

Summary of Service Learning Survey (Spring 09)

Introduction

In order to better understand the impact and operation of the service learning program, a self-report in-class survey was distributed to all service learning classes. The survey included both close- and open-ended items. Out of 207 students enrolled in Service Learning courses, 73 completed a survey, representing 35.3% of the program population.

Closed end responses

Table 1: Reported level of learning from participating in the class (n=73).

	Nothing		A little		Much		Very Much	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
How much did you learn about the needs of the community you worked in?	21	28.8%	8	11.0%	20	27.4%	24	32.9%
How much did you learn about how a community agency works with social/environmental issues?	15	20.5%	14	19.2%	25	34.2%	19	26.0%
How much did you learn about potential careers/opportunities that you did not know about before?	8	11.0%	25	34.2%	25	34.2%	15	20.5%

Table 2: Reported increase in likelihood as a result of class participation (n=73).

	Not more likely		Slightly more likely		Likely		Very Likely	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
How much more likely will you be to volunteer with other organizations?	26	37.1%	11	15.7%	15	21.4%	18	25.7%
How much more likely will you be to Vote?	14	21.9%	5	7.8%	16	25.0%	29	45.3%
How much more likely will you be to donate money when you are able?	4	5.6%	10	13.9%	24	33.3%	34	47.2%
How much more likely will you be to transfer to a 4-year university?	6	9.0%	5	7.5%	12	17.9%	44	65.7%
How much more likely will you be to pursue a career in helping people or the environment?	9	12.9%	6	8.6%	13	18.6%	42	60.0%

Summary of open-ended responses

Placement Good Things

- ❖ Learned about the community
- ❖ Learned about the organization
- ❖ Flexible hours
- ❖ Feels good to help community
- ❖ Meeting new people and doing new things
- ❖ Inspired to share my experiences with others
- ❖ Desire to help more
- ❖ Developed a more complex understand of social issues
- ❖ Meeting professionals who are passionate about their work
- ❖ More likely to volunteer in the future
- ❖ Great to actually start to work in future area of study
- ❖ Increased social skills and how to handle conflict
- ❖ Making a difference
- ❖ Fun

Suggestions for improving placements

- ❖ Better preparation for volunteers
- ❖ More service learning sites
- ❖ Students need to be aggressive so that the placement fits their needs.
- ❖ More organization and structure
- ❖ Allow students to find their own placement
- ❖ More communication via emails
- ❖ Add a few more hours
- ❖ More communication from the organization
- ❖ Make sure supervisor knows what the students' goals are
- ❖ More opportunities in San Jose

Classroom good things

- ❖ Nice to be able to share experiences in the classroom
- ❖ It made the issues talked about in class real. It helped put a face on those in the community who need help
- ❖ Helped increase understanding of future career goals
- ❖ Learned about the different placements and social issues when students shared
- ❖ Hands on experience
- ❖ The class was managed very well

- ❖ Students helped each other
- ❖ The interactions with others in the class
- ❖ Able to share problems and solutions with other students.
- ❖ The instructor kept up motivation and spirits

Classroom suggestions

- ❖ Have less discussion which is only based on opinion, more facts
- ❖ Less papers so students have a chance to think about what we are doing in the placements
- ❖ Do weekly reports on what happened at the placement
- ❖ More field trips
- ❖ Offer more opportunity to interact with other students outside of the class
- ❖ Have longer placement time to see our work develop

Overall

- ❖ More advertisements for students who may want to take the class
- ❖ Increase the number of classes offering SL

Summary

Prior to summarizing the results, it must be noted that the results represent a portion of the participants from only one academic term. In addition, a self-report survey can only assess what a participant *thinks* he/she has learned or what he/she *intends* to do. Nevertheless, self-report data can be important in assessing students' perceptions and typically, student perceptions are correlated with student success.

It appears from the data that most students reported learning more about the community and about professional opportunities as a result of the Service Learning experience. Over sixty percent of students reported that they had learned *much* or *very much* about the *needs of the community* and about *how the agency works with social/environmental issues*. Fifty-four percent reported learning *much* or *very much* about *potential career opportunities*. While a high proportion of students reported learning about community issues, only 54% of respondents reported learning about potential career opportunities. It may be that the placements were not useful in learning about professional opportunities or that students were not interested in learning about different career pathways. Nonetheless, most students report considerable learning from their placements.

Students also reported the intent to change their behavior due to their experiences in the program. Student reported being *likely* or *very likely* to *volunteer with organizations* (47.1%), to *vote* (70.3), to *donate money* (80.5%), to *transfer to a 4-year university* (83.6%), and to *pursue a career in helping people or the environment* (78.6%). These results seem to be exceptionally high, all except for a reported increased likelihood to volunteer. A

majority of the students reporting that they are not significantly more *likely to volunteer* seems contradictory to other findings and needs further examination.

A majority of the students wrote in comments about the benefits of participating in the program. Many students commented that they increased their understanding of their communities' social and environmental issues. They reported that they learned more about the field and potential career pathways. Other students reported that they appreciated the dialogue with fellow students regarding their placement experiences. Students reported to be more likely to support these and other like organizations in the future.

Some suggestions included students seeking their own placement opportunities and broadening the placement choices to include San Jose. Several students suggested the need for greater communication between the placement site, the student, and the instructor. Another student suggested facilitating students' interaction outside of class time. Overall, several students commented that the program should be marketed to more students.

In sum, the students in the program seem to be learning more about the social and environmental issues in the community and how agencies and organizations address these issues. Students reported that these experiences have changed their perspectives and are likely to modify their future behavior. Furthermore, several students commented that information they learned from student placements helped them with course content. As far as program improvements, some students' suggestions may need consideration, for example, the broadening of placement opportunities and the facilitation of student interaction outside of class. Some of the above findings also suggest the need for further study and potential program modifications. As mentioned above, self-report data is only representative of *real* gains or shifts, but the write in data seems to support the findings that students are benefiting from the program.