

## **The Value of a Cooperative Service Project as Reciprocal Teaching/Learning for Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

Phyllis McCluskey-Titus  
Illinois State University

### **Abstract**

This paper reports the results of a qualitative study undertaken to discover what two groups of students learned from participating together in a volunteer service-learning project. Students reported satisfaction with their labors, an enjoyment of team work, an appreciation for family and material goods, the value and impact they had on others and the community, and an awareness of personal skills and competencies. Implications for teaching/ student learning and recommendations for future research and practice are also presented.

Current scholarship validates the integration of volunteer and service-learning projects into college course work as a means to promote learning (Astin & Sax, 1998; Brody & Wright, 2004; Eyler & Giles, 1999). The opportunity to participate in service-learning enhances important content knowledge in a variety of disciplines including social work (Timmermans & Bouman, 2004), education (Guaderrama, 2000), and political science (Berson & Younkin, 1998) among others. In addition, service-learning for college students has been linked to further development in critical thinking (Ehrlich, 2000), diversity awareness (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000), values commitment (Rhoads, 1997) and indirectly to stronger graduation and retention rates (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In this research project two classes of students, one undergraduate and one graduate, taught by the same instructor, were paired and participated in one of two service-learning projects held during the same week-end. The primary purpose of the project was two-fold: 1) To provide graduate student role models for first year students who were new to campus, and 2) To provide an applied setting for graduate students to learn about first year students. Teaching and learning were to be reciprocal outcomes within the same project. The purpose of this research then, was to assess the extent to which learning about other students took place while also assessing the benefits to students of using a volunteer service-learning project as a teaching/learning methodology. This study adds to the current SoTL literature by assessing graduate students' learning that is typically not studied (McKinney, 2007) and through the inclusion of student voices and student recommendations for changes to the project to enhance the overall learning experience.

### **Logistics of the Service-learning Project**

Participants in this project included 18 first year undergraduate students enrolled in a first year experience (LinC) course and 15 graduate students enrolled in a course on the study of college students which were taught by the same instructor. One of the requirements of the LinC course was to participate in six hours of service within the local community. An intended outcome in the college student course was for students to learn about and better understand traditionally aged first year students. Given both of those course goals, the opportunity for the two classes of students to work together on a service project and learn with and from each other seemed intriguing. Weigert (1998) explains that when service "flows from and into course objectives" (p. 5) it provides a true learning experience.

Within our local community there is a week-end of service and activism called Sharefest. I was able to find appropriate service projects that would offer large groups of college-aged students opportunities to be involved and make a difference to the local community where they were attending college. The first project involved painting a group home for developmentally disabled adults, and the second project was to clear away brush and do yard work at a childcare center for children from low income families. The two projects were scheduled for one-half day on a Friday afternoon and a Saturday morning, and students could choose to work with either project based on personal interest or their schedule.

Students were assigned by the instructor to work in teams of four including two graduate students and two undergraduate students per team. The teams were purposefully arranged to promote discussion among students who had not already bonded with each other in the first three weeks of class, and to allow for teams with various differences in race, ethnicity, religion, major, and hometown. Graduate students were assigned the position of “informal leaders” and were briefed on their role to initiate conversation, provide direction for the work to be completed, facilitate icebreakers, and provide transportation for the group.

### **Methodology for the Study**

Following the week-end service experience every student submitted a reflective paper detailing his or her own thoughts on what was learned from the service project using prompts provided by the instructor. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) report that service-learning activities are more productive when there are written or oral reflection elements incorporated into projects. Furthermore, “reflection activities direct the student’s attention to new interpretations of events and provide a means through which the community service can be studied, analyzed, and interpreted much like a text is read and studied for deeper understanding” (Bringle, Phillips & Hudson, 2004, p. 6). Students were asked to reflect on how they felt about completing the service-learning project and working with the other students, what they learned about themselves and others from the experience, and how likely that they would participate in volunteer service in the future. First year students also completed journal assignments each week and many discussed their experiences with their team and the service-learning project more in depth in the journal entry immediately following the service experience. After the papers and journals were submitted,

discussions were held separately in both classes to clarify ideas and obtain additional insights that can only result when a group of people with shared experiences come together and talk. In addition, qualitative remarks from the course evaluations were also reviewed for comments particular to the shared service-learning projects and were included as an additional source of data in this study.

Reflections from the papers and journals, course evaluations, and class discussions were analyzed by taking significant student quotes and thoughts and then grouping those using common or reoccurring themes (Merriam, 2002). Based on this basic interpretive data analysis seven distinct and broad categories of responses emerged. In order to validate the choice of these themes and establish a level of trustworthiness in the analysis, two colleagues who also taught these same classes reviewed the raw data and were asked to sort student comments into the established themes. In addition, students themselves were offered the opportunity to review the themes that emerged and to comment about how their experience did or did not fit with those themes. Students were asked for feedback only after the semester had ended and there was not a perceived pressure to respond in a certain way since the classes were completed and grades already assigned. Based on peer review and participant feedback, several changes to the themes and to the comments associated with those themes were made.

What follows is a discussion of the seven themes that emerged from the data collected and the student comments supporting those themes that are used to further explain students' learning. Following the discussion of each theme, implications and suggestions for teaching and learning using similar a pedagogy including a service-learning project will be presented.

### **Results: In Their Own Words**

Students involved in the cooperative service-learning projects reported understanding the linkage between themselves and people in need, satisfaction with the project and the amount of work completed, enjoyment in helping others and working as a part of a team, greater appreciation for what material goods and personal supports they had, an awareness of the value and impact of their work, experiences with people they never would have otherwise, and a new awareness of their own personal skills and competencies. This section will share the ideas and thoughts of student learners who were engaged in service-learning projects as a part of class and what they believed they took away from this experience.

### **Theme one: Linkages to People in Need**

Originally the class was asked to paint a group home, but we learned several days before the project that our help was needed to paint a home for two families who had been displaced by Hurricane Katrina and were moving to our community. This allowed for discussion in class about our connection in Illinois to persons in need on the Gulf coast. Our campus was also engaged in the American Democracy Project and wanted to promote civic engagement that Thomas Ehrlich (2000) defines as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference...promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes” (p. vi). This service-learning project seemed very relevant to that effort, and this connection was discussed in the classroom with students as well. One student reflected in his paper, *“Once it was announced in class that our service project would be painting a house for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, I felt that I was doing something that would have meaning behind it...”*

The intentional link made within course discussion between participation in service within our community and the recent natural disaster on the Gulf coast provided an opportunity to process student feelings, examine connections between seemingly unrelated groups of citizens, and provided students additional motivation to become involved in disaster relief efforts. Following the class discussion, one student remarked, *“I was very happy that I was going to be able to help someone from Hurricane Katrina because I was feeling like I had not done my part to help the victims.”*

### **Teaching/learning strategies:**

In order to further establish the relationship of students in the class to those being helped in the community and in the Southeast, an activity was done using the children’s book *Zoom* by Istvan Banyai (1995). *Zoom* is a picture book that begins with a seemingly abstract drawing on page one, which is found, on page two to be a rooster’s comb. In subsequent pages the drawing becomes broader and more global by zooming out to reveal more and more of a scene, ending, 30 pages later, with the view of the earth from far out in space. Each student was given one page from this book and told to describe the picture to others in the class, one at a time, without showing it to anyone. Students were instructed to find the connections between the pictures. After the activity was completed and students found the relationship among the pictures in the book, a discussion was held linking the situation between poverty

in our community and destruction on the Gulf coast to our class. We then discussed other more “real” connections between students in our classes and the issues we were addressing through the service-learning projects. For instance, one student had a cousin who lived in New Orleans, another had a neighbor in the National Guard who was being sent to help with the removal of hurricane debris, and another had a sister who was a single mother and relied on subsidized child care. All of these stories had great meaning for students in both classes and allowed them to better understand how their help locally could make a difference in the lives of many others.

Following this discussion, one graduate student commented that *“I have noticed that many people in the Midwest (or in the U.S. for that matter) do not think there is anything else in the world other than their own community, friends, and family.”* Using this learning activity allowed students to see that perhaps their view of the world was limited, but that through helping others they might also expand their own knowledge and understanding of people they had never met.

### **Theme two: Satisfaction with the project and the amount of work completed**

As might have been anticipated, in spite of initial reluctance and some complaints from the undergraduate students in particular, most students in their reflective papers, journals, course evaluations, and class discussions reported satisfaction with the service-learning project and with the amount of work that was completed individually and as a group. One first year student stated, *“The feeling I received after I looked back on the completed house gave me strong motivation to continue doing community service.”* There was a sense of accomplishment that permeated both the reflective papers and the class discussions. There was also a sense of surprise at what college students were able to do in a short period of time and how they felt afterwards. One undergraduate student commented, *“I felt such a feeling of accomplishment like I had done something worthwhile...It is good to give a monetary donation, but I felt more of a sense of really doing something and helping after the service project.”* Because both projects allowed the participants to see immediate results, the freshly painted house and the weed and branch-free playground, students could assess on site the value of their labors. *“It was nice to be able to step back and look at exactly what we had done,”* said one participant. The sense of accomplishment also was demonstrated by student recognition that the children and the families would be grateful for the assistance provided by both classes. After painting the house for the hurricane

evacuees, we took group photographs and the students wanted to send a note and their picture to the families who would be moving in. At the childcare center, one student related *"It was awesome to know that Monday when the children arrived they would have clean blacktop on which to play basketball and a playground without weeds coming through the stones."*

It is also noteworthy that although students were initially apprehensive and even upset about having to "give up" their time in order to participate in this service-learning project, that they reported having a positive experience after it was completed.

### **Teaching/learning strategies:**

Focusing on the end product and the intended outcomes of the service-learning project may be helpful in building student enthusiasm beforehand. Eyster & Giles (1999) offer five strategies for thoughtful reflection after completing service projects, and one of those strategies is making a connection. This end result that is anticipated may have a relationship to local, state-wide, or national events in order to best motivate students. Students in this study reported that painting a home for families displaced by the hurricane was much more rewarding than if they had painted the same home for developmentally disabled adults. If the instructor is able to connect the service-learning project to something that has affected the students, then the potential for learning may be greater.

Another way to enhance learning would be to connect the people being served with the students in some sort of interaction before or after the service-learning project is completed. Seeing or meeting the people who will benefit from the work might provide an important stimulus to allow students to be more enthusiastic beforehand about completing the project and better understand how their efforts will make a difference to real people.

### **Theme three: Enjoyment in helping others and working as a part of a team**

A third concept that emerged from the data was the gratification that was expressed by students in their ability to help others while working as a part of a team. *"After cleaning up the playgrounds I felt satisfied. I felt proud of myself and the students I worked with. We all worked really hard and the hard work was worth every drop of sweat."* This was especially notable because the students in the two classes had no knowledge of each other until the day of the service project. There was even initial apprehension by the undergraduate students who had some preconceived notions about what graduate

students would be like and how they would or would not relate to the first year students socially.

Throughout the day students in both classes shared stories, snacks, and worked together. One new student reported *"At the end of the day the school looked amazing, and I thought that all of us involved felt closer because of it."*

Another aspect of the value of team work became clearer through student journals and papers which discussed how much more could be accomplished as a member of a group than as an individual. *"Everyone seemed to have put forth all their effort to make a difference for the children."* Several students planned further involvements through campus organizations that would allow them to work with others on service-learning projects which were an intended outcome of the LinC class in particular. *"If anything, I feel this experience has really motivated me to work towards getting involved and looking into campus and community service organizations to which I could donate some of my time,"* reported one undergraduate student.

The magnitude of the projects that were undertaken seemed so big, and almost unattainable when viewed initially. The home that was painted (walls and ceilings) contained five large bedrooms, two bathrooms, a great room, kitchen, entry and interior hallways. The childcare center had two large playground areas, a blacktopped basketball area, and several gardens and exterior landscaping that needed extensive maintenance. One student remark captured the essence of what others were also feeling when she noted that *"working together to help others makes you feel helpful because some work is just unable to be done without someone else's help."*

### **Teaching/learning implications:**

This project brought two classes of otherwise unrelated students together to complete important work. Without this service-learning project, perhaps most of the students would have no opportunity to interact or to learn from each other. There was awkwardness between the two classes of students as we gathered on campus to leave for the service-learning projects. Each team of four rode to the project in the same car and was asked to choose a team name en route. This served as an ice-breaker, but also gave the teams a chance to learn more about each other. A suggestion that students made following the event was to bring the classes together prior to working on the service-learning project. This, said the students,

would have allowed them to begin the team building process earlier and perhaps they might have accomplished more.

Both classes also wished that there had been time to process the experience right after the service-learning projects had been completed, perhaps over pizza and sodas. The teams wanted more of an opportunity to talk about their experiences while the information and the feelings were fresh. While this would have been positive in terms of a debriefing to the activity, I wondered about the reflective or thoughtful element that may be missed by discussing what was learned in a group setting too soon. Perhaps individual voices or alternative perspectives to the learning would be lost or over-ridden in the discussion process immediately following the projects. This concern was validated by Strage (2000) who found that students were better able to integrate concepts associated with a service-learning project later in the semester than they were at mid-term (p.11).

By working as a part of a team and discussing with others the backgrounds and upbringing each person had prior to college, some students came to realize how fortunate they been growing up compared with others.

#### **Theme four: Greater appreciation for material goods and personal supports**

Since these projects and subsequent discussions were completed shortly after Hurricane Katrina devastated the United States Gulf Coast and the photographs from newscasts were showing widespread devastation, a third theme, greater appreciation for what material goods students had, may have been more situated in current events than in the actual service-learning activities performed. Nonetheless, this theme emerged strongly from students as they reflected on the new inhabitants of the house that was painted and the children who spent each day at the childcare center where we cleaned the grounds and playground. Several similar comments reflected that *“by participating in this service project I learned how lucky my family, friends, and I were when we were growing up”* and *“I really do take things for granted, and I realized this when I was thinking of all the people that lost all of their belongings in the hurricane.”*

Today's traditionally aged college students as a whole have grown up in an era of relative economic productivity (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Students in both classes reported that their families had some level of disposable income. Working for people from a very different socio-economic stratum also was a learning experience for most of the students involved in the projects. *“I realized how hard it must*

*be on those families, so painting the inside of their house was the least I could do.*" A certain level of naiveté was also evident especially in the remarks of the first year students. One student wrote that, *"seeing and hearing about people who don't have things that I take for granted reminds me of what is truly important and I want to help others so they can have all the things I have."*

### **Teaching/learning implications:**

While recognizing their own privilege, students also reported learning how much their efforts would assist the families who benefited from their labor which was something they had not considered prior to the service-learning project. It would have enhanced learning in both classes if we had addressed the issue of poverty from an intellectual perspective through readings and discussions before participating in the service-learning projects. Hatcher, Bringle, and Muthiah (2004) found that "...students benefited from repeated, rather than isolated, opportunities to connect community service to the course content" (p. 42). The graduate class studied college students from low socio-economic backgrounds after the service-learning project, and their discussion was greatly informed by their participation in the project combined with the assigned readings (Ehrenreich, 2001; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Suskind, 1998). In a course evaluation one student commented, *"The reading materials were extremely helpful, particularly the books for the literature circle (on students from poor backgrounds)."*

Even though the students recognized they had been very fortunate in their upbringings, they also were moved by their awareness of how much their work meant to other people who needed it.

### **Theme five: An awareness of the value and impact of their work**

A number of students had never participated in service-learning projects before which was surprising given the emphasis in both high schools and undergraduate institutions on volunteerism and service-learning (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The fifth theme, an awareness of the value and impact their work meant to others, shows the lack of understanding of some students, even at the graduate level, about the importance of service to a community.

*"I learned that I am capable of assisting other members of the community by simply painting a house. It did not seem like that big of a deal to me at first, but looking back I understand that those six hours of my time really helped people in need."* As surprising as it seems, particularly in light of what they reported about how much could be accomplished by working as a part of a team, students reported

amazement at the value of their efforts to others. They began to see themselves as part of and contributing to something bigger and outside of themselves. This learning was expressed by a student who indicated, *“At first we thought of this as a job. After we got to the house and learned about the people moving in, I realized how much this was helping them.”*

One student had significant experience working with volunteer organizations before coming to campus and she was especially interested in and engaged in the landscaping project at the childcare center because she had spent her summer working outdoors doing grounds maintenance. Given this experience, she served as a resource and educator for those doing gardening work by teaching others to prune bushes, remove underbrush, and create a safe and aesthetically pleasant playground area. Her insights were especially thoughtful as she commented *“Being involved in service projects helps people I am helping realize they are cared about, helps me reach outside of my comfort zone, and helps me meet other people.”*

A final comment from a male first year student summed up the “ah ha!” that was apparent throughout the conversations held within the classes and in the written assignments about the impact that students felt they made while being a part of these service-learning projects. *“I was always the one saying, ‘If I am not going to be paid then what is the point in working?’ Now I realize the point is to make a difference in someone else’s life that is less fortunate than you.”*

### **Teaching/learning implications:**

One major benefit of incorporating service-learning projects as a learning tool in college courses has to do with the immediacy with which students understand what they learned and how they (and others) benefited from participation in the project. Many of these insights were collected from students within two weeks of their experience, which allowed them some time to process and reflect, but they were able to share very deep thoughts about their own learning and the value of the project rather quickly. Other comments about the service-learning project were provided at the end of the semester in course evaluations. Students had time to absorb class material and experiences over the semester before commenting about the value of this project as an effective learning technique.

A challenge for any instructor using the service-learning pedagogy would be in discovering how to capture that positive “halo effect” immediately following the service-learning project. How can those

important insights and lessons learned through the service project be continued throughout the course? The students offered the suggestion to get together again for another service-learning project during the semester, or to choose a project that would be on-going (tutoring or recreational programs for children, maintaining a community garden) over the entire course. This would allow the teams to work together and learn about and from each other over an extended period, which was a benefit discussed by students in both classes.

### **Theme six: Experiences with people they never would have met otherwise**

One of the purposes of this project was for first year students to meet graduate students who may be working in offices or providing services that new students would need during their first semester on a college campus. The positive reactions reported by both first year and graduate students to having an opportunity to talk with people they would not otherwise have spoken to was a favorable and intended outcome of the service-learning project. Part of this result may have been attributed to the intentional pairing of students with others who were distinctly different in a variety of ways, or those whom the instructor noted had not interacted much in classes held up to that point. The assignment of students to groups was not positively viewed by all the students in the class, but as one student observed, *“Not only did it pull two classes together to work toward a common goal, there was a genuine task at hand. It was not something that was artificial such as a bonding or team-building game. I think that helped people let their true colors show, more so than trying to manufacture an activity would have.”* When dissimilar people work toward a similar goal there are opportunities to connect on a deeper level and find commonalities of purpose rather than focus on individual differences. Another student stated, *“I feel that the greatest value of an activity like this was the contact between the classes. All too often ‘freshmen’ or ‘graduate students’ can be abstract terms that we read about or talk about, but this put a face, a voice, and an attitude on those terms.”* The purposes of the class service-learning project seemed to be met as students expressed that they were able to learn about others while participating in a worthwhile activity.

### **Teaching/learning implications:**

As a method to introduce students to other people in different sections of the same course, different majors, or with substantially different backgrounds and experiences, cooperative participation in a service-learning project creates an environment where real learning takes place. Rhoads (1997)

reported that community service was important because students made connections with their inner-selves as well as with other volunteers.

There are many opportunities on a college campus for students in different classes to engage together in a service-learning project that would enhance each course's learning outcomes. As pointed out by one student, working together on a service-learning project provides an opportunity for students to genuinely interact and be themselves that is hard to create within a classroom setting alone. There is a shared purpose for the interaction and this collective group work, with opportunities for reflection afterwards, builds bonds between individuals that discussion, group projects, even cooperative in-class work cannot attempt to provide. Sax & Astin (1997) reported that students who participated in service projects had a greater "...knowledge of different races/cultures, (and) acceptance of different races/cultures..." (p. 29) than did non-participants. An additional outcome of this service-learning project, however, was that in addition to learning about others, students reported learning more about themselves as well.

#### **Theme seven: A new awareness of their personal skills and competencies**

A final learning experience that emerged from this research about the service-learning projects included students' awareness of their strengths and abilities. Some of these were realizations about simple likes and dislikes, while others' learning was more focused on career choice or work-related skills.

Several students reported learning that they were task-oriented and would have preferred to focus on the work at hand rather than meeting and interacting with others. Another reported learning that she was a perfectionist about responsibilities or tasks assigned to her, and made it her responsibility to see that others were doing their best. A number of students reported that you only "get back" what you give to a project. One student explained that comment in this way, *"I think the level of value you receive from the experience depends on the attitude you have going into the project. If you look at it as a learning experience it is expected that you will find something to take from project. On the other hand if you look at the service project just as work or a grade, it probably will not mean as much."*

For some of the first year students, developing various competencies and establishing themselves in a new location and in college provided enough of a challenge so the learning they reported as having acquired through this process was more concrete. For instance, one student indicated, *"I have*

*come to realize that I can accomplish a goal if I put my mind to it.*" Another first year student shared that *"helping paint the house for the victims of the hurricane reinforced the notion that students are a part of the community."* This realization of becoming associated to the local community was an especially important, although unanticipated, learning outcome because all but one of the students in the classes were from locations outside the community where they attended college.

Some of the student realizations related to what they did not or could not do. For instance, one student expressed, *"when I saw others doing an inadequate job, instead of motivating them to do better, I merely did the job myself. It became more important to me to do a great job and fulfill my own expectations, than to teach and inspire others to do a great job together."* Many students had never painted or done yard work and one male student expressed concern in this way, *"I was nervous because I have never really painted an inside of a house before but when I noticed that nobody else knew how to paint also, I felt better."* Following the service-learning project, in the journals and class discussions, students in both classes reflected that they now felt able to take on an unfamiliar task, such as painting or landscape work, and this project had given them the self-confidence to try something new.

### **Teaching/learning implications:**

Both groups of students reported levels of confidence in their abilities to interact with new people, and for graduate students a reported confidence in their choice of career as a college administrator. Astin and Sax (1998) also found that students who participated in any sort of service-learning reported increased social self-confidence that was developed as a result of that service experience. For first year students, this confidence might manifest itself in more successful campus and community adjustment, and stronger relationships with both peers and faculty on campus. Astin (1984) has written that students who have well developed relationships with peers and faculty, and who are interested and involved in their campus experience, both inside and outside of the classroom, learn more across a spectrum of different positive outcomes. Offering students the opportunity to work together on a service-learning project and establish themselves in a new environment can promote achievement both academically and socially.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand what graduate and undergraduate students gained by participating in a one-time service-learning project. A major outcome was for each class of students to meet, relate to, and learn from and about the other. A secondary purpose of the project was to validate the impact of using a service-learning project as a teaching and learning methodology. This section will focus on implications for using service-learning as a pedagogical tool in both graduate and undergraduate college courses.

Using a service-learning project allows students to better understand relevant course content whether in an undergraduate or graduate course. Hands-on experiential learning allows concepts to be deeply embedded, and can be more effective in driving home a point than reading, lecturing, or facilitated discussion alone. In this case, graduate students were able to experience first-hand the sorts of issues, concerns, and habits of first year undergraduates. They were able to compare what they read about first year students to their own personal interactions with these students while working together. This sort of learning laboratory was a very effective method to understand the first year college student culture from more of an insider point of view.

Both undergraduate and graduate students also reported increased commitment to their campus community, which according to Sax and Astin (1997) is a short-term effect of courses that included a service-learning project. This was recognized by one graduate student who indicated, *“By integrating community service into the educational environment and including both graduate students and first year students, they (the students) are able to learn from each other and in the process, give back to the community in which they are living.”* This type of active learning is important because it spans all types of course subject matter. As faculty, many times we tend to focus on the amount of content to be covered, rather than the method used to cover specific topics. Learning facts or certain subject matter does not always stay with students. The hands-on applied activities and life lessons learned through doing and serving, particularly with a group of peers, could help turn short-term benefits into longer lasting commitment to others and to the community. Sax and Astin (1997) state, “Service-learning not only enriches traditional course content by giving the student the opportunity to ‘test’ or ‘demonstrate’ abstract

theory in the real world, it also improves the quality of service being performed by giving it an intellectual underpinning” (p. 26).

Some students in both classes were troubled by the thought of being forced to “volunteer” for a part of a class assignment. They believed that a person should only volunteer because they wanted to do so... that’s what the word “volunteer” means, they said. This sort of argument should be anticipated and the instructor can have a strong rationale prepared that addresses the benefits of completing a service-learning project to the individuals, the community, and to the class as a whole (see for example: Ehrlich, 2000; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). Using a class activity, such as *Zoom* (Banyai, 1995) as referenced earlier, can help provide the necessary connection between the class content, the anticipated learning outcomes, and the service-learning project and help to build support for using this pedagogy to enhance student learning.

### **Recommendations for the Future**

After the implementation of this service-learning project, and through review of student comments about their learning in papers, journals, and course evaluations, the following changes to the service-learning assignment were recommended. Students suggested that the class discussions be held jointly so that everyone could benefit from what others had learned. Another strong recommendation from students was for this service-learning research study to be conducted again to examine whether or not the reported learning outcomes and themes were consistent among different classes.

Future research could address use of a service-learning project in the same classes with different instructors. I do not teach the first year LinC class, but I have paired up with a colleague who does and we look forward to seeing whether student learning is affected by having different instructors teaching the two classes. It would also be interesting to see if information presented in class about issues such as poverty, homelessness, or mental illness, would affect student learning during a service-learning project, or whether the learning reported by students would be deeper or more substantial because of the prior introduction to the issues.

As a whole, this service-learning project assisted students in their learning over a greater span of outcomes than was originally anticipated. As reflected in the following statement from a first year student, *“The most rewarding service activity I have ever been involved in was cleaning up the child care center,”*

there was also a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that accompanied their learning. For students to report this level of learning after completing one service-learning assignment is certainly worth the effort it took to develop and coordinate such a project. Imagine what could be possible using this teaching methodology within the same course multiple times!

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