

Community Orientation 1999

General Assessment Report

Summary

Outcome

Through General Education Core courses in Service Learning (Core 305) and other curricular and co-curricular activities students will become community oriented and express future intentions for community service.

Faculty and Personnel Involvement

Teresa Bader-Hull, Deborah Burris-Kitchen, Sharon Davis, Aghop Der-Karabetian, Shelly Millone, Debbie Roberts, Ann Wichman, and Dorena Wright.

Methods and Procedures

1. Pre-post attitude measure
2. Pre-post reflection papers
3. Student journals
4. Senior exit survey
5. Alumni phone survey

Results

1. Students at the end of Core 305 scored higher than the ULV normative sample on service and social justice orientation, and gave more importance to finding a service oriented career.
2. The exit survey showed that 40% of traditional and 60% of nontraditional students spend one or more hours per week doing community service.
3. Alumni Survey showed that about 90% thought they were equally or better prepared at ULV than their peers in learning the value of giving community service.
4. Reflection papers and journals from the Core course showed that students were learning about working with people and their inner resources, gaining knowledge about community needs, and reassessing life and career goals. Some felt a little frustrated about the ambiguity of what was expected of them, or their readiness to cope with the demands of the service work.

Actions for Program Improvement

1. Informed advisors to try to match student readiness and interest with area of service.
2. Faculty put more effort to clarify learning outcomes and anticipated difficulties.
3. Increased effort to obtain feedback from agency or site supervisors.

Community Orientation

Outcome

Through General Education Core course in Service Learning (CORE 305) and other curricular and co-curricular activities(Campus culture) students will develop attitudes of community orientation, and future intentions for community service. The CORE 305 G.E. requirement is one of the ways the University tries to live out its Mission. Other activities involve, internships and fieldwork in various disciplines, and summer service through the Church of the Brethren.

Faculty and Personnel Involvement

1. Deborah Burris-Kitchen, Ann Wichman, Aghop Der-karabetian and their students in various courses developed and standardized an attitudinal scale to measure community orientation.
2. Sharon Davis and Dorena Wright did content analysis of student journals and reflection papers.
3. Debbie Roberts coordinates the summer service program through the Brethren Church. She provided student journals for analysis.
4. Teresa Bader-Hull, coordinated the pre-test and post-test data collection from the Service Learning courses and helped with the development of the attitude scales.
5. Shelly Millone, a senior psychology student, helped with the computer data analysis.

Methods and Procedures

Conversations about outcomes assessment took place while the Core course was being designed. It revolved around how course embedded work such as journals or reflection papers may be used for outcomes assessment, and what kind of pre-test and post-test would be appropriate. Five different methods and approaches were utilized in assessing community and service orientation.

1. Pre-Post Attitude Measure

This measure was composed of three subscales: General Service Orientation (4 items), Social Justice (4 items), and Change in Orientation, used for post-test only (7 items). It was developed and normed internally with University of La Verne students. The items were adopted and modified from Howard and McKeachie (1992). It was administered at the beginning and at the end of the Service Learning course. A copy of the measure is attached to this section. Altogether 97 students participated in this survey, but not all students completed both the pre-test and the post-test.

2. Pre-Post Reflection Papers

This was a qualitative measure that involved reflections at the beginning and the end of the Service Learning course based on four questions that dealt with the meaning of service for the student, and how the course may affect them. Altogether 33 students' pre-post reflections were used for analysis. Answers to these questions were content analyzed to identify shifts in attitudes and perspectives. The questions are attached.

3. Student Journals

As part of the Service Learning course and Summer Service program students are expected to write a series of structured journals about their experiences. Journals from two Service Learning courses and one Summer Service session participants, a total of 22 students, were content analyzed. These classes were different from the ones used for the analysis of pre-post reflection paper. The thematic content of the journals covered three major components: a) Stages in experience, b) Frustrations, and c) Benefits.

4. Senior Exit Survey

The ACT College Outcomes Survey was used to survey seniors during the 1997-1998 academic year. The Survey includes five items that relate to community service and orientation. One supplemental question was added related to the Service Learning course. Altogether 134 traditional age students and 191 returning adults participated in the survey. These questions are attached.

5. Alumni Phone Survey

Undergraduate and graduate alumni from 1995 were surveyed by phone using an internally developed questionnaire. There were two questions about service learning: a) "Please tell me if the preparation you received at ULV was excellent, good, fair or poor concerning the value of giving community service." And, b) "Compared to your peers or co-workers from other colleges and universities were you better prepared, about equally prepared, less than most prepared, or no basis for comparison concerning the value of giving community service?" Altogether 84 undergraduate and 125 graduate alumni participated in the phone survey.

It is important to note that the results of the outcomes assessment efforts reported here involve students who did not have to participate in the new GE program. Therefore, the data gathered so far beside providing insight about the impact of student experiences, create a reasonable baseline for future comparison. As of June 1999 data have been collected from students who were required to take the Service Learning course, but the analysis will not be ready to include in this report. However, they should be ready for dissemination and dialogue early in the Fall of 1999.

Results

1. Pre-test Post-test Attitude Scale

Over 70% of the students said that they had done community service prior coming to ULV, and about 45% said they will definitely do community service after leaving ULV, and 50% said they will probably do so.

It is apparent that these students were not strangers to service, and not surprisingly, compared to the normative sample at ULV they scored higher on service orientation and social justice.

The sample as a whole did not show differences between the pre- and post-tests in service orientation and social justice. However, those who said they will definitely do service after leaving ULV compared to those who said they will probably do service, had higher service orientation and social justice scores to start with, and maintained that difference at the end of the class.

The composite scores on change in orientation were unrelated to prior service, service orientation or social justice. However, there were pre-post difference on two items. In the post-test students rated higher the importance of

- a) "Becoming involved in programs to improve my community," and
- b) "Finding a career that provides the opportunity to be helpful to others or useful to society."

2. Pre-Post Reflection Papers

The content analysis of the pre-post reflection papers was conducted by Drs. Davis (Sociology) and Wright (English), and senior Psychology student, Carol Mannion. The themes that emerged from the content analysis showed that students were challenged and changed in several different ways. The following summarize the learning outcomes. Students said they

1. Became more aware of cultures and subcultures (race, SES, age)
2. Used critical thinking
3. Developed skills in human interaction
4. Gained respect for authority
5. Gained new knowledge and information about the population they worked with
6. Became aware of personal strengths and weaknesses

7. Found the experience occupationally relevant
8. Appreciated the value of helping others and giving back to society
9. Realized the extent of the need for help in the community

Several students found the experiences somewhat disconcerting, and thought that the classes were irrelevant for their career goals.

3. Student Journals

Student journals were content analyzed by Dr. Dorena Wright(English). The themes that came out of the journals showed different stages that students went through, their frustrations and problems, and the benefits.

The stages the students went through included the following:

1. Doubts about the their ability to cope with the work, the clients and unfamiliar situations
2. Feeling comfortable and engaged
3. Developing attachments to the clients
4. Emotional preparation for separation and a sense of time flying
5. Reflections about the experiences

The journals also showed themes of frustration and challenges in the following areas:

1. Communication difficulties with clients and supervisors
2. Organizational issues such as scheduling
3. Relating to other staff
4. Uncertainty about their abilities to cope with the demands of the work
5. Lack of knowledge about the conditions of certain type of clients, such as their disabilities
6. Role clarification issues, such as being treated as baby sitters vs tutors

The themes that related to perceived benefits and learning outcomes were varied:

1. Learning about working with other people
2. Gaining knowledge about the clients
3. Discovering something about themselves and their inner resources
4. Appreciating the satisfaction that comes with serving others
5. Reassessment of life goals and career paths

4. Senior Exit Survey

According to the responses of seniors to the ACT College Outcomes Survey three to four out of ten students indicated that the college made great or very great contribution to their interest and motivation for engagement in civic and political issues. About 30% of traditional age and 15% of nontraditional age seniors said that the college made great or very great contribution to their desire to “participate in volunteer work to support worthwhile causes.” These are low percentages, but the traditional age data are comparable to the national private norms.

It is possible to interpret these data in terms of the fact that many seniors, specially the adults, tend to be already engaged in service and civic areas. In this regard the senior survey data also showed that about 40% of traditional age and 60% of nontraditional age seniors spend one or more hours per week doing off-campus community service. Moreover, of the traditional age seniors who took the Service Learning G.E. core course (n=33), nearly 60% said that after taking the Service Learning class they did participate in service/volunteer work on or off campus prior to graduation. These results are attached.

5. Alumni Phone Survey

The phone survey of 84 undergraduate alumni of 1995 showed that they were somewhat critical about the preparation they received in the value of giving community service. Moreover, in comparing themselves to their peers about 40% said they were better prepared, and 50% about equally prepared in learning about the value of giving community service.

The responses among the 125 graduate alumni of 1995 were comparable to the undergraduates. About 50% felt that they received good preparation at ULV about the value of giving service. However, over 60% felt they were better prepared than their peers in this area.

Dissemination and Dialogue

These data have received fairly wide dissemination and stimulated quite a bit of discussion. The following constituencies have engaged in dialogue on service and community orientation:

1. Faculty teaching the Service Learning Core course
2. The General Education Committee
3. The Assessment Committee
4. A focus group composed of students selected by ASF (Associated Student Federation)
5. Faculty at large

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the data from a variety of sources and methodologies point to a relatively modest impact of ULV education and experience on service and community orientation, which is not inconsistent with the pattern observed among other private colleges nationwide. It is important to remember that the outcomes assessment efforts so far have included undergraduates who did not have to go through the G.E. requirement in service learning, although opportunities for internships, fieldwork, and volunteer service have existed on the campus for a while.

Another aspect of the interpretation of the data is that students may be coming to ULV with some degree of experience in community service and volunteer work. If so, the value added aspect of their experience at ULV would tend to be relatively small. The analysis of the data from students who are required to take the G.E. Service Learning Core course are in progress, and should provide helpful comparisons.

Discussions of the data by faculty and students in various contexts was quite productive, specially the conversations among the faculty who have taught the G.E. Service Learning course. The following highlight the recommendations that emerged from the dialogue around the data:

1. Explore further why the percentage of those who are definite about doing service in the future is lower than those who said they did service prior to the class.
2. Prepare students about the frustration they may encounter on their service sites.
3. Share with students the results of these assessment efforts and let them know what they can expect to learn in the course.
4. Replace the daily journal writing with a reflection paper every 2-3 weeks based on specific questions generated by the instructor that pertain to the area of service.

5. Do the pre-post testing for summer service students as well, using the same scales.
6. Explicitly assess if this courses has impacted students' career choices.
7. Educate academic advisors to look for a match between student interests and the topic or area of a particular service learning section.
8. Inform academic advisors that some service learning courses require certain skills such as physical education.
9. Consider a book titled, "How can I help" as possible required reading for all Core 305 courses. Summer Service students are required to read it.
10. Encourage faculty to look at student comments in the course evaluations on a regular basis besides the overall mean ratings.
11. Do content analysis of student comments in the course evaluations, and share it with the teaching faculty as well as the students who have just started a service learning course.
12. Improve on the return of supervisor ratings, and evaluate them collectively.

Actions for Program Improvement

Several of the recommendations have already been acted on, and some are under consideration.

1. Advisors have been made aware of the need to look for a good match between a student's career objectives and the area of service. Also, advisors should make sure that students have the minimal skills or competency to have a positive experience.
2. Requiring the reading of the book, "How Can I Help" was considered but not adopted for the G.E. Service Learning course. It is still required of the Summer Service students.
3. The faculty group that developed the course has met to consider ways of clarifying or expending the descriptions of the course objectives so that they are less ambiguous.
4. Types of assessments and analyses suggested in the recommendations are planned for the next phase of the analysis already underway.
5. The director of the G.E. program has been more persistent in seeking feedback from the field supervisors about the students, and the quality of the service provided. The revised feedback form is attached.

OPINION SURVEY ABOUT COMMUNITY

This survey deals with how people feel and relate to their communities. There are no right or wrong answers. Answering the questionnaire is voluntary, and it is your right not to answer any or all of the questions.

1. Current semester: _____ Year
2. Year in college: Fr So Jr Sr
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender? Woman Man
5. What is your ethnic background?
6. What is your declared, intended or desired major?
7. What is your most recent GPA (Approximate is o.k.)?
8. Have you done volunteer or community service? Yes No

Using the scale below, indicate the importance to you personally of the following:

- 1 for not important
- 2 for somewhat important
- 3 for very important
- 4 for essential

- _____ 1. Becoming involved in a program to improve my community.
- _____ 2. Volunteering my time helping people in need.
- _____ 3. Giving 3% or more of my income to help those in need.
- _____ 4. Finding a career that provides the opportunity to be helpful to others or useful to society.

Using the scale below, indicate your responses to the following items:

- 1 for strongly disagree
- 2 for disagree
- 3 for undecided
- 4 for agree
- 5 strongly agree

- _____ 5. Adults should give some time for the good of their community or country.
- _____ 6. Having an impact on the world is within the reach of most individuals.
- _____ 7. People, regardless of whether or not they have been successful, ought to help those in need.
- _____ 8. I feel that I can make a difference in the world.

Please circle the response that best describes your opinion using the following scale:

- 1 for strongly disagree
- 2 for disagree
- 3 for slightly disagree
- 4 for slightly agree
- 5 for agree
- 6 for strongly agree

_____ 9. I believe I could live a satisfying life in another culture.

_____ 10. When I meet people who are different from me, I tend to feel
uncomfortable.

_____ 11. I am not good at understanding people when they are different from me.

_____ 12. Helping to promote interethnic and intercultural understanding is
personally important to me.

Table 1
 Percentage of ULV Seniors (97-98) indicating contribution of ULV to **community orientation**, compared to the ACT norms of national private universities.

| ACT Items | ULV Trad Undergrad n=134 | Fresh Entry n=73 | Trans Entry n=57 | CAPA n=85 | SCE n=106 | National Privates |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. Hours per week spent currently doing off-campus community service (1 hour or more) (I-M10) | 43 | 45 | 40 | 65 | 61 | 49 |
| 2. College contribution to actively participating in volunteer work to support worthwhile causes (Very Great/Great) (II-D7) | 28 | 31 | 25 | 16 | 17 | 34 |
| 3. College contribution to preparing myself to participate effectively in the electoral process (Very Great/Great) (II-D11) | 26 | 23 | 36 | 22 | 18 | 26 |
| 4. College contribution to becoming more aware of local & national political & social issues (Very Great/Great) (II-D12) | 40 | 38 | 45 | 42 | 35 | 32 |
| 5. College contribution to recognizing my rights, responsibilities & privileges as a citizen (Very Great/Great) (II-D14) | 42 | 42 | 42 | 35 | 33 | 34 |

Table 2

After taking the Service Learning class, did you participate in **service/volunteer** work on or off campus prior to graduation? (ULV 4)

| | Yes | | No | | Not Applicable | |
|---------------------|-----|----|----|----|----------------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| ULV (Fresh & Trans) | 19 | 14 | 14 | 11 | 98 | 75 |
| Freshmen | 12 | 16 | 5 | 7 | 56 | 77 |
| Transfers | 6 | 11 | 8 | 15 | 40 | 74 |
| CAPA | 2 | 2 | 9 | 11 | 73 | 87 |
| SCE | 4 | 4 | 14 | 13 | 86 | 83 |