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# **You Want Your Students to Do Service-Learning Where? On-Campus Options for Fashion Merchandising and Consumer Studies Students**

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*Service-learning is recognized by colleges and universities for its benefits to students; however, locating partners for course-specific service-learning projects and ways to manage these projects within a class can be a complex challenge for faculty. This challenge is magnified when faculty strive to maintain course-specific objectives while providing students with a service experience within a limited and sparsely populated geographic area. Following Lesnick (2010), our solution to this challenge was to look within our campus for partners. Using word-of-mouth and other networking skills, we identified two non-teaching units and one class unit as partners for student service-learning projects. Through careful coordination and vigilant planning, we were able to achieve course-specific activities for students to help prepare them for future jobs in business and industry and provide a service to our on-campus partners. This article explains our process and provides both the pitfalls and benefits of working with on-campus partners.*

*Keywords:* Service-learning, on-campus, fashion merchandising, consumer studies, case studies

## **Introduction**

Over the past several decades, service-learning has moved from an activity completed by students in a few fields (e.g., health, education, human services) to a pedagogy promoted widely in higher education and, more recently, to a requirement by many academic programs. In the 1990s, students engaged in community service to improve their resumés and impress graduate schools and employers (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Rebori, 2019). Since that time, service-learning, including community service, has become much more pervasive and integrated into higher education curricula. In the 2020s, many students now perform service to fulfill course or

major requirements (Yorio & Ye, 2012). The current consensus is that everyone in higher education is participating in service-learning (Kiltz, 2010).

Many universities have campus-wide programs as well as course-specific service-learning activities and have service-learning hours embedded within courses. Service-learning has become a metric for student engagement, evidence of outreach for faculty activities, and a measure of important pedagogical undertakings (Abes et al., 2002; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Karpova et al., 2011). Universities provide a range of support for faculty, including a listing of courses with service-learning components, websites with tips and hints, and links to nationwide programs (Kronick, 2007) but rarely provide direction on finding partners. Finding the right partners for this activity is often difficult, especially if you want your students to complete the learning part as well as perform the service for service-learning during a regular school semester (Minnaert et al., 2020). To fill this need, faculty typically have used appropriate off-campus community partners (Vickers et al., 2004). However, this may be difficult if the campus is located in a small or isolated area, especially for rural campuses and in times of limited travel. Being located at a major land grant university in a remote and rural area, we found the issue of a scarcity of partners to be a major impediment to fulfilling our majors' requirements for service-learning experiences. Our conundrum was to find service-learning partners in a rural setting for industry-specific experiences in academic fields that were not widely and often not generally available in close geographic proximity to the university. Thus, our research question was, "can we find on-campus partners to satisfy the service-learning requirements for our human science majors?"

The purpose of this article is to share our experiences with three service-learning projects using rich and untapped opportunities on our campus and to provide guidance to others who wish to use this on-campus model as part of the pedagogy of service-learning projects. We further examine the process for faculty to develop these on-campus projects with reflections from the three participation entities - faculty, students, and partners. From this analysis, we identify themes within the findings and models for service-learning partners and make recommendations for the future. Partnering for service-learning with on-campus entities proved to have benefits and pitfalls for faculty and students.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Definitions and an Overview**

Service-learning is one type of activity among several types of action-focused activities that students may complete (Kiltz, 2010). Although varied definitions appear in the literature, the unique aspect of service-learning is the combination of (a) the service provided to an agency or other unit within a community and (b) the student experience gained while performing the service (*Service-Learning*, 2015). While not readily visible in the name of the activity, reflection is the third important aspect of the service-learning experience (Conville & Kinnell, 2012;

Damons & Dunbar-Krige, 2020; Vickers et al., 2004). Reflection helps students focus on what they learned and provides all partners feedback on the efficacy and issues within the experience. Extensive research on many aspects and the importance of service-learning has been consistent since the 1990s (e.g., Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Condon et al., 2015; Humphrey & James, 2021; Keith, 1995; Kiltz, 2010; Resch & Schrittmesser, 2021). Some recent research has focused on service-learning with more socially-forward topics such as service-learning and sustainability (Hernández-Barco et al., 2020) and service-learning and technology (Bringle & Clayton, 2020). Both large and small universities and colleges have service-learning programs. To show the depth and diversity of service-learning programs, a Google search of the term “service-learning” coupled with the term “universities” tenders over eight billion results. One example was our own university’s VT Engage website (Virginia Tech, 2021). Service-learning at universities has become such an important part of the university experience that programs across the nation are ranked by major news sources (e.g., U.S. News & World Report, 2020). Two of these top programs are well-known for their service-learning programs (e.g., Berea College; Warren Wilson College).

### **Benefits of Service-Learning**

The benefits of service-learning are well documented in academic and professional literature (e.g., Humphrey & James, 2021; Kronick, 2007; Yorio & Ye, 2012). The students benefit from the practice of in-class learning as well as gain an appreciation for the application of their work (Humphrey & James, 2021; Nandan, 2010). Likewise, the agencies or external partners benefit from the service provided by the students and the information that students can contribute to their businesses. Faculty have the opportunity to teach students who are more engaged and have a deeper understanding of academic concepts (Hernández-Barco et al., 2020; Meyer & Miller, 2008). The literature has expanded over the past decade to confirm the benefits of service-learning for many student demographics (e.g., issues of socio-economic levels; Nishimura & Yokote, 2020; students with disabilities; Cox & Klas, 1996) and for various community partners (e.g., public schools as partners; Nandan, 2010). Service-learning can promote many benefits for students, including improved learning outcomes, advances in career development, and improved relationships with the institution, the community, and the student (Kiltz, 2010). Hence, the pathway to civic engagement produces active and engaged citizens (Rebori, 2019). Promoting civic responsibility and strengthening community are also important outcomes of service-learning. As a trifecta relationship, service-learning can be a win-win for communities/organizations (service), faculty (improved coursework learning), and students (field-based learning).

### **Preparation and Consideration of Partnerships, Including on Campus**

Developing and implementing a service-learning course or a segment within a course requires faculty time and additional resources. To ensure that students achieve the learning aspect of service-learning, faculty will first need to review their course objectives and consider the specific

learning they intend students to accomplish while performing their service (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2012). Keeping the learning in a service-learning project requires diligent work from faculty to maintain focus on the intended learning activities within the service-learning project (Condon et al., 2015). Objectives must be established for the activities and coordinated to coincide with course competencies. When students complete general public service to an agency without the learning component, this action is volunteerism (Kiltz, 2010). Service-learning is organized with a focused eye on course objectives. To meet the intentions of the service-learning initiative, finding partners in service-learning who can help students address recognized course objectives and who can accommodate enough students depending on class size is an important task for faculty during preparation (Minnaert et al., 2020).

For some courses of study (e.g., nursing, social work, education), these objectives may seem more visible and thus easier to achieve in the community than other courses of study. According to the literature, these fields have been leaders in service-learning, and defining their community partners is more obvious (e.g., Gelmon et al., 1998). For instance, the requirement that students in an education preparation program at Western Sydney University in Australia complete a service-learning class has been in place since the late 1990s (Vickers et al., 2004). Transitioning these students into public schools for pre-teacher training was a logical step. Health programs are another educational field where service-learning has been widely used. For example, the Health Professions Schools in Service to the Nation (HPSISN) was established in the mid-1990s, including several universities in the United States (Gelmon et al., 1998). Service-learning continues to be important in medical fields (Humphrey & James, 2021).

Some academic fields of study seem to have easy matches with some obvious community partners for service-learning activities. However, recent research shows that even these academic fields, which are service-related by content, are often searching for new sources of partners (Condon et al., 2015). Collaborating with new partners requires a mindset that helps both partners to see the value of the service and to recognize and maintain the importance of the course objectives (Minnaert et al., 2020).

For most universities and other institutions of higher learning, the campus is a community that provides activities and services to engage and support the community members. Thereby, the campus fits the community agency aspect of the service-learning partnership. With many major universities such as our campus, the student population equates to a small or midsize town, and typical town-type services exist to support the population. Given the community nature of a college or university campus, Lesnick (2010) encourages incorporating all aspects of campus into the service-learning model.

### **Content-Relevant Partners for Fashion Merchandising and Consumer Studies Students**

With the increasing demand for a service-learning component in every class or at least some classes within fashion merchandising and consumer studies, faculty are often tasked with finding

service-learning opportunities for students that provide learning related to course content. Literature on service-learning in fashion merchandising and consumer studies programs tends to lean toward advice specific to working with corporate partners (e.g., Karpova et al., 2011; Kincade & Gibson, 2012).

Appropriate community partners must be identified that can use the skill sets of the majors, offer enough engagement so students can complete required service hours, and have management willing to engage in meaningful dialog with these academic learners. Finding the right partners can often seem impossible when the course content is industry-specific and the industry is narrowly focused or not located near the educational institution.

### **Limitations of Service-Learning Opportunities in College Towns**

Universities in large cities and major metropolitan areas with larger population bases and more public agencies and businesses in close geographic proximity have greater opportunities than those in small towns or rural locations of many land-grant programs. Even in densely populated locations, the depth of local retailers and other service agencies able to provide the specific learning aspects for our human science majors and absorb the number of students is limited.

While the option for on-campus partners for service-learning is clearly acknowledged, the research on connecting with on-campus partners in service-learning is limited and narrowly focused (e.g., Judge, 2006; Lesnick, 2010). For example, Lesnick's on-campus case study (2010) focused on students' social learning. Or, partnerships on campus are focused on computers or other skills without focusing on our human sciences courses. For example, the university library has been reported in the literature as a partner for faculty who need computer-related services (Meyer & Miller, 2008).

Other typical partnerships from universities are with public schools. For example, groups of junior high and high school students are often used as recipients of service-learning (e.g., Nandan, 2010); however, small college towns have a limited number of public schools, which are often inundated with requests for service-learning activities. This limitation of potential service-learning sites in small college towns is confounded with a continued demand each semester. Some community partners may feel they are being overused or their need becomes satisfied over time.

### **Research Methods for the Three Case Studies**

This research is a practice and pedagogy report about our search and implementation of on-campus learning situations. Our research design, to approach the pedagogical issue of finding and using on-campus partnerships for service-learning and measuring the success of these activities, was qualitative research, specifically using a case study approach. We used a convenience sample of three of our courses: a senior merchandising course, a senior quality

products course, and a senior financial counseling course. Each course had an enrollment of over 20 students and was taught individually by two of the researchers, along with one teaching assistant in one course. Implementation of the service-learning projects in each course provided the three case studies for examining our research question of successful on-campus partners.

For data collection, the data used for this study came from our involvement with our classes participating in the on-campus service-learning projects. As we taught our classes, we maintained reflection logs as the service-learning projects progressed and at the conclusion of the case studies. Observation of in-class feedback and our notes on student activities and comments were part of our data logs. We learned from our experiences and observations of students' interactions and reflections with their group members and other class members. For assigning grades, students were assessed for their service-learning participation based on several criteria: their hours of service, feedback from the service-learning partners, and their self-reflection essays. As part of their requirements for the service-learning experience, student teams provided the on-campus program or project directors with a final reflection about their work. In addition, feedback was solicited from the directors of the on-campus units. Data analysis of these reflections was content analysis performed by two of the three researchers and was checked for consistency and understanding by the teaching assistant.

The limited number of students in the case study courses and the selected topics of the courses provided limitations to the validity or generalizability of the study. As researchers, we realize that the findings would be pertinent only to these particular courses, although some expansion to similar courses could be possible. The reliability of the study is also limited as we are reporting on one semester; however, we are reporting via a very in-depth and immersive method, as we were actively involved in the service-learning projects throughout the semester. Our involvement provides richness to the data but creates an inherent bias.

The methodological model we followed was a four-step planning model described by Jenkins and Sheehey (2012). This model for implementing service-learning programs in higher education has been downloaded over 500 times since its posting on the journal's website. And according to Google Scholar, it has been cited in over 70 studies across a variety of curricula. This practical pedagogical process has the following four steps: preparation (Step 1), implementation (Step 2), assessment/reflection (Step 3), and demonstration with celebration (Step 4).

## **Findings and Discussion or Reporting the Steps of the Service-Learning Model**

### **Preparation (Step 1)**

Within the preparation step, faculty must accomplish several tasks, including (a) establishing the objectives of the required student service, (b) finding the partners to receive the service, and (c) informing the class. These three substeps are described in a linear format in the following information, but the first two substeps are somewhat of a reiteration of development.

## *Finding the Partners*

Knowing that we wanted to have a service-learning component in our three courses, our first task was to find on-campus partners. We had some prior on-campus experience with service-learning projects in fashion merchandising but not in consumer studies. We partnered with the on-campus bookstores and other “retail” functions on campus for student internships. Although these agencies or units were willing to help our students, they became overburdened quickly with our requests (e.g., class size issues). In addition, they often preferred to hire student workers instead of using student volunteers without classroom objectives and credits. When these “retail” units had volunteers, they were concerned with issues of insurance and occupational liabilities. When students are covered through classroom credits and the university, they are not volunteers but service-learning workers. Knowing the benefits of service-learning and wanting more of our students to be involved in service-learning activities, we needed other partners who could handle our growing number of students and were interested in receiving student service-learning workers.

We needed on-campus units that were geographically close for student access but also partners that could provide industry-relevant tasks. In our courses, we prepared fashion merchandising and consumer studies students for jobs in the workforce unrelated to the general services of education, health, or human services. We wanted service-learning opportunities that would allow students to use information learned from their in-major courses and help them transfer classroom knowledge to industry or community activities. The final criteria for finding good partners related to (a) coursework, (b) proximity, and (c) preparation for jobs in respective industries.

Through campus communication vehicles (e.g., daily news emails, college meetings), word-of-mouth, and personal networking, we collected information about service activities already in place by various offices and departments across campus and assessed the needs of these units. Personal networking was the most successful vehicle. To find partners, we asked many questions of many unit administrators. Three non-traditional partners presented themselves as potential service-learning partners: career services, the university library, and groups of students.

While serving as departmental career advisors, we often work with university Career Services (CS) and were informed they were planning a suit drive specifically to gather and supply career wear (e.g., suits, jackets, ties) for job-seeking students. In our senior-level quality product course (taught by one of the researchers), students integrate and practice information from previous courses within our department that address fashion choices, consumer behavior, and body sizing and fit issues. The service-learning activity with CS was relevant to our fashion-merchandising students. We contacted the person in charge of the career wear program and offered the services of our students. With course training in fashion quality and fit, our students were able to help match donated suits to students seeking career wear. Students could provide personalized fitting services and style or fashion advice to their peers who needed assistance selecting items to find



the best fit for a professional business look. In addition, students were able to assist CS with merchandise display and presentation of the suits and accessories. The first case study with on-campus partners was initiated.

A second case study was launched when the director of services in the University Library contacted our department. A library administrator was seeking input for ideas on renovations for the library's public spaces. The library administration wanted input on spatial and advertising renovations in the library and considered our course offerings. They wanted the front lobby to resemble an upscale retail space. Previous research has reported student work on databases and other library work-related activities (e.g., Meyer & Miller, 2008), but none have been noted to provide spatial design or retail industry-related service. Our senior students in a capstone merchandising class had previous course training in retail management and visual merchandising to offer product and space-specific suggestions with details on color, placement, and item selection for the lobby of the library. Students used what they learned in previous classes to complete the project and implemented surveys to assess feedback about their work. Using data collected from the surveys and videos of the project, students presented their service-learning experience to the library staff.

Partnerships for the third case study again depended on personal networking, asking questions among our colleagues, and looking within our own departmental community. Students in an upper-level consumer studies class about financial counseling, taught by one of the researchers, were partnered with students in an entry-level undergraduate class, also taught by a researcher, to provide personalized budget and financial management information. This idea draws from the more common service-learning partnership of undergraduate university students partnering with high school students (e.g., Brewster et al., 2016; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Gallagher & McGorry, 2015; Nandan, 2010). Projects involving high school students require the logistics of transporting students to off-campus sites and the need to obtain specialized permission for providing service to minors. Instead of partnering with public junior high or high schools, we decided to continue our theme of the university as our community. Thus, we brought the student-to-student idea to campus and partnered with our own undergraduate students. This relationship created the mentor-mentee connection for service-learning (Vickers et al., 2004). The upper-level students prepared visual and tangible information (e.g., handouts, videos, PowerPoints) for teaching the entry-level students about budgets and personal finance issues. These topics are relevant to both consumer studies students who will use this information in their industry jobs and the merchandising students who will manage employees in need of such information. Students met in a job fair format for several hours and several days. Some of these partners may seem obvious for other disciplines (e.g., working with the library), but it took the adaptability and open communication recommended by Minnaert et al. (2020) to complete an effective partnership targeted for skill sets for human sciences majors. For example, our service to the library was more design-based and not something of need for the obvious academic functions of the library.

### *Establishing Objectives*

Meeting course learning objectives while matching the partner's requests is the most important aspect of an effective service-learning project (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2012). For our three service-learning-related courses, we first reviewed course objectives for each class identified as having a required service-learning project. We then met with our contact person from the proposed on-campus agency partner. To explain our ideas, we itemized course content and learning objectives that would be addressed in each project. For example, we met with the Career Services (CS) program director to explain the class goals and learn more about her planned career wear program. Next, we developed a proposal for the service-learning project that aligned with the class's objectives and the CS program's goals.

For each partner, we met again to verify that the proposal would meet the needs of the three entities in the service-learning partnership (i.e., instructor, student, on-campus partner). Veering too far from course objectives to meet a request of the outside partner is not beneficial to students or the academic program (Kiltz, 2010). Our obligation to keep the learning focused within the service-learning project added restrictions to a partnership and further limited available choices for partners. As an example of how reiterative the process can be, we met multiple times with the CS program director for the career suit-drive case study. In the second meeting with the CS program director, we discussed the activities we proposed that students would complete and made adjustments to fit the expectations of CS. Similar meetings and discussions were completed to initiate the two other case studies (i.e., renovation of library space, financial management training).

### *Informing the Class*

Taking time during class in preparation for the service activities and throughout the service time was an important aspect of the four-step service-learning process. Class time and activities were planned into the syllabi, both for instructional time and grades. Prior to the beginning of the semester for the three courses (i.e., quality product, merchandising management, financial counseling) involved in our case studies, the appropriate project was identified in each of the course syllabi, including the dates of student participation and/or presentations. In addition, specialized project directions were generated by the instructors to identify the students' responsibilities and assessments. Participation in the service-learning project was a required part of each course, and students were informed when the project was introduced as to the ways to earn course credit and the evaluation methods to be used. Preparing students for their service required textbook-based information and service-activity direction.

Involving students in the planning process and reiterating the value of the activities is important in maintaining the learning aspect of the service-learning project (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2012). Activities were outlined for students, related course content was reviewed in class, and class time was allocated to allow students to prepare. For example, students in the class with the CS project

were advised of the times for their participation, and signup sheets were used to avoid having too many students at a given time at the CS. Students were also given time in class to practice their suit measuring and fitting skills. As suggested by other service-learning researchers (Averett & Arnd-Caddigan, 2014; Eyer, 2002), role-playing was used to prepare students for their on-campus service activities. For instance, each student brought a jacket to class and approached other classmates as if they were providing fashion-consulting services to student participants at the CS suit-drive case study.

In other use of class time, we invited the contact person of the on-campus agency to present their agency's requests to the appropriate class. We invited the CS program director to present to the upper-level fashion merchandising class that would be involved in the CS suit donation project. For the class-to-class project, the faculty member responsible for both courses discussed the project with the respective classes. We scheduled each visit or explanation early in the semester and began to integrate the projects into the courses immediately. In addition, once class teams were formed and their activities explained, student teams were directed to schedule team appointments with their on-campus partner representatives.

### **Implementation or Providing the Service (Step 2)**

Students provided services through their directed service-learning projects to the on-campus agencies to fulfill the service-learning activities. For the career-suit case study, students worked in the CS unit during the week of the suit giveaway. Students signed up for hours and logged in at CS. They worked with the student customers providing fitting and style advice. For the second case study, the students met in the university library with various library personnel for information gathering sessions, which included question-and-answer periods as well as tours of library spaces. Students reported that they toured spaces they had never seen in the library. These students met several times with library personnel to present ideas and demonstrate recommendations. Students in the financial counseling course planned a counseling fair and developed signage, handouts, and other materials. They staffed booths at the on-campus fair and spoke directly with the sophomore "clients" during the counseling fair.

During the service-learning implementation phase of each case study, instructors for each class met regularly with the student teams and with directors of the on-campus agency partners. These meetings were scheduled as part of the class. Meeting with student groups improved their individual and group performance. In-class meetings with the entire class helped the learning experience coalesce for the entire class. During these meetings, students were asked for progress reports or input about the completed activities for their service and their learning, their ideas for improving their performance, and assistance that faculty could provide, either to the student or the partner. For instance, we asked students to report what they used in their service activities that they learned in class. Throughout their service, they also delivered regular written updates on their activities and checked completion of their in-process stage-gates for their class projects.

### **Assessment and Reflection or Evaluating the Learning (Step 3)**

In the assessment of the three case studies, we found very similar findings across the three cases. For this reason, the results of our assessment are stated in a global format and not separated for the three case studies. Several themes emerged from the content analysis of our notes taken during and after the service-learning activities. We recognized a multifaceted student satisfaction with the service-learning activity, which was expected, and an unexpected confirmation of the major. A third theme was the frustration many feel with service-learning, which is the inability to control the service-learning activity because of the partnership aspect.

As anticipated, our notes as researchers and faculty teaching the classes showed that students felt satisfied that they had provided service to others and were positive about the service-learning experience. This finding supports the extensive research on the benefits of service-learning (e.g., Humphrey & James, 2021; Kronick, 2007; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Students stated in their in-class sharing that they had learned ample class and life-skills information during the service-learning process. In addition, perhaps because of the on-campus nature of the projects, students expressed a sense of gratitude and pride that they were able to contribute to projects for which they felt ownership because they were also members of the campus community. One other unexpected reflection from students was a sense of accomplishment in that they were able to provide knowledge and skills to another unit on campus. We observed that students felt validation of their major when they realized that they possessed a level of skills and knowledge that the director or other leaders of the partner agencies did not. Students indicated that they saw value in what they had learned in class and often said, “I thought everyone knew that” or “I was surprised that the students [directors] did not know what I knew about the topic.” One of the researchers described this as students having an “ah-ha moment” as they worked with service-learning partners in the projects. With this affirmation of their course knowledge, students recognized that their in-major skill sets offered them a competitive edge in the real world.

The third theme was related to problems with service-learning. As faculty, we felt, as the students did, that service-learning had some restrictive elements. Students also expressed that even with this knowledge, they, as service-learning workers, were not able to control the situation better or make changes they thought were needed in the project. For example, students working with CS identified products on the display racks that were out of style or soiled, which should have been removed. Although they were able to make recommendations in their report to the project directors and agency partners, they were still thwarted in their desire to improve their current project situation. This theme is supportive of the work by Minnaert et al. (2020) about the importance of partnership mindset.

Although limited, the feedback from the service-learning partners was positive. The two program directors and the faculty member agreed that the students’ service was beneficial both in dedicated hours and in the knowledge shared. The CS director and the faculty member expressed an interest in repeating the activity. The library administrator found that the student input was

similar to ideas received from other sources and was refocusing on a new project; therefore, the director was not interested in more assistance from our students.

#### **Demonstration with Celebration or Reflections (Step 4)**

As both the researchers and faculty directly teaching the service-learning courses, our feedback was both positive and negative. We found much to celebrate and much for reflection and change. On the celebration side, students were enthusiastic about the activities and became deeply engaged in the course content. This engagement was reflected in their positive test scores on later tests that covered course content used in the service-learning project. On the negative side, with a need for more consideration, was the amount of time necessary to set up the projects was extensive. Each new project required revisions to syllabi, the creation of activity directions and signup sheets, and meetings outside of the classroom to find and secure the on-campus partners. Some of this time might be mitigated if the projects were repeated but was lost when a project could not be repeated. The class time essential to prepare students adequately was also disruptive to the balance of information in the overall course content for each of the three courses. Service-learning projects are time-intensive, and instructors often have difficulty balancing them with other academic responsibilities (Abes et al., 2002). For on-campus service-learning, these negatives were offset by a number of positive outcomes.

#### ***Pitfalls/Challenges***

One of the primary pitfalls of using on-campus partners appeared because the partners were indeed on campus. The on-campus position of the service-learning partners generated additional stress for us, the instructors/researchers. Although, as faculty, you always want your students to shine and perform well in “public,” having students working for university colleagues meant that we were even more sensitive to the quality of their work. We felt that their image and the department’s image were at stake in the outcome of these projects. Long after this class of students is gone, we must continue to function on campus and interact with our service-learning partners, even if outside a specific project. This increased the stress level of the projects.

To compound this added stress, the on-campus partners seemed less threatening to the students. From the students’ perspective, because the partners were on campus, they tended to take a more relaxed and less professional attitude about their approach to their service-learning partners. Students assumed they could drop in on program directors or send casual emails. These approaches were often unsuccessful, added to the students’ frustration, and were unwanted by and generated the indignation of the on-campus partners. This same casual approach also applied to presentations and presentation materials. During class discussions and group meetings, faculty continuously reminded students that all means of communication had to be professional. To reduce stress and to assure more professionalism among students, we suggest that faculty take an additional active role in establishing student-to-partner contact. This may include setting

appointments for the students and requiring all email contact from students be copied to faculty or reviewed by faculty before sending to the partner.

Having on-campus partners should have mitigated some course preparation time (e.g., less travel time); however, we conclude that while some of the time outside of class was reduced, the time needed within class increased. Practicing for the activities, reflecting on the outcomes, and designing in-class learning experiences required extra class time compared to the same class taught without the service-learning component. Although the on-campus projects were, as we desired, specific to the class and the major, we had to adjust classroom topics and other activities to prepare and evaluate students for the projects and manage the groups.

### ***Benefits***

On the other hand, the on-campus location had several benefits, and for this reason, we highly recommend considering the use of on-campus partners. We were pleasantly surprised at how many non-obvious partners we found on campus and how receptive units on campus were to our students' services. In addition, students gained a comprehensive understanding of campus community issues and attained opportunities to apply their classroom knowledge. They enjoyed getting "behind the scenes" views of university units that had seemed organizational and inhuman to them. They also arrived at the sites and completed their activities without transportation costs and carpooling issues. With the locations close, they found they could utilize their time between classes and did not necessitate large blocks of time for service-learning work. Another benefit for students is highlighting their work ethic and establishing a personal reference from the on-campus partners for their first-hand experience with service-learning projects. Their involvement also sends a message to job recruiters about their ability to utilize and capitalize on resources within their reach (e.g., partners on campus).

For faculty, the on-campus partnerships were rewarding on several levels. We met new people in departments and units we had never seen across campus. The department name and major received increased visibility, and we built lasting partnerships across campus. When students did outstanding jobs, we were invited back for repeat semesters. For example, the CS project has extended work into subsequent semesters, has members of our student organization now doing service-learning work with that unit, and has evolved into a paid student internship position with CS to direct the program and provide guidance to the students who are doing the service-learning work. We were able to provide students with relevant service-learning projects that make transparent connections between course content and real-world scenarios. Seeking in-major and industry-specific projects with on-campus partners was an overall positive experience for us. These on-campus projects were definitely a win-win-win across the student-faculty-partner relationship in service-learning.

## **Conclusions, Implications, and Future Research**

From our findings, we concluded that having students work on campus is a positive way for them to garner service-learning experience in a convenient and safe place while also increasing visibility for the major. The benefits of service-learning seemed to transcend the on-campus location. Although stressful for faculty in a number of ways, some of the issues unique to the on-campus location, we recommend this route when creating a service-learning course or considering service-learning activities for classes and for faculty searching for new service-learning partners.

### **Implications for Practitioners**

In addition to the discussion given in the previous Step 4 reflections section, one other area, service-learning models, was noted that provides information for practitioners.

#### ***Models of Service-Learning Projects***

Across the three case studies, two models of service-learning projects with on-campus partnerships emerged. These two models of on-campus community engagement were as follows: course-based (e.g., peer-to-peer tutoring, the library project) and problem-based (e.g., CS suit donation project). The course-based projects integrated with the courses throughout the semester to create, implement, and reflect upon the project. Meanwhile, the problem-based project was more topic-specific and involved a few weeks within the semester but did not encompass the course. All projects were discipline-specific and fulfilled the need for both student service and objective-based learning. Faculty may want to consider whether they want a service-learning project that encompasses the entire course or focuses on one aspect of a course.

### **Theoretical Implications for the Literature**

The study followed the four-step model of Jenkins and Sheehey (2012); thus, these theoretical implications are reported against the following four steps: (1) preparation, (2) implementation, (3) assessment/reflection, and (4) demonstration with celebration.

#### ***Preparation and Implementation***

In general, a service-learning project takes time to develop and administer. Preparation and implementation time has been documented by numerous researchers (Abes et al., 2002; Jenkins & Sheehey, 2012). The findings of our research supported this literature. Although the travel time was less because we were on campus, the in-class preparation and the need to be perfect for on-campus partners offset any time benefits. On-campus partnerships have many benefits, but time-saving did not prove to be one of the benefits.

### ***Assessment/Reflection***

Students kept logs of their work and underwent various forms of assessment, including discussing their work in class. Benefits from this process were seen as predicted by previous researchers (e.g., Damons & Dunbar-Krige, 2020; Vickers et al., 2004). We noted that our students developed additional skills through service-learning through assessment and reflection activities, as predicted by Tucker and McCarthy (2001). We also observed growing professional relationships with the on-campus partners beyond the typical classroom use of these partner agencies.

### ***Demonstration with Celebration***

In the on-campus activities, students took pride in their major and in using the specific in-major knowledge they learned in class, which is consistent with the findings by Meyer and Miller (2008). Like the students, we, the teaching faculty, felt a similar sense of pride in providing services to our campus, as we are also part of the university community. Although these benefits may be found in numerous service-learning projects, we felt they had some unique special qualities because they were on our campus.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

We recognized that our experience with on-campus partners is limited to the projects and partners we selected on campus during a single semester. We selected those as appropriate for our majors, but with our success, we can recommend that faculty seek opportunities on their campus that fit the in-major learning for their majors.

Suggestions for future research are plentiful and are mostly drawn from the study's limitations. Future research is recommended at the departmental, college, or university level to investigate on-campus service-learning opportunities. In addition, we recommend that future studies involve the collection of more detailed feedback from students and partners. Partners may be reluctant to provide feedback, but perhaps scheduling a time for a debriefing visit at the beginning of the partnership may prompt improved feedback. A comparison study could be developed using a class where a selection of students worked with on-campus partnerships and others worked with off-campus partners could further the validity of the findings. Repeating on-campus service-learning with the same courses is also recommended for improved reliability of the findings. As a side note, in subsequent semesters, we repeated the service-learning activities for both the merchandising management class and the financial counseling course with similar success. Repeating on-campus service-learning with other human science majors is also recommended to validate the findings further.

Considering both the benefits and pitfalls/limitations of service-learning done on campus, we still highly recommend considering this mode of site selection. Finding the right partner is



important in any service-learning project, but the benefits to students and campus are real. Our students provided services to many constituents on campus and, in the process, received validation of their majors. Creativity and personal networking were needed to find the right opportunities for our students, but the rewards were large for us. This idea is part of the future of service-learning as one of our campuses is now actively recruiting partners for a multiple-avenue on-campus service-learning project. Future research may confirm these findings with benefits to faculty and students.

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