, character development, and personal development, critical skills for high levels of professional performance (Dugan & Komives, 2007). In addition, the intent of the class is to positively impact equity in the business environment. In findings by Kenzar and Moriarity (2000), male students have higher levels of leadership efficacy at the start and end of 4-years in college. One of the implicit benefits of this class in having a female instructor with decades of experience in industry is female students, seeing a role model are positively impacted in a variety of traditionally male-dominated fields (Dasgupta & Asgri, 2004, Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, & McManus, 2011). In each of the areas this class services, mentorship, leadership, and service-learning, the students increase components of leadership efficacy.

In the Spring 2022 semester, this class will continue to bring in local industry leaders for students to receive a fresh approach to what they can expect in their professional careers. In the survey, students reflected that they enjoyed the frequent nature of the presentations (monthly) and the small personalized (less than 20 people in the virtual room) setting, which allowed them to get their questions answers and interact with the speakers. The students will also be more available to interact with business leaders in-person and with community partners on external sites. In the survey, students indicated they would have liked to interact with on-site activities to enhance their knowledge of why the SDG goals are essential and the direct impact individuals can have in the local community.

REFERENCES

Allen, R. H. *Impact Teaching: Ideas and Strategies for Teachers to Maximize Student Learning.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2002.

Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. How undergraduates are affected by service participation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 1998, *39* (3), 251–263.

Boyer, Ernest L. Creating the New American College. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1994, *40*: A48

Bringle, Robert B., & Julie A. Hatcher. Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 1996, *67* (2), 221-239

Crabtree, R. Theoretical foundations for international service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 2008, *15* (1), 18– 36.

Dubb, S., & Hodges, R.A. *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads*. 1st ed. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012.

Dugan, J. P., & Komives, S. R. Developing leadership capacity in college students. *National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs*, 2007.

Edwards, Bob, & Sam Marullo. Editors' Introduction: Universities in Troubled Times— Institutional Responses. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1999, *42* (5), 754-765.

Eyler, J., & Giles Jr. D. E. *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Harkavy, Ira, & Daniel Romer. Service Learning as an Integrated Strategy. *Liberal Education*, 1999, *85* (3), 14-20.

Kezar, A., & Moriarty, D. Expanding our understanding of student leadership development: A study exploring gender and ethnic identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 2000, *41* (1), 55–69.

Kraft, Richard J. Service Learning: An Introduction to Its Theory, Practice, and Effects. *Education and Urban Society*, 1996, *28* (2), 131-160.

Mitchell, Tania. Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning: Engaging the Literature to Differentiate Two Models. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 2008, Spring, 50-65

Mezirow, J. Perspective Transformation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 1978, *28* (2), 100-110.

Ricklan, M. What employers look for in future leaders. Forbes Community Voice. https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2016/07/28/what-employerslook-for-in-future-leaders/#9a1d5e4c5cf5

Nilanjana Dasgupta, Shaki Asgari. Seeing is believing: Exposure to counter stereotypic women leaders and its effect on the malleability of automatic gender stereotyping, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 2004, *40* (5), 642-658,

Rudolph, Frederick. *The American College & University: A History*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press. 1990

Soska, Tracy M. Service Learning: Community Engagement and Partnership for Integrating Teaching, Research, and Service. *Journal of community practice.* 2010, *18* (2-3) 139–147.

Stone, Rebecca. *Core Issues in Comprehensive Community Building Initiatives.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children and University of Chicago. 1996

Stout, J. G., Dasgupta, N., Hunsinger, M., & McManus, M. A. STEMing the tide: Using ingroup experts to inoculate women's self-concept in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 2011, *100* (2), 255–270.

Sullivan, William M. (2003). The University as Citizen: Institutional Identity and Social Responsibility. *Civic Arts Review*, 2003, *16* (1), 4-16.

Thelin, *H. History of American Higher Education*. The John Hopkins University Press. 2011