

Service learning in sport management: Moving beyond the classroom

Corinne Daprano, University of Dayton

Peter Titlebaum, University of Dayton

Andrew Formentini, University of Dayton

Elizabeth Shabeen, University of Dayton

**Teaching
Session 16**

**Friday, May 30, 2008
3:00 PM - 3:25 PM**

**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 493**

Service learning is gaining widespread use across college campuses as more universities seek to provide students with real world experiences to better prepare them for entry into an increasingly global and complex business and social environment. As Eyer (2000) explains, "service-learning, which at its best allows students to confront issues and problems in complex natural contexts, appears to be ideally suited to help students develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, a practical knowledge of how community decision-making processes work, and strategies for transferring knowledge and problem solving skills to new situations." In addition to providing experience that is not easily duplicated in a classroom setting, service-learning projects build linkages between universities and communities thus providing students with an even greater understanding of the complex nature of the world around them.

The service learning movement has developed from a long tradition of volunteerism and service in the U.S. since 1862 (Titlebaum, Williamson, Daprano, Baer, & Brahler, 2004). Service learning incorporated into higher education has continued to develop over the past 40 years with more and more colleges and universities providing service-learning opportunities across the curriculum. Service learning can occur outside of the classroom or be incorporated into the classroom experience. Several scholars argue that the ideal situation occurs when service and learning are both emphasized and a conscious effort is made to involve all participants (i.e. students, faculty, community members) in the educational/service experience (Eyer & Giles, 1999; Howard, 1998; Sigmon, 1996; Weigert, 1998). Steiner and Watson (2006) suggest that service learning: "1) entails a hands-on encounter; 2) ties into course curriculum; 3) requires reflection on the experience; 4) includes a community project and/or organization; and, 5) seeks to foster civic values and/or community" (p. 424).

This presentation will: 1) provide a brief review of the literature on service learning in the sport sciences and business education; 2) share the results of a survey that measured students' perceptions of service learning before and after the completion of a community service project; and, 3) highlight a service learning project that moved beyond the classroom.

A review of the literature on service learning was conducted to determine how service learning is defined and being utilized in the sport sciences and business education. The results of this review indicate that there is a lack of agreement as to what constitutes service learning in the classroom. In addition, few research studies have been conducted on the outcomes of service learning and its effectiveness as a method for teaching civic engagement and responsibility.

In response to this void in the literature, the Higher Education Service Learning Survey (Diaz, Furco, & Yamada, 2000) was pilot tested with students (N=52) working on a multi-disciplinary service-learning project. The students were enrolled in a Sport Facility Management course and Engineering Materials course. The instrument has demographic and attitudinal items categorized into academic, civic responsibility, career, and empowerment sub scales; as well as open-ended questions regarding employment, volunteer activities, and reasons for taking the course. An analysis of the sub scale results revealed that there were no significant differences between pre- and post-test scores. The means of the four sub scales revealed that the academic sub scale generated the highest and civic responsibility the lowest mean score.

Finally, using the results of the previously mentioned pilot study, a service-learning lab was created to address the gap between students' attitudes toward civic responsibility and their actual civic behavior. Students in that lab, which was attached to a Global Sport course, began working on a project to raise awareness and funds for the Nothing But Nets campaign. The goal of this United Nations organization is to save the lives of children in Africa by preventing malaria through the use of bed nets. We will discuss how this service-learning project has moved beyond the classroom and become a student led and organized service initiative.