

Utilizing Service-Learning to Engage Honors Students in a First Year Seminar



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<http://ter.ps/871>
www.ils.umd.edu
FYE Conference 2015

Who's in the Room?

Nicole Horvath - Assistant Director, ILS
Peace Corps Volunteer 2005-2007
MS Sustainable Development
2 pups rule my house



What are we going to do today?

This session will include a discussion of:

- basics of Service-Learning and critical reflection
- steps taken to integrate Service-Learning into the First Year Seminar
- lessons learned and best practices



Institutional Context

University of Maryland

- Public Research University
- 9 miles from Washington, DC.
- ~ 25,000 Undergraduate Students
- ~ 4,000 First Year Students

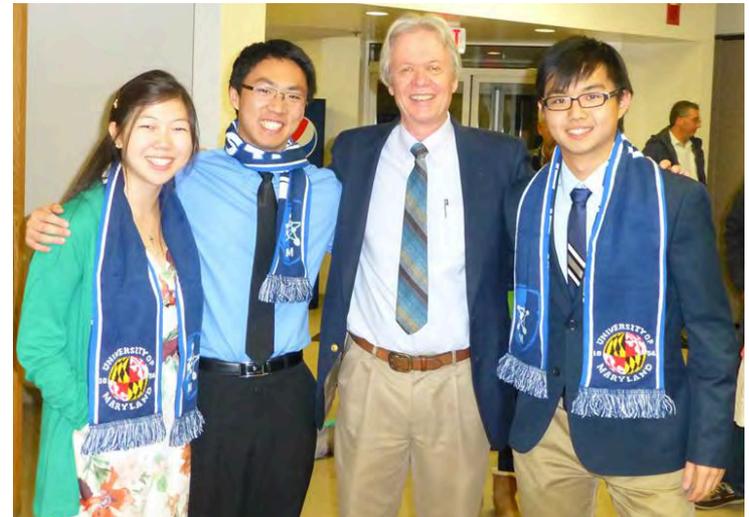
Honors Education at UMD

- 7 Honors College LLPs
- ~ 1000 First Year Students



Integrated Life Sciences (ILS)

- Developed to inspire, educate and launch the careers of talented life science students.
- First Cohort of Students in Fall 2011
- Shift in undergraduate life science education is needed.
- Courses focus on group learning
- ILS Core Values:
Cooperation, Collaboration, Service,
and Lifelong Learning



Integrated Life Sciences (ILS)

- ~75 students per cohort
- Two Year Program
- Residential requirement for first year students
- Majority of students major in Biology or Bioengineering
 - Other majors include Animal Science, Computer Science, and Public Health
- Career Goals – medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, biological research, academia



Goals of the First Year Experience

What comes to mind when you think about the goals of a first year seminar or the first year experience?

Goals of the First Year Experience



Goals of the First Year Experience

1. Is your FYE program achieving your intended goals?
2. What may be keeping your FYE program from achieving these goals?

What We Started With...

UNIV100 course

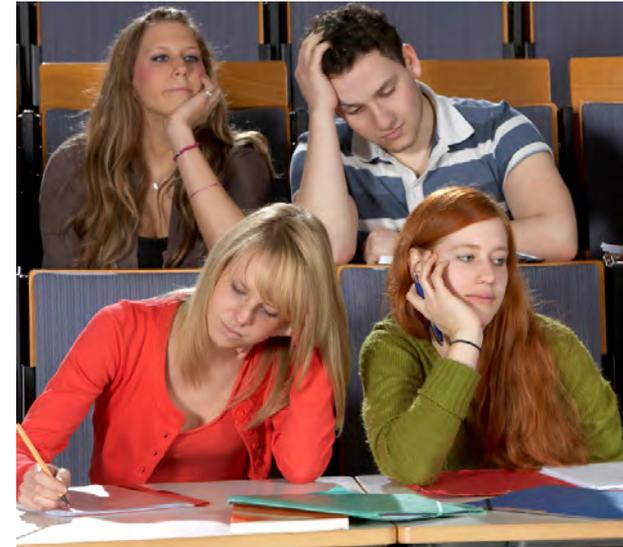
- Small discussion based seminar ~20 students per class
- 1 staff member and 1 UTA
- 1 credit course
- 14 weeks, 1.5 hours per week
- 4, 1-2 page reflections
- Academic enrichment
- Final Project

Topics Discussed

- Academic Integrity
- Campus Resource Panels
- Time Management
- Four Year Planning
- Diversity
- Scholarships
- Current Events
- First Year Book
- Campus Involvement

Why We Changed...

- Students did not take the course seriously or take advantage of invited guests and panels.
- Evaluations stated students did not see the point of the class.
- But they liked discussions focused on the life sciences.
 - Sustainability and book discussion on *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*



Why a Service-Learning Model?

- Outcomes associated with SL courses
 1. Facilitate meaningful connections between students and improve social skills.
 2. Improve student attitudes toward self, school, and learning.
 3. Increase student civic engagement.
 4. Increase academic performance.
 5. Provide space for students to develop critical thinking and reflection skills.

(Celio et al., 2011; Bordelon & Phillips, 2006; Brown, 2011; Burrows et al., 1999)

- Students in the sciences have limited access to discussing content in a “non-academic” way. (Association of American College, 1991; Lima, 2000; Kinnell, 2000)
- ILS students had a strong desire to get involved with service organizations.
- UMD has a commitment to increasing engagement with local communities.

So What is Service-Learning?

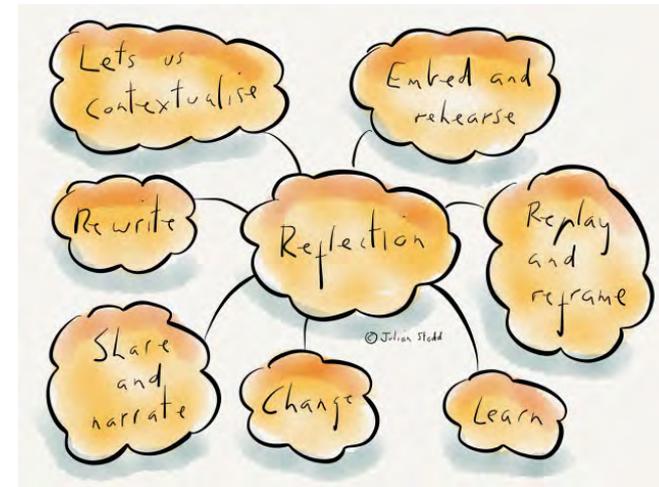
“...a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes.”

(Jacoby, B. 1996. Service Learning in Higher Education)



What Is Critical Reflection?

- Process of analyzing, reconsidering, and questioning one's experience within a broad context of issues and content knowledge.
- Move students from retelling events and ask them to be critical of their views, policies, etc.
- 4 C's of Critical Reflection (Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996).
 - Continuous
 - Connected
 - Challenging
 - Contextual



<https://julianstodd.wordpress.com/2014/07/10/rewriting-the-code-time-for-reflection/>

Steps to Create a Service-Learning Course

Identify:

1. the goal of your SL experience
2. course content to connect with the service experience
3. a reasonable service requirement for your population
4. service partners

1. Our SL Goal

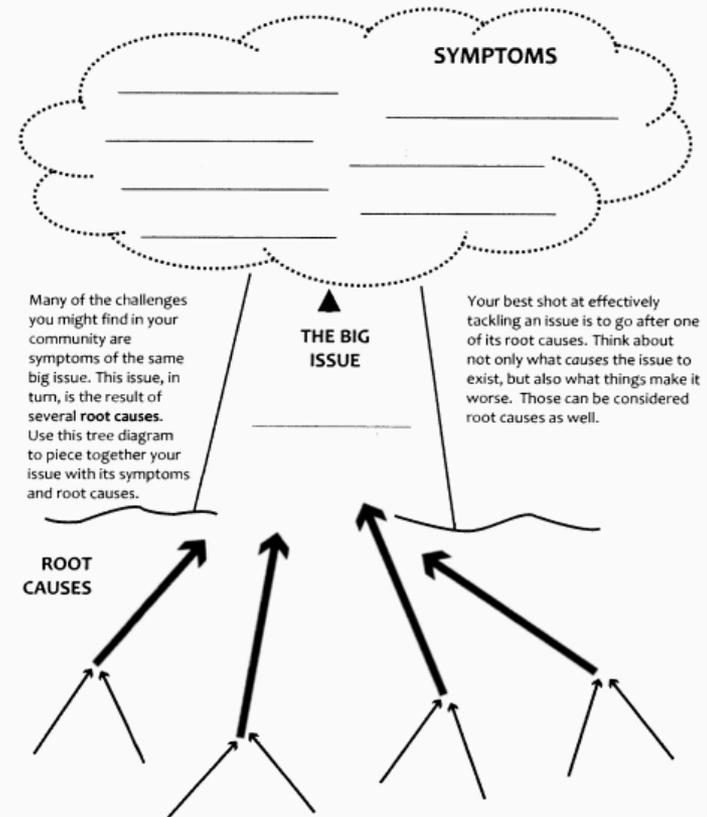
For students to be able to:

- Draw connections between classroom content and the community surrounding UMD.
- Identify personal skills and strengths while also identifying personal areas of improvement.
- Build a stronger ILS community.
- Identify possible careers and areas of interest.



2. SL Focused Content

- Root Causes and Service-Learning (1 wk)
- Values and “Path” (2 wks)
- Sustainability (2 wks)
- Social Determinants of Health (2 wks)
- STEM Education (1 wk)



3. SL Requirement

- 12 hours of service with 10 pre-selected service partners.
- Service dates and information about each organization provided during week 2.
- Students preference two sites then are placed in one.
- Service must be completed by end of November.



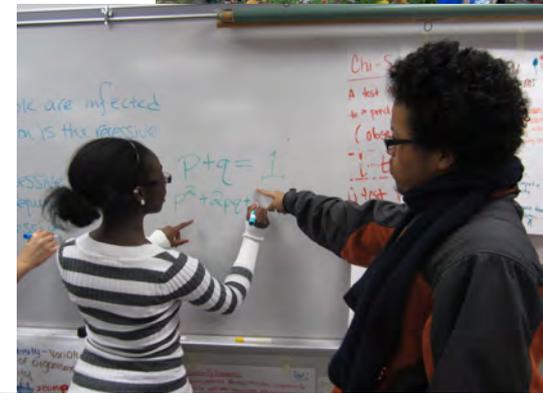
4. SL Partners

Finding Service Partners

1. Think about student abilities/interests, community needs, and SL content and goals
2. Identify campus departments already involved with service
 - Office of Community Engagement and Outreach
 - Alternative Breaks
 - Extension Office (each county in the US has one)
3. Budget and transportation options

Working with Service Partners

- Partner contracts
 - Communicating expectations
 - Realistic Numbers of Volunteers Needed



Course Assessment



- Overall, students appreciate the course and the content covered
- At the end of the semester the majority of students report more comfort in the following areas:
 - Working in a group
 - Speaking during class discussions
 - Interacting with new people
 - Sharing their opinion
 - Asking for help from others
- There is also a realization that they have a responsibility to make their communities stronger.

In Their Own Words

- “... a terrific experience that I would want to replicate. I enjoyed the independence we were given, the immediate impact we had on the community, and the connection to content discussed during class.”
- Troy, 2014
- “...it taught me that I can make a difference as well as the importance of teamwork and most importantly, humility.” - Arun, 2013.
- “...a highly integral component of the course and should never be removed. I really liked that I was able to make connections with other students who I normally wouldn't hang out with.”
- Emma, 2014
- “...in many ways it contributed to our growth as individuals in society and exposed us to new situations.”
- Jenny, 2013
- “...opened my eyes to what is going on in the world outside of campus.”
- Morgan, 2014
- “...provided a safe way to discover and learn on my own the responsibilities of being an adult.” - Joe 2014
- “...a major part of this course is ‘self-development’, I can't think of a more effective way to accomplish this than through service.”- Robel, 2013

Lessons Learned

- Keep your goals in mind when speaking with students and service partners.
- Be mindful of the semester schedule.
 - opening, midterms, finals, spring break, homecoming, etc.
- Remind service partners about your students' abilities and expertise.
 - Young and eager but maybe not very experienced.
- Plan for more service sites than you think you'll need.
- Plan service for various days of the week.
- Ask for help and be honest with your students.
- Use student feedback to evaluate the program after each semester.

Keep in Mind

Be Creative!

There's no one model





If you'd like to know more details about our course
contact me at nhorvath@umd.edu

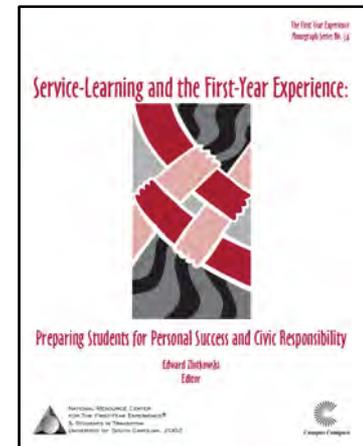
Relevant Resources

Campus Compact

<http://www.compact.org/resources-for-community-serviceservice-learning-staff/>

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