



Part I addresses how government organizations can benefit by using service learning.

Service-Learning Through Colleges and Universities, Part I

by Linda Kiltz

The weak economy will continue to cause great fiscal distress among state and local governments around the nation. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, at least 48 states have addressed or are facing shortfalls in their budgets for the new fiscal year totaling \$194 billion or 28 percent of state budgets. The estimated state budget gap is \$180 billion for 2011 and \$118 billion and for 2012.

Although the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided roughly \$140 billion in fiscal relief for state governments in 2010, these funds are not enough to make up for budget shortfalls caused by declining tax revenues over the past two years. According to the National League of Cities, the municipal sector will likely face a fiscal shortfall of between \$56 billion and \$83 billion from 2010 to 2012, driven by declining tax revenues, ongoing service demands, and cuts in state revenues.

In response to budget shortfalls, many state and local governments have enacted tax and fee increases and taken measures to implement budget cuts through workforce reductions—canceling capital infrastructure projects and reducing services to citizens.

No one can definitively answer, “When will the economy rebound?” Times such as these provide opportunities for creative thinking, transformative change, and new collaborative partnerships between different levels of government, community organizations, and educational institutions. Cities, counties, and states must find solutions for looming cutbacks in essential services, public work projects, social service, and parks and recreation programs, to name a few. One possible solution is for public managers to build collaborative

partnerships with higher education institutions for service learning and other service programs.

Every day, colleges and universities provide students—who represent a large and growing source of the nation’s volunteers—with opportunities to deliver valuable services to communities across the country.

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the nation has witnessed a significant upsurge in volunteers, particularly among college students. Both on campuses and in surrounding communities, millions of college students are participating in a wide range of volunteer service activities, from teaching and mentoring children from disadvantaged circumstances to collecting donations for the local food banks to helping their fellow Americans recover from hurricanes and other disasters.

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, between September 2004 and September 2005, nearly 3.3 million college students ages 16 to 24 performed volunteer services throughout the United States, which represented 30.2 percent of the more than 10.8 million students who were enrolled in college in 2005. As our nation faces the daunting path to economic recovery, colleges and universities remain committed to educating citizens and building strong communities through civic engagement, community service, and service-learning.

Campus Compact, a national coalition of 1,190 colleges and universities dedicated to campus-based civic engagement, reported that its member organizations contributed an estimated \$5.7 billion and 282 million hours of service to their communities during the 2007–2008 academic year, and 3.16 million students performed more than 300 million hours of service in 2009.

As a public manager, it is important to not only identify the different types of service programs offered by colleges and universities that can benefit local communities, but also to build strong partnerships with faculty and administrators at higher education institutions committed to civic engagement and addressing community, state, and national needs.

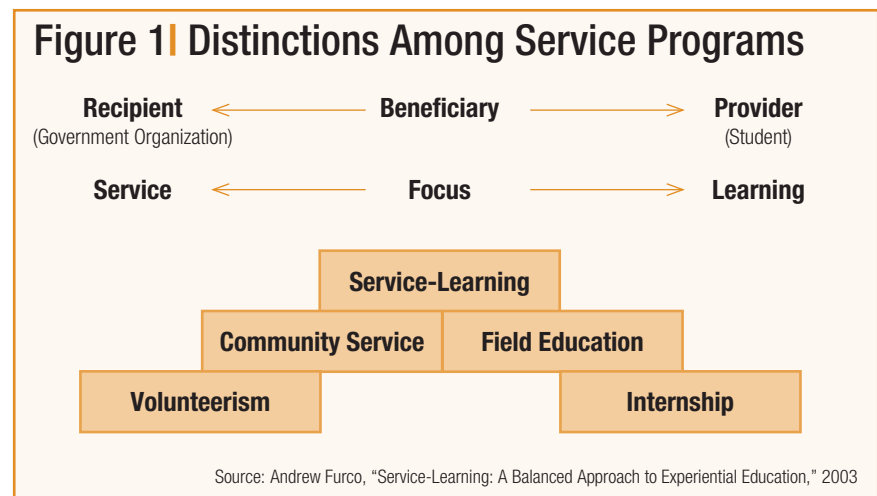
Differentiating Service-Learning from Other Service Programs

The term *service-learning* has a wide range of definitions and has been used to characterize an array of experiential education endeavors—from volunteer and community service projects to field studies and internship programs. To highlight the distinct characteristics of service-learning in comparison with other service programs, the typology in Figure 1 represents an experiential education program continuum upon which various service programs might lie.

government or community organization) and its degree of emphasis on service and learning. Rather than being located at a single point, each type of program occupies a range of points on the continuum.

Using Figure 1, each of the different types of service programs can be defined. Volunteerism is the engagement of students in activities in which the primary emphasis is on the service provided and the primary intended beneficiary is the service recipient.

Volunteers are people who perform some service of their own free will without pay. Volunteer activities may include one-time events such as beach clean-up efforts, one-day food drives, and recycling events or occasional visits to local hospitals and elementary schools. Although students may receive some emotional and cognitive benefits from the experience, the focus is not on student learning but rather on service provision.



Volunteerism

As the figure suggests, different types of service programs can be distinguished by their primary intent and focus. Each program is defined by the intended beneficiary of the service activity (such as a

Internships

On the opposite end of the continuum from volunteerism are internship programs, which engage students in activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on work experiences that enhance their

learning or understanding of issues relative to a particular area of study. In these programs, the students are the primary beneficiaries, and the focus of the service activity is student learning. Students are placed in internships to acquire skills and knowledge that will enhance their academic learning or vocational development.

For many students, internships are performed after a sequence of courses have been taken and are part of the students regular course work. Internships can be paid or unpaid, can take place in nonprofit and government organizations, and are coordinated by faculty within departments. Although the student is providing a service as an intern, the student engages in the activity primarily for her personal benefit. As these students place greater emphasis on the service being provided and the ways in which the service recipients are benefiting, the internship program moves closer to the center of the continuum and becomes more like field education and service-learning.

Field Education

Field education programs provide students with co-curricular service opportunities that are related to, but not fully integrated with, their formal academic studies. Students perform the service as part of a program that is designed primarily to enhance students' understanding of a field of study, while also providing substantial emphasis on the service being provided. Field education plays an important role in a variety of service-oriented professional programs, such as social work, education, and public health.

In these programs, students often spend one to two years providing a service to a school, health agency, or social service agency. For example, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

School of Social Work, master of social work students spend two years in field education working with community social work practitioners in a variety of settings. While strong intentions to benefit the recipients are evident, the focus of field education programs tends to be on maximizing the student's learning in a specific field of study.

Because of their long-term commitment to the service field, students understand how their service benefits those who receive it, but their primary focus is still on student learning. On the opposite end of the spectrum—to field education programs—is community service.

Community Service

Community service is the engagement of students in activities that focus primarily on the service being provided as well as the benefits the service activities have on the recipients. What distinguishes community service programs from volunteerism is that community service programs are often more structured and involve greater student commitment. In community service activities, campus student groups or individuals are involved in semester or year-long activities that address local, state, or global needs.

Community service projects can include weekly mentoring and tutoring of high school students, developing marketing materials for nonprofit organizations, or organizing fundraising efforts to raise money for Haiti relief efforts. While the students' primary purpose for engaging in community service is often to advance a specific cause, their engagement allows them to learn more about the social, political, and cultural issues of a specific cause and what is needed to effectively deal with that issue.

As the service activities become more integrated with the academic course work of students—and as students begin to engage in reflection, discourse, and research around various community issues—the community service program moves closer to the center of the continuum to become service-learning.

The Benefits of Service-Learning

Service-learning programs are distinguished from other approaches by their intent to benefit the provider and the recipient of the service equally, as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. In service-learning programs, students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the college or university and community or government organization.

Many service-learning programs are integrated into the academic curriculum. Students take a service-learning course in which they think, talk, and write about what they see and do during their service activity, as well as integrate their experiences with the knowledge they have gained from their academic discipline. For example, Portland State University has integrated service-learning into the core undergraduate curriculum by requiring all seniors to participate in Senior Capstone courses. These courses are arranged by PSU faculty in partnership with a wide variety of community organizations.

At their best, service-learning experiences are reciprocally beneficial for both the community and students. For students, service-learning is an opportunity to enrich and apply

classroom knowledge to real world problems; to explore different careers and develop occupational skills; and to develop civic literacy and a concern for social problems, which leads to a sense of social responsibility and commitment to public service. For many community and government organizations, students involved in service-learning augment service delivery, meet crucial human needs, and use applied research techniques to identify and solve community problems.

As state and local budgets continue to shrink and critical services are cut, public managers could greatly benefit by building collaborative partnerships with colleges and universities or with public service programs to utilize undergraduate and graduate students as volunteers and interns as well as in community service, field education, and service-learning projects. The challenge for public managers will be in finding the time and resources to develop and sustain mutually beneficial community-campus partnerships.

make a significant positive difference in meeting growing human needs and in addressing increasingly complex social and economic problems.

In many service programs in higher education, those faculty and staff coordinating the program are responsible for developing campus-community partnerships. However, often these program coordinators are not aware of the variety of community issues and the resources needed to address them.

Public managers at all levels of government are in unique positions to not only understand the complexity of the issues facing their community, but also to identify the network of stakeholders that should be involved to addressing the problem in collaboration with institutions of higher education. The first step in developing a partnership is for public managers to identify which colleges and universities in their region have service programs and to determine who is responsible for coordinating

service programs is within offices of student affairs or student activities, which can be found on many college and university websites. There are also a number of service-learning resources on the web that can help public managers identify service program coordinators.

For example, the Learn and Serve website has the most comprehensive information about service learning programs, policies, resources, and research. Campus Compact's website provides information on service programs for each of its member institutions and for the Campus Compact office in each state.

Also, the American Association of Community Colleges has promoted the value of service learning to the 1,200 associate degree-granting institutions in the U.S. Its site provides information on service-learning and provides an interactive map at which one can locate community colleges and their points of contact by city or state.

After identifying the service program coordinators at local institutions of higher education, public managers should reach out and make initial contact with colleges and universities to begin the first steps in developing a collaborative relationship.

However, government organizations and community groups are often reluctant to develop collaborative partnerships with colleges and universities because there is a perception that service learning programs are often conceived of as benefits bestowed on the community by the university instead of as opportunities to partner with communities to meet collective needs. To be effective, truly reciprocal partnerships must be established.

Because the work of service-learning is complex and multidimensional, it must be under girded by a

Figure 2 | Service-Learning Resources

Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse;
www.servicelearning.org

Campus Compact; www.compact.org

American Association of Community Colleges;
www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/horizons/Pages/default.aspx

Developing Community-Campus Relationships

By necessity, service-learning involves a range of partnerships within and across academic institutions, as well as with governments at all levels and community service providers. These partnerships are critical because higher education offers a rich array of resources and tremendous potential to

the different types of service programs that may be available.

Community service and service-learning programs are housed in various locations on campus. Student organizations were among the first coordinators of service programs, and many continue to be the institution's focal point for service. Thus, a common home for

strong, interconnected partnership. The keys stages of developing a partnership include designing and building collaborative relationships.

Stage 1. Designing the Partnership

This first stage is focused on developing a shared vision and clearly articulated values. Partnerships proceed from the idea that the participants are members of a common community that they seek to improve for the public good. In collaborative conversation, partners develop a vision of how their community can be strengthened and identify the unique talents and resources they each bring to the partnership to realize this vision.

Stage 2. Building Collaborative Relationships

The second stage is composed of multidimensional, interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect that form between diverse institutions to address complex community problems. Trust, equal voice, shared responsibility, open communication, shared vision, and clear lines of accountability characterize strong community-campus partnerships.

Building these types of relationships takes time and energy to develop and maintain, but successful partnerships can yield great dividends for participating organizations and the local community. The process involved in developing and negotiating a partnership is as important as the partnership itself.

Partnerships should be developed and nurtured around underlying principles and specific process and outcomes objectives. Successful partnerships have a clear scope that includes considerations of the boundaries of time,

financial and other resource costs, and the development and dissemination of products and other outcomes.

Stage 3. Formalizing the Partnership

The final stage includes completing a written partnership agreement that serves as a tool for developing and sustaining community-campus partnerships, and for introducing new levels of accountability among the partners. This agreement should clearly state the roles and responsibilities of each partner, along with well-defined outcomes and mutual benefits.

When developing a partnership agreement, be sure to

- involve all key partners
- agree on the partnership's purpose, goals, and objectives
- determine each partner's expectations and anticipated benefits of the partnership
- determine the roles, responsibilities, and key tasks of each partner; and create a timeline
- anticipate the partnership's outcomes and benefits
- anticipate the partnership's financial and staffing considerations
- anticipate the partnership's products and resulting copyright and ownership issues
- plan an evaluation process.

Future Promises

The potential is enormous for community-campus partnerships to transform learning and the discovery of new knowledge; redefine traditional relationships between communities and higher educational institutions;

renew civic responsibility; and improve the overall health of communities.

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Part II will highlight service-learning programs at colleges and universities around the nation and will demonstrate the dynamic impact these programs have on local and state government organizations and on the lives of individual citizens and students.

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