Creating Community On-Campus, Reaching Community Off-Campus: Assessing Impact of Service-Learning

Katie Pritchett, Ph.D.
Ashley Stone, M.S.Ed.
Suchi Gururaj, Ph.D.
Agenda

- Background
- Data
- Findings
- Discussion
- Future Research
UT Austin’s 360 Connections

- Small learning community
- Holistic student development
- Focus on academic success & engagement
- Different formats for each college
Literature

Studies show service-learning contributes to increased

- Academic Persistence
- Comprehension of Course Content
- GPA
- Cognitive and Cultural Development
- Sense of Social Responsibility
- Issues Underlying Social Problems

(Yeh, 2010; Tinto, 2003; Vogelgesang, Ikeda, Gimartin & Keup, 2002; Astin & Sax, 1998; Gray et. al., 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997)
Pilot Study

- Exploratory
- Fall 2013
- UGS 303 Race in the Age of Obama
- 400 Students
- 3-4 hours of service
- Predetermined service events
- Paper-based assessments
- Main focus on satisfaction
Current Study

UGS 303 Race in the Age of Obama
- 500 First-year Students
- Increased Service Component to Two Events
- Completed Service Individually
- 3-credit course that counts toward a GER

McCombs School of Business First-Year Interest Groups
- 900 First-year Students
- Selected and Completed Service Events as a Group
- Service Beyond the Requirement was Incentivized
- 1-credit first-year seminar course
Data Sources

- Online platform for Pre & Post-service assessments
- Collected Quantitative & Qualitative data
- Service hours were tracked through UTvolunteers.org
UGS 303 Cohort

- 627 Students, Faculty, Staff, and Peer Mentors
- 1,438 Hours Served
- 486 Total Impacts
  - Average length of an impact: 2.9 hours
- $32,428 Economic Impact
UGS- Pre Civic Engagement Levels

Recent Activity

- Registered to vote: 55%
- Contacted government/elected official about political/social issue: 10%
- Signed petition on political/social issue: 30%
- Participated in rally, protest, or stand-in: 8%
- Worked together in/formally with others to solve problem in community where I live: 43%
- Volunteered through non-profit in community: 85%
UGS 303- Academic Outcomes

Confident in courses to register to graduate in 4 years
- **PRE**: 52% agreed or strongly agreed
- **POST**: 83% agreed or strongly agreed

Whether studying abroad is right for my academic career
- **PRE**: 55% agreed or strongly agreed
- **POST**: 77% agreed or strongly agreed

Where to get help for tutoring and learning study strategies
- **PRE**: 60% agreed or strongly agreed
- **POST**: 76% agreed or strongly agreed
UGS 303- Service Outcomes

How to become more involved in the Austin community
- POST: 89% agreed or strongly agreed

Made me aware of my own values
- POST: 61% agreed or strongly agreed

Have a better understanding of my role as a citizen
- POST: 79% agreed or strongly agreed
UGS 303- Pre & Post Qualitative Data

Themes of Service Learning

1. Connecting with diversity
   - Students hope to gain approachability towards other races and reaching a state of comfortability in culturally diverse environments.

2. Improving the Individual
   - Leadership, responsibility, experience, and knowledge, contribute to students wanting to make a difference and continue service beyond their college years.

3. Helping the Austin Community
   - Main goal for students is to gain a stronger understanding of social issues and struggles by giving back and improving their community.

4. Problem Solving
   - Students aspire to create connections in the community and with fellow peers in order to innovate and initiate resolutions within the Austin community.

5. Impacting: World to local scale
   - Students are concerned with gaining knowledge of what is going on in the world that connects with their community. Hoping to make a positive change.
McCombs Business Cohort

- 1,057 Students, Faculty, Staff, and Peer Mentors
- 2,188 Hours Served
- 641 Total Impacts
  - Average length of an impact: 3.4 hours
- $51,196 Economic Impact
McCombs Civic Engagement Levels

Recent Activity

Registered to vote: 59%

- Contacted government/elected official about political/social issue: 13%
- Signed petition on political/social issue: 33%

Participated in rally, protest, or stand-in: 7%

- Worked together in/formally with others to solve problem in community where I live: 53%
- Volunteered through non-profit in community: 90%
McCombs- Academic Outcomes

Confident in courses to register to graduate in 4 years
- PRE: 54% agreed or strongly agreed
- POST: 88% agreed or strongly agreed

Familiar with services from the BBA Career Services Office
- PRE: 39% agreed or strongly agreed
- POST: 72% agreed or strongly agreed

Where to get help for tutoring and study strategies
- PRE: 54% agreed or strongly agreed
- POST: 85% agreed or strongly agreed
McCombs- Service Outcomes

How to become more involved in the Austin community
- POST: 79% agreed or strongly agreed

Fostered community among their small group
- POST: 71% agreed or strongly agreed

Have a better understanding of my role as a citizen
- POST: 79% agreed or strongly agreed
McCombs- PRE Qualitative Data

Themes of Community-Based Learning

**What students said they hope to gain from this experience:**

- **Connecting with Diversity**: Students hope to gain an understanding of working with people from diverse backgrounds and hope to become comfortable in approaching and working in culturally diverse environments.
- **Strengthening Leadership in Business**: Students hope to execute lessons learned from the business school and gain skills, strategies, and insights in order to become stronger business leaders.
- **Networking**: Students want the opportunity to create connections in the community and with fellow peers to collaborate on innovative solutions to problems in business and the Austin community.
- **Helping the Austin Community**: Students want to gain a stronger understanding of social issues and struggles by giving back and improving their community.
McCombs - POST Qualitative Data

**Skills that make our students leaders:**

- **Networking**
  
  Students reported that the service experience provided an opportunity to form a stronger bond with their peers, feel more connected to the university, and demonstrate to the community that they are an active member of the Austin community.

- **Strengthening Leadership in Business**
  
  Students described leadership skills they learned through this service experience including: communication, teamwork, and remaining calm under pressure.

- **Helping the Austin Community**
  
  Students learned about the great need for volunteerism in Austin and how to get involved. Once students were active in the community, they identified a stronger connection to social issues and struggles faced by local residents.

- **Personal and Cultural Awareness**
  
  Students cited their involvement with under-served populations as a catalyst for introspection—leading some students to a strong sense of self-awareness, a humble attitude, cultural sensitivity, and/or an enriched perspective on life.
Personal Awareness

UGS students who completed service on their own reported:

- the service component of the course helped them to better understand their role as a citizen
- better understanding of their own values, biases and prejudices at higher rates than those from McCombs.
Community Building

McCombs students who completed service as a group reported:
- a greater sense of community within their group than those in the UGS 303 course.
Community Engagement Outcomes

Students reported in the 90th percentile on both the Pre and Post service assessments on measures of:

- important role of young people in community
- leaders should understand social issues
- belief that they can make a difference

Post-survey assessment:

- 74% of students across both cohorts agreed that college coursework should be combined with service
Community Engagement Outcomes

**UGS**
- 50% of students plan to enroll in another service-learning course
- 74% of students would encourage other students to enroll in service-learning

**McCombs**
- 41% of students plan to enroll in another service-learning course
- 60% of students would encourage other students to enroll in service-learning
Next Steps

Programmatic Take-Aways
- Tailor plans according to objectives
- Expand program to include cohorts in College of Natural Sciences & College of Liberal Arts
- Shared curriculum/lesson for all participants

Assessment Take-Aways
- Unique identifier to track students longitudinally across surveys
- Further explore findings about personal awareness and community building across disciplines
Questions & Feedback

Katie.Pritchett@austin.utexas.edu
Ashley_Stone@austin.utexas.edu
Suchi.Gururaj@austin.utexas.edu