Clemson Collaborations in Service-Learning

Service-Learning at Clemson University: Making Education Come Alive

2008-2009
Dear Friends and Colleagues:

A publication of the Clemson University Service Alliance, “Clemson Collaborations in Service-Learning” highlights the work of Clemson faculty receiving funding from Service Alliance programs that support and promote the use of service-learning and community-based research in the classroom.

Articles in this publication are written by the Clemson faculty and students who participated in service-learning classes and projects funded by the Service Alliance in 2008-2009. Due to the budget shortfall, the course development and Citizens and Scholars mini-grant programs were suspended in 2008-2009; however, two programs – the Service Alliance Faculty Fellows Program and the Engaged Department Initiative – did continue to operate. The faculty and student work occurring in these two programs is the focus of this edition.

The theme of “Collaborations” this year is “Making Education Come Alive”. The use of service-learning and community-based research in our classrooms at Clemson is creating a transformational experience for many of our students – both undergraduate and graduate alike. These classes connect the learning experience to the experience of living, and are preparing our students with many of the skills needed to succeed personally and professionally in the global marketplace. Undergraduate student Alexa Taylor sums it up best in a reflection on her service-learning work with Professor Laura Shick in a Math Science statistics class:

Service-Learning means finding different ways to help your community… Classes don’t have to be about just learning facts and figures. They can be dual-purpose: teaching the textbook information and also teaching us about becoming the much needed change in our community. I hope that Clemson continues to include these courses as options for students as they are valuable lessons that every Clemson student benefits from.

The Clemson faculty highlighted here represent just a small sample of faculty across every college in our institution – faculty truly committed to making the educational experience for our students a meaningful journey that fully engages the students in the learning process on multiple levels. I hope reading a little about their classroom journeys will make education come alive for you, too.

John W. Kelly
Vice President, Public Service and Agriculture
Clemson University
Statistics came alive for one section of MthSc301 as my students adopted Clemson Community Care and Clemson Free Clinic. They designed and conducted surveys of donors on perceptions of the severity of community needs and also examined the hard statistics of hunger and poverty both internationally and in our local area. Students matched the faces of children and families waiting for food or frequenting the Free Clinic with the data that one-third of Clemson residents — many of them children — are actually living in poverty. For the students, textbook techniques met and addressed real world questions.

More importantly, the spirit-seed of volunteerism was planted and will hopefully continue to grow for many of them. A group of students also participated in the Clemson CROP WALK created a video on hunger and poverty as part of their class project. To view the video go to http://wow.clemsoncommunitycare.org/movies.html.

"I realized that although there may be “something in these hills” at Clemson University, just down the road that “something” fades, because many people are poor and hungry." (Ellen Barre)

"I had no idea how unfortunate the poverty is in the Clemson area was until we began researching. The class was very beneficial in understanding the importance of statistics and its relevance to the world." (Emily Young)

"Not only did we help a great cause but we utilized what we learned in real world situations. I will definitely be able to call on the statistics skills learned during the community service and apply them to problems I may face in the future." (Calvin Simmons)
Several years ago, a student in my English 385 (Children's Literature) class returned from her first service learning visit stunned: the working-class, African-American preschool child with whom she had read had announced to my Caucasian, middle-class college student: “My daddy in jail.” Though this student was an education major who would be in the K-8 classroom within a few years of taking my class, never had she met a child with an incarcerated parent. After spending time with this child for ten weeks, my student admitted that she had learned just as much as—if not more than—the child.

Though I had not previously thought much about the powerful potential that service learning has for bringing students in contact with others whose lives are drastically different from their own, this student’s experience made me more aware and helped me to integrate discussions about cross-cultural sharing and sensitivity into my service learning projects.

These are a few of the thoughts I share with them:

• Learn to listen well and to ask the child good questions.
• Avoid judging, especially a child’s family dynamics. Acceptance builds trust.
• Share your own experiences and background with the child.
• Choose books to share that will teach the child about people whose lives differ markedly from their own but also ones that affirm the life experiences of that child.
• Choose books with illustrations that will expand their thinking about the world.

Hence, when students need guidance about what to say when Joe asks why Amy has two moms, or when Shana comments on the fact that her skin is darker than her tutor’s, or when Sue asks why Ramon talks with an accent, or when Jamie wants to know how their school would be different if it were in China, or when Kaderius wants to know what it means that Lora is adopted, they are a bit better prepared—or at least better attuned to think of difference as a learning experience. And the more they can use books to bridge the gaps, the better.
For the third consecutive year, Clemson University has been a significant partner in delivering Science Fun Day (SFD) 2009 for students at Stone Academy of Communication Arts in Greenville. Nearly half of the 96 sessions delivered for SFD were coordinated by teams of Clemson chemistry majors that were completing service-learning projects as part of their CH 152 (Chemistry Communications) course. In 2009, one team of Clemson Chemistry majors worked with Clemson English majors to help deliver a Read-a-Rama event in the Clemson community. Material developed through this collaboration was then utilized to develop hands-on activities for students at Stone Academy as part of SFD.

The Read-a-Rama event was a great interdisciplinary project involving English and chemistry majors. Read-a-Rama events have been an ongoing project for Dr. Michelle Martin of the English department for the past 10 years. Michelle and I met through the Service Alliance Faculty Fellows program in 2008 and decided to collaborate on a science-focused event. The Read-a-Rama event was a great success. My students also chose to link this project with the larger SFD event being organized by their fellow classmates. Using the Read-a-Rama experience, the students developed hands-on activities that taught science in conjunction with a specific children’s book. Gravity and chromatography were the two science concepts and the team did a fabulous job entertaining and teaching the kindergarten and first grade students. One of the students was able to work with the Drama teacher teaching the kindergarten class and commented in her final reflection. “Through this Science Fun Day experience, I have seen firsthand the effect that a
teacher can have on a young mind”. In addition to connecting with the community, developing the ability to work as a team is also an explicit learning objective for the course. While this learning objective is not always met, the following reflection clearly demonstrates the progress this group of students made toward this objective. “One of the things we wanted to strive for at the beginning of the semester was perfection but we didn’t specify specifically what was meant by this. Now, I can confidently say it was perfecting the art of working in a group”.

Creating Teachable Moments with Service-Learning

Jackie Gillespie, RN, MN, CNE
Senior Lecturer, Nursing,
Service Alliance Faculty Fellow

According to Educator Thomas Haskins, a teachable moment occurs when the student has experienced a moment that leaves the learner open and willing to learn. As teachers, we hope to make a lasting contribution to the education of our students. What better way to do this than to assure our students have opportunities to utilize their new found knowledge? Community Nursing Faculty have found that service-learning is an excellent way to help students take classroom learning, apply it in practice and ultimately create a memory to take with them long after they leave the academic setting. When utilizing service learning as a instruction tool, there are several teaching strategies that faculty can employ to promote a student’s openness to learn, leading to a teachable moment.

Site selection is very important in all service learning experiences. To ensure a teachable moment, faculty must provide guidance regarding the selection of the service-learning site. Helping the students choose a site that desires a service-learning project promotes a positive learning experience for both the recipient and the student. Instruct the student to visit this site, talk to key people, and get familiar with the environment prior to the service learning project. During this time, they will learn about the site and clients through interviews and research.
In addition to informed site selection, classroom preparation is essential. Students need faculty to spend classroom time sharing concrete, valid, usable information and sources. Nursing students are provided with lectures on health education and how to make health education pamphlets for their target population. In addition, opportunities to role play and prepare the project with faculty input is crucial. During this time of preparation, faculty can share the experiences of previous students and faculty through storytelling, videos, pictures and examples of their work. Not only will they learn from viewing these tools, these resources will help them develop understanding, compassion and feelings for others. This creates an openness that promotes a teachable moment.

Lastly, give the students an opportunity to journal this experience and show their work through pictures or presentations. This is an excellent way for students to share what they have learned and the insight they gained from their service-learning project. Expect laughter, appreciation and applause as the students share their hard work and experiences with each other.

Service-learning provides an opportunity for faculty to help students apply their knowledge in the real world. Service-learning, if planned as a teachable moment, helps them gain a glimpse of what their future holds and how their education will equip them to make a difference. As one student wrote “The service-learning project combines many things that we have learned. It puts the class into practice.”
Integrating Teaching, Research, and Service at the SC Botanical Garden

Jeffrey Hallo, Assistant Professor.
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management
Service Alliance Faculty Fellow

Service-learning encourages development and growth at many levels. In particular, it provides opportunities for faculty to engage students – both undergraduate and graduate – in real-life issues, supply much needed service to community organizations, and contribute to a body of knowledge. I see it as a “win-win” for everyone! One example of this comes from a research methods course offered by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management.

Students in this course have typically been asked to develop individual research proposals to apply and demonstrate their understanding of course lessons. Instead, a service and community-oriented research project was used during the Fall 2008 semester to provide a real-life context for student learning. Students were engaged not just in the planning of research, but also in conducting research and reporting its results. The project selected for the course was a study of visitors to the South Carolina Botanical Garden (SCBG). A study of SCBG visitors had not been conducted, and the SCBG staff was interested in learning about their visitors’ use of the garden, their attitudes towards it, and about their background. Students conducted a review of relevant literature, planned most aspects of a survey, designed a questionnaire, collected over 300 completed responses from visitors, and then analyzed the resulting data.

Many positive outcomes were realized by this project. First, the project concluded with a student presentation of the results to the SCBG staff and a discussion of their real-life implications. The learning, critical thinking, and sense of ownership that these students achieved during the project were clearly evident in students’ interaction and
final presentation to the SCBG staff. Second, this study was also used by Matt Brownlee, a graduate teaching assistant for the course, to investigate visitor’s perceptions of local climate change. Matt presented work from this study at the 2009 George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites. Matt is also preparing a manuscript from this project to be published in a peer-reviewed journal. Third, the SCBG now has reliable data on their visitors. These data include the percentage of visitors who are members of the garden, important activities and garden amenities for visitors, and the frequency and timing of visits.

The SCBG project was a watershed moment for me as an instructor. I clearly saw – in a way that goes far beyond information that can be relayed in any student evaluation – the learning and development that took place in my students during the semester. I was struck at the connections that were made by students between the work they did and what it meant for the garden. Also, I saw how the efforts of so many bright, energetic minds could be harnessed for the good of a community partner. Service-learning truly provided me the ability to simultaneously achieve multiple, positive benefits for my students, the community, and an emerging body of literature on climate change.

**Integrating Research and Service:**
**Service-Learning and Creative Inquiry**

Janice Lanham, Lecturer
Nursing
Service Alliance Faculty Fellow

Clemson University promotes two pedagogical approaches that involve students in engaged learning and research. The first program, Creative Inquiry encourages undergraduate student teams to participate in a faculty-led research program, typically spanning three to four semesters. The second program, Service-Learning, is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Faculty can provide an innovative and meaningful hands-on approach to education,
service-learning and research by integrating these two pedagogical approaches in a wide variety of settings. The core concept driving this educational strategy is that by combining service objectives and research objectives, along with the intent to show measurable change in both the recipient and the provider of the service, the result is a radically-effective transformative method of conducting research while positively impacting the community. Students who assist with research help to strengthen faculty research goals and objectives by promoting faculty's research agenda, of vital importance for tenure track faculty employed at a research institution.

Undergraduate and graduate students are recruited to work, under the mentorship of faculty whose interests match the research project. In the School of Nursing, faculty are given the opportunity to present their research agenda to students and discuss their research priorities. During this presentation, faculty are able to provide a clear, concise outline of their research aims and objectives. This is a great opportunity to dialogue with potential students and match faculty/student interests. Funding received from creative inquiry can provide support to conduct pilot studies or support additional research needs of the project. Students receive course credit using the creative inquiry program guidelines. Contract grading can be used to meet course objectives and negotiate course deliverables. Deliverables on the research project can include completing a comprehensive literature review, data collection/analysis, and presentation of findings at local, state and/or regional conferences.

Integrating creative inquiry and service learning can have a significant impact in establishing and strengthening the faculty research agenda. Involving students in these approaches can provide an effective teaching/learning experience that also provides a positive and meaningful impact in the community.
Fostering Social Responsibility and Citizenship

Angie Rogers, Lecturer, English
Service Alliance Faculty Fellow

The English Department’s Advanced Writing Program’ Client-Based Program has received national attention for its service learning projects, which foster an awareness of social responsibility in our students. During the 2008-2009 academic year, students created writing materials for a variety of non-profit organizations, as well as on-campus initiatives.

One particularly meaningful project involved working with Redfern’s Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI) (http://www.clemson.edu/studentaffairs/redfern/healthpromotion/healthy_campus/index.php). I met with my spring 2009 English 304 classes early in the semester to discuss the project and help students begin the process of brainstorming project ideas. I stressed that the ultimate goals of these student projects would be to both create an awareness of the project in the student population and to develop an ecological approach to promoting healthy behavior on campus.

Many students were immediately drawn to ideas that might promote Clemson University’s organic farm. Team Pro-Health began their project by conducting a survey to find out whether or not most Clemson students were even aware that we have an organic farm. The group proceeded to write a script for a video about the organic farm, which Jennifer Goree and her team can now use to help educate our students about its existence and its benefits.

Meanwhile, Team PAC (Promoting an Active Campus) felt that a great way to promote the organic farm would be through selling fruit at fruit stands on campus. After some research with students to see how they would respond to this idea, Team PAC reported that, “selling produce for an affordable and appealing price to the students would be optimal for promoting the initiative. The fruit stand would appear professional and all sales would be conducted in a quick and concise manner so there would be limited waiting time for students, thus making this an even more appealing option.”
Other students were more interested in finding ways to make nutritional information in dining halls more accessible to students who would like to make healthy choices. The group called Tiger Promotions did survey research with students to find out how they would respond to the availability of this type of information. The group reported that students would like to see “nutritional information posted on the glass right by the food so that the students are sure to read it, or at least have the opportunity to do so. The Healthy Campus Initiative logo should be displayed on the sheet with the nutritional facts to inform students of the leadership that the Initiative is taking to help students engage in a healthier lifestyle.” The group went on to design examples of how this nutritional information might be displayed with the HCI’s logo.

Several groups also felt that creating videos that promote healthy behavior and making them available online might be the best way to reach this generation of college students, who spend ample time perusing videos on such websites as Youtube and Hulu. Several groups wrote scripts for recipe demonstrations and even a humorous series of scripts about a Clemson Tiger linebacker who travels around campus playing the role of health enforcer, giving students “encouragement” to make healthy decisions. Team Billy Breathes developed a two-part video at the following links:

Billy Breathes Part 1: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XehoElld14Q
Billy Breathes Part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQbzz5l2Ekl

By working with Jennifer Goree and the Healthy Campus Initiative, students in my English 304 classes were able to analyze a problem, conduct research, write a proposal, and create deliverables for a real client who will use their materials. Even more than this, they were able to take a look at the environment in which they live and think about how to make it better for themselves and the people around them.
Teaching - and Learning to Teach - through Service-Learning

Joan Hoffacker, Assistant Professor, Mathematical Sciences
Service Alliance Faculty Fellow

In fall of 2008 I taught 2 sections of MathSci 453, which could best be called "why calculus works". Part of the challenge of teaching this class is that it combines Secondary Education Mathematics majors with Mathematics majors, and the two groups usually don't mix. The service-learning project was designed to have these groups work together in such a way that they would appreciate each other's strengths. Each group had students from each discipline and their task was to design a project appropriate for high school students that explained the concepts we were discussing in class. By mid-September the service-learning groups had expanded into study groups. The math majors learned to explain what they understood in a way that could help others, and the secondary education majors learned the abstraction tools they needed to do well in the class. Besides the obvious benefits to the community, the students' grades were markedly improved over previous classes, comprehension was increased, and discussion in the classroom was more active. Service learning benefits the students not just in ways such as building character or civic responsibility, but in concrete ways they appreciate, like better grades!
Building Long-Term Relationships to Promote Community Health

Joel Williams, Assistant Professor  
Public Health Sciences  
Service Alliance Faculty Fellow

During the spring semester of 2009, I co-instructed HLTH 480 Community Health Promotion with Dr. Sarah Griffin. Forty-two students from public health sciences and language and international health not only learned community health promotion theory, they also gained “hands-on” experience by partnering with the town of Pendleton to promote physical activity. The project expanded on previous work and built on relationships established by the previous class of students, who assisted the Pendleton Pride-In-Motion (PPIM) coalition in mapping and building walking routes, called the Health and Heritage Trail, in the town. This year’s project involved social marketing of the walking routes by hosting two walking events and working with Pendleton Town Council, PPIM, and city leaders to design walking route signage similar to the historical markers located around town. To accomplish these goals the class members divided into four teams: Policy and Planning, Marketing, Walking Event, and Evaluation. Each team was charged with working with the other teams to contact and work with appropriate community representatives, develop budgets for activities, and coordinate project efforts. Highlights of the class activities include presenting their plans to Pendleton Town Council for approval, surveying walkers, painting footsteps on sidewalks to designate the inner loop of the walking route, and designing signage to mark the walking route. Signs will be placed this summer and several of the class members will return to participate in this culminating event.
The Engaged Department Initiative

In 2008, the Service Alliance offered the Engaged Department Initiative. Academic departments participating in this initiative were required to develop strategies to (1) incorporate community-based work into their teaching/scholarship; (2) include community-based experiences as a standard expectation for majors and (3) allow the department to serve as model for civic/community engagement at a departmental level. The following article was adapted in part, from the Department of Applied Economics and Statistics’ Engaged Department Progress Report.

Integrating Student Intellectual Development with Economic Development

Kenneth L. Robinson
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Applied Economics and Statistics
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Motivating students to challenge familiar understandings and to critically assess the truth of commonly held assumptions often requires helping students to better understand the world around them. To complement its traditional field study and internship learning experiences, the Department of Applied Economics and Statistics (AES) has recently increased its breadth of activity in experiential learning and community-based projects. Such projects generally have an economic development emphasis and a significant entrepreneurship and leadership component as well. These departmental activities have been generously supported in the past by a Citizens and Scholars mini-grant, a Course Development Grant, and more recently by the Service Alliance Engaged Department Initiative.

Real World Experiences

The objective of AES's experiential learning and community-based activities centers on increased student involvement and enhanced student experiences through engaged learning, community visioning, and finding solutions to community-based problems
and issues. When given the opportunity, AES faculty are encouraged to complement classroom activities with practical, real-world experiences. Since 2008, the number of AES creative inquiry teams has increased, and more graduate students are now working on service-learning and community-based research projects. For example, Dr. David Hughes has involved students in an environmental justice project and on a study of the Pendleton Farmers Market where students learned how to conduct applied research in conjunction with local leaders.

Similarly, in my RS 401/601 Human Ecology/Social Impact Analysis (SIA) course, student teams are involved in an impact analysis of an industry, organization, or development activity on a local community, county, or region of South Carolina. Each team is required to complete a project where they conduct a social impact analysis and interact with local stakeholders. Each team makes an in-class presentation and often teams are invited to make a community presentation as well. Recent analyses have included assessments of the Central Roller Mill and the Pinnacle Falls Wilderness Camp in northern Pickens County.

Last year, with the support of a grant from the Service Alliance Engaged Department Initiative, faculty from AES and the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development led several projects designed to intersect academics and the real world. In the centerpiece project, graduate research assistants David Tysinger and Alex Ewing, under the direction of myself and Dr. Hoke Hill, examined the local communities of Pendleton and Central, S.C. The students reviewed the respective 20-Year Comprehensive Plans for Anderson and Pickens counties, took an inventory of local businesses and historical points of interest, and then plotted those locations with the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. They also outlined potential areas of growth with respect to local businesses and points of interest, while classifying designated areas by zoning, acreage, appraisal values, and other significant economic factors. The goal of the project was to help local groups, such as the Pendleton Revitalization Task Force and the Central Area Business Council, to identify opportunities that would revitalize and support a sustainable economy/community.
On a statewide level, Dr. David Hughes involved a group of undergraduate (five) and graduate students (two) in community-based focus groups (forums) concerning environmental justice as a local issue in cooperation with SC Department of Health and Environmental Control and the US Environmental Protection Agency. Students were employed as recorders and “runners” in a North Charleston area forum. Students helped to co-facilitate forums in Aiken and Spartanburg as well. Data collected in the forums are to be used in a report to be submitted to the SC General Assembly. Students will also help produce an internal document highlighting developmental strategies for blighted areas where environmental justice is a major issue.

Student Learning Outcomes

Through the Engaged Department Initiative and other departmental activities, AES has sought to bring the real world to the classroom; promoting intellectual engagement and helping students become more discerning thinkers of the world around them. Student learning outcomes of these activities have ranged from directly observing, through experimental learning, one model of how to conduct community-based focus groups, and examining issues and principals involved with economic impact analysis as an economic development tool, to learning about the issues that can rise in attempting to coordinate a programmatic effort with state, and federal agencies. The success of these activities can best be summed up by the students themselves. The shaded text-boxes highlight two students’ perspective on their participation in these activities.

Student Reflections from AES projects:

“The community-based service learning project with Central and Pendleton has been a great learning experience. Thus far we have met with representatives of both Central and Pendleton to discuss the ways we can help their communities with our knowledge of economics and statistics. In these meetings I have learned how smaller towns work, what their goals are and how they accomplish these goals… This project has allowed me to use information I am currently learning in a community development class this semester for a real world, practical project. My involvement in this project is allowing me to experience and learn things that I otherwise would not have sought out. These things include GIS, the inner workings of small towns, and the real world experience of transforming academic knowledge into practical applications.”

-- Alex Ewing, AES Graduate Research Assistant
Future Goals
In its effort to train the next generation of applied social scientists and statisticians, AES plans to:

1. Continue to find good project opportunities for student and faculty involvement;
2. Continue to broadly encourage student participation;
3. Continue to seek partner and grant-based funding that would directly support community project activities; and
4. Look for other opportunities to incorporate student service learning and community-based research into funded faculty research projects.

To accomplish these goals, AES faculty must always seek to complement our teaching and research with experiential learning and outreach activities that bring the real world to the classroom. Only then will we be able to claim some measure of success in helping our students to contribute to finding solutions to community-based problems and issues such as economic stagnation, poverty, and related development issues.

Student Reflections from AES projects:

“Our community development group work has put me in the middle of an exciting revitalization effort both in Pendleton and Central. I have a sense of pride that this research we are doing will benefit not only the university and the local community we are working with, but similar communities and economies of scale. Participating in this project, contributes to an overall sense of understanding of how local government and businesses work. I have established many contacts with local business owners and elected city officials. And most importantly, I have found myself in the center of a room presenting new ideas to community leaders ready for change. I am excited to be a part of this revitalization effort along with being proud to accept the responsibilities associated with it. Because in the end, this project represents to me how Applied Economics and Statistics can be used in the real world, which is an integral part of a successful graduate education.”

-- David Tysinger, AES Graduate Research Assistant
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