SIDP Clusters: Leveraging Transformative Change

As you may recall, this fall’s first issue of On Teaching featured a piece on leveraging the effects of campus-wide initiatives in your classroom, which encouraged faculty to be more aware of student learning outside their classes in order to further student learning in their classes. In this issue we are pleased to announce a special funding initiative to assist that effort.

For over 20 years the Alumni Foundation has funded Summer Instructional Development Project (SIDP) grants, which provide faculty with a month long stipend in the summer to design or redesign a course. The Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC) selects the recipients of these competitive grants based on the quality of their proposed pedagogy and potential impact on student learning.

This spring, in partnership with the academic deans, FIDC seeks to further the impact of SIDPs by clustering the projects to enable faculty to work collaboratively on course design or redesign. The intent is to support faculty in embracing a broader view of student learning that encompasses not only their own courses, but also other courses their students take. Ultimately the goal is to enhance the student learning experience by bringing intentionality, coherence, and sound pedagogical practice to how students experience the curriculum.

Faculty seeking to collaborate in a cohort of three or more have multiple options for proposing an SIDP cluster. A group from a single discipline or academic unit could work together to embed a common theme (e.g., sustainability, leadership, integrity) or to create alignment between courses (e.g., an intro course, a required 200 level course, and a capstone). An interdisciplinary cohort might pursue a specific pedagogical approach (e.g., experiential learning, inquiry-based learning, undergraduate research) or use comparable teaching resources (e.g., the SCALE-UP classroom, distance technologies). Or faculty might improve common types of experiences in the curriculum (e.g., adding specific objectives/course content to capstone courses, embedding specific assignments in courses that give academic structure to internships, preparing common learning goals for first year courses).

The application deadline is February 3 at noon. Full details are available at oid.UND.edu. Faculty applying as an SIDP Cluster must include a plan describing how they will function as a cohort group and how their activities will lead to significant collaboration. We encourage consideration of formal workshops now supported by OID (Teaching with Writing or Teaching with Technology workshops) as one means of assisting group efforts and creating opportunities for collaboration. To explore ideas for a cohort group, contact Anne Kelsch (701.777.4233 or anne.kelsch@UND.edu). Please register for the December 10 On Teaching breakfast session on SIDP clusters at oid.UND.edu.
Student Enrichment and Community Impact: The Benefits of Service-Learning at UND

Jason Miller, Graduate Service Assistant, UND Center for Community Engagement

Service-learning is an important pedagogical strategy used by faculty at UND. In fact, it’s so widespread and integrated across campus that the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching awarded UND its full “Community Engagement” classification in 2010 based on evidence about service-learning submitted by the UND Center for Community Engagement.

In the year documented for Carnegie, UND offered over 500 service learning courses, with 79% of departments offering courses, 16% of instructors teaching them, and 18% of students enrolled. UND is not the only campus that has made significant use of this pedagogy. According to Campus Compact, a coalition of more than 1,100 university and college presidents (including UND’s), service-learning is a well-established pedagogy, with 95% of campuses responding to a 2012 survey saying they offer service learning courses and that seven percent of faculty used the pedagogy (Campus Compact, 2012, p. 2).

Even though service-learning courses are being offered across the UND campus, faculty may not always call the strategies they use in their classes service-learning and may not be aware of the benefits associated with this pedagogy. If the course is thoughtfully designed, there are many benefits to service-learning, including improved student learning, potential improvements in retention rates, increased avenues for advancing faculty research interests, and positive community impact.

Other faculty may want to try some community-based learning activities but aren’t aware of the literature and resources available to help them start. This article will examine service-learning at UND, discuss the benefits and pitfalls of using this pedagogy, give a UND case example, and provide resources for implementing community-based activities.

Service-Learning Program at UND

When a faculty member is engaging students in community-based experiential learning for academic credit, they are adding to students’ academic experiences while producing a benefit to the community. That’s how service-learning has been defined at UND since 2007 when a group of UND service-learning faculty representing a number of departments met at a retreat to organize a service-learning program at the Center for Community Engagement. The group produced a mission for the program, goals for students in service-learning courses, and an assessment plan to help faculty assess both learning and community impact. The mission, available at www.communityengagement.UND.edu, is “to increase the ability of students to participate knowledgeably and actively in public life as citizens and professionals, while contributing to the well-being of their communities.”

The assessment plan (also available at the Center’s website) notes that service-learning courses should respond to an identified community need and provide service opportunities designed to enhance student learning of specific course objectives. Students engaging in service-learning are often placed with nonprofit organizations, government entities, and other community groups. A student’s service experience can be paid or unpaid, required or optional.

The service-learning assessment plan identifies four learning goals for faculty to incorporate into their course goals: civic skills, which prepare students to participate in the public life of their community (compatible with UND’s Essential Studies goals); civic knowledge, which prepares students to participate knowledgeably as citizens in public life; civic professionalism, which shows students how careers or professions can contribute positively to public life; and civic impact, where students improve community well-being through their academic service. Courses that use this assessment plan are asked to address one of the first three goals while they are expected to address the fourth.

Service-Learning as a Benefit to Students and Community

Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher (1996) indicate that service-learning, with its combination of service, course content, and structured reflection, results in several educational benefits for students, including improved understanding of course content and a sense of civic responsibility. They also point to research that demonstrated the value of service learning to improvements in student achievement as measured on midterm and final examinations. Bringle and Hatcher note that service-learning differs from extra-curricular volunteering, which often lacks a connection to course content, as well as from other types of experiential learning, like internships, where the focus of the experience is on developing field specific professional skills (p. 222).

In addition to improved student achievement, a potential connection between retention rates and enrollment in service-learning courses by first year students was examined in a study by Bringle, Hatcher, and Richard N. Muthiah (2010). They note that students ranked service-learning courses as higher
quality learning experiences than non-service-learning courses, and that this perception had an impact on intentions to re-enroll. They state, “Re-enrollment at the same campus the following year was found to be related to enrollment in a service-learning course” (p. 38).

Service-learning has benefits beyond student learning and retention. This pedagogy can also positively impact faculty research. Andrew Furco (2001) states that many research universities have recognized “the scholarly benefits of having faculty incorporate service-learning into their research activities” (p. 70). He indicates that the benefits for doing so are numerous, including solutions to community problems derived from research, the integration of student learning of course objectives with research, and improved relationships with community organizations that can help advance the faculty member’s research agenda.

Although the benefits of service-learning for students and faculty are important, the course should give equal focus to how it will impact the community and meet its needs. According to Jamie Beran and Aleeza Lubin (2012) “a common critique of service-learning is that it benefits the participants more than the communities served” (p. 88). They contend that many service-learning programs approach service as a transaction. Students, often working towards a service goal quantified in hours, perform a service in exchange for an experience. This approach to service can short change communities as they must take advantage of student service when it is available, even if it does not fit their needs or schedules. Beran and Lubin also feel that transactional service can leave students with a skewed understanding of their roles in performing service. Concerns about this type of student service are echoed by other scholars.

John W. Eby (1998) refers to these types of transactional student service projects as “McService” (p. 2). He feels this type of service is ameliorative at best and does little to address the underlying social issues contributing to the need for the service. It also leaves students with simplified and truncated understandings of social needs and how service impacts communities. For Eby, these problems with service-learning stem from too much focus on learning outcomes, insufficient attention to how service affects the community, and a failure to constructively include the community in making decisions about how to meet their needs.

Beran and Lubin (2012) advocate changing to a service model that invests in long term relationships between service-learning programs and communities, which has greater potential impact for all parties involved.

Service-Learning Case Example

UND Assistant Professor of Geography Michael Niedzielski uses service-learning in a model fashion in his course, Geography 471: Cartography and Visualization. He pairs students with representatives of a selected community organization to create maps that meet a need determined by the community partner.

BEST PRACTICES

Best Practices for Faculty Using Service-Learning

Initiate first contact with the community partner well in advance of the project

Respect the community partner’s time and expertise

Engage the community in the research used to determine need and appropriate projects

Set learning goals and make sure they are communicated to students and the community partner

Involve the community partner in planning the project’s activities and assignments

Prepare students with the information and skills needed to work effectively with the community

Reinforce professional standards of behavior for students’ engagement

Assess student learning and community impact during and at the end of the project

Share results of the project with the community partner (and beyond, if possible)

Form long-term relationships with community partners to improve learning outcomes and community benefits

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Niedzielski connected this course with the Near North Neighborhood Association in the fall semester of 2011, with support from the Center for Community Engagement. The class produced several maps for the community, including ones that mapped sidewalk conditions, rental properties, area businesses, capital improvements, and changes in crime rates after the addition of Neighborhood Watch signs. The results of the project were presented to the Grand Forks City Council, and the maps have been made available to the neighborhood in print and online. The maps and information about the course and a later project with Lutheran Social Services New American Services are available at http://arts-sciences.und.edu/geography/maps4community/index.cfm.

This semester students are working with the Near Southside Neighborhood Association. The community partner is actively involved in decision making during all stages of the project. The class initially met with the community organization to explain the course and what assistance the students could offer. According to Niedzielski, “Mapping ideas are generated by the community—not by so called experts telling the community what should be mapped. Instead they listen to the community on what they want mapped.” The community partner also provides feedback on the students’ draft maps, which the students are expected to incorporate into the final product. Niedzielski has said, “Students in this course are better able to learn map design by working on a real project, for a real purpose, for a real person.”

Service-Learning Resources
Resources for faculty interested in service-learning are available from the Center’s website, including a service-learning bibliography. Other resources are available from Campus Compact (www.camampuscompact.org), including sample syllabi and examples of graduate projects. Additional information and resources on course development are available from the Office of Instructional Development at oid. UND.edu.

The Center for Community Engagement can provide assistance for faculty or departments interested in developing or expanding their service-learning options. Faculty in need of funding for modest support of service-learning projects should consult the information on the Center’s Stone Soup Fund. The Center can be contacted at 701.777.0675 or by email at UND.communityengagement@UND.edu.

References


Upcoming Conferences on Service-Learning
Pathways to Achieving Civic Engagement (PACE) Conference
• University of North Carolina, Wilmington, NC
• February 5, 2014
• Early Registration Deadline January 3, 2014
• Contact: Leslie Garvin at (336) 278-7278 or at lgarvin [a] elon.edu
• http://www.elon.edu/e-web/org/nccc/confMeet-PACE.xhtml

2014 Gulf-South Summit on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement through Higher Education
• Auburn University, Auburn, AL
• March 26-28, 2014
• Early Registration Deadline January 31, 2014, 4pm CT.
• http://www.gulfsouthsummit.org/geninfo.htm

17th Annual Continuums of Service Conference
• Hosted by Washington Campus Compact, Honolulu, HI
• April 2-4, 2014
• Early Registration Deadline March 18, 2014
• http://www.wacampuscompact.org/cosconference/cos2014.shtml
Get to Know

Career Services

CAREER SERVICES' goal is to guide students in preparing, planning for and carrying out their career goals and to provide opportunities to apply the learning environment beyond the classroom through employer partnerships.

This is accomplished through a variety of services, including individual or group assistance in job search techniques, resume/cover letter writing, and interviewing skills. Additionally Career Services offers a resource library, Cooperative Education, and a job database called Career Connect. Career Services coordinates activities such as on-campus interviews and specialized workshops and holds three Career Fairs annually.

ILENE ODEGARD, Director of Career Services, began serving in May 2013. Prior to being named Director she served as Interim Director in 2012 and Co-op/Education Coordinator for Career Services in 2011.

Ilene has 14 years of supervisory experience in the areas of student affairs, non-profit leadership, for-profit corporate culture, human services and education. She earned a Master of Arts degree in Education from Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota in 2002.

Ilene is as member of the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the Cooperative Education and Internship Association, the Midwest Association of Colleges and Employers and the North Dakota Association of Career Services Professionals, among other professional organizations.

How to Connect Career Services to Your Teaching and Advising: An Interview with Ilene Odegard, Director of Career Services

What should faculty know about Career Services offerings?

Faculty know that we are here to serve each and every UND student and alum, by not just preparing them for their “first destination” position out of school, but by preparing them for a lifetime of career development. Today’s graduates will have between 8-10 different jobs within their lifetime and will have 3-4 major career shifts, so coming to see us early and often makes good sense. Research shows that the number of times a student visits Career Services throughout each academic year directly relates to how successful they will be when they go out into the professional work force. Career Services offers resume and cover letter review, interview and networking tips, practice interviewing, suggestions on how to apply to graduate and professional schools, tips on professional dress and proper dining etiquette, how to conduct a job search, how to set up a LinkedIn account—the list goes on!

How can faculty incorporate Career Services in their classroom teaching or advising?

This is a wonderful question, thank you for asking it! If faculty weave us into their syllabi, we become partners with them, connecting the student’s degree with the student’s future career achievements. The collaboration promotes a higher retention of students and gives them confidence when they think about their return on investment. Career Services will present any topic, to any class, to any student organization, at any time. We have a “Don’t Cancel Class” initiative so if a professor or instructor is unable to be in class, we can take over for the day. Many faculty members already have given their students assignments (or given extra credit) when they visit Career Services, have their resumes reviewed by us, or attend one of our many events.

When should faculty refer students to Career Services?

Right away! If students are undeclared, we have an online assessment tool called “Career Liftoff,” which helps define what some of their strongest interests are and how those interests align with professionals who have similar interests. When upper ranking students seek internships and co-op experiences, we are there to help them search, apply, and interview for such positions. (Did you know that research shows that students who have completed internships have a 60% better chance of landing the job of their dreams over those who do not have hands-on learning?)

Finally, Student Employment is also located within Career Services so those students (many of them freshmen) who are seeking Work Study, Institutional, or Off Campus positions are also welcome to visit with us about their part-time work options while attending school.

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If alumni contact faculty with job search questions, can they be referred to Career Services?

Absolutely! Career Services staff work with alumni all the time! Even if alums are living in other states or countries, we are available for consultation via email, Skype, and so on. We have web cams installed on our computers, adding a personal touch to visits with both online/distance students and alumni.

How can faculty help students who are uncertain about their career paths—or who may be on a career path that doesn’t seem to be a good fit for them?

Everyone here at Career Services is considered a career educator/coach, so it isn’t uncommon for us to talk with students who are undeclared (or are changing majors) and offer them techniques that will assist them. I mentioned Career Liftoff earlier. The beauty of this survey is that the results are obtained immediately and any of us here at Career Services will help students interpret those results. We also offer a one credit part-term class called Career Exploration (Counseling 101), taught by our talented GTAs from the Counseling Department. This class allows undeclared students to delve into their personal value systems and determine what career choices would be a good match for them. The class encourages students to think about the type of work environment and work culture they would thrive in. Finally, we are located next door to the Counseling Center; we collaborate with this department often if students are having difficulty determining their path. Currently there are three excellent Career Counselors who work one on one with students.

How can faculty help students think about their careers beyond that first job after graduation?

It’s important for all of us here at UND to help students keep their eyes on the ball, dream big, and plan for their future. Whenever I meet with a student, I ask them, “What do you plan on doing when you graduate?” I ask this question so that students are reminded why they are here. Today’s student needs to think not just about that first job after graduation, but also about the question, “What will my second and third job look like?” By coaching and supporting all students in this way, and by taking a holistic approach to career development, we will be a solid part of their academic and professional success.

Meet Our New Faculty

In our last issue of On Teaching, we featured many of our newest colleagues. We also asked for help with inviting other new faculty to submit a bio and photo to include in this issue. We are pleased to share this additional profile.

Rocío I. García (Languages) earned her PhD in Spanish Language from the University of Málaga, Spain, in 2012. Her research focuses on fifteenth-century discourse analysis, especially syntax and text linguistics properties of coherence and cohesion. She has been teaching Spanish as a second language since 2003, when she obtained her bachelor’s degree in Hispanic Philology.
Nursing 526: Ethical, Legal and Health Policy Issues in Healthcare is a course emphasizing health policy issues within the context of legal and ethical concepts. In the course, students examine and debate health policies in current practice, thus broadening their ability to analyze, implement, and evaluate health policy issues. This course builds on the students’ knowledge of health policy with an emphasis on the legal and ethical concepts developed in baccalaureate programs. Students are guided to examine legal and ethical concepts from the perspective of development and implementation of health policy.

One assignment in the course is to write an opinion editorial (op-ed) designed to influence and improve healthcare. This assignment gives the students an opportunity to actually work on health policy and the opportunity to influence health policy:

As an outcome of this course you will craft an opinion editorial (op-ed) designed to influence and improve healthcare. Identify an issue or problem that interests you, is timely, and is relevant to the course. You will need to read op-ed articles on healthcare policy and the legal and ethical issues involved. Some newspapers have daily op-ed sections and smaller newspapers run these articles often in the Sunday edition. For most venues you need to write 600-800 words. Consider the following questions as you draft and revise your op-ed.

1. Is there a clearly defined issue related to health care policy?
2. Is the issue timely (i.e., is it still an issue or has this issue exceeded its natural life?)
3. Is it a persuasive case?
4. Is there evidence of significant library research and use of credible sources? This is something you usually don’t have to do for an op-ed, but you do have to do as a requirement for a class. A reference page is required for this assignment.
5. Does the op-ed use logic and evidence to back up its points well?
6. Are credible ethics displayed? Does it address the needs or core values of the audience?
7. Are the paragraphs well-constructed and centered around one idea? Is the text grammatically correct?

Extra credit (20 points) may be earned by submission and publication of an article. You will find submission requirements for most newspapers online. If you are published in a smaller newspaper that is not online, you may mail a photo copy of the article to the instructor.

Each semester several students have had their articles published on a variety of health issues. For most students, this is the first time they have been published, which many find exciting. Students have commented on their evaluations that they were surprised by how much they enjoyed writing the op-ed and taking part in policy making for the advancement of nursing and healthcare. This assignment, in addition to meeting the learning outcomes of the course, encourages students to connect learning with real-world and personal experiences and is an opportunity to share what they have learned.
WORKING ON A PAPER?

We can help! The Writing Center is open to all students, faculty, and staff. You can meet with a writing consultant at any stage of the writing process for coaching or feedback.

To make an appointment, visit writingcenter.UND.edu.

UPCOMING DEADLINES

Nov 22 Registration for Nov 26 On Teaching Seminar: “Using Metacognition to Foster Students’ Writing Skills”

Nov 29 Registration for Dec 3 On Teaching Seminar: “How to ‘Gamify’ Your Course”

Dec 2 FIDC grant monthly deadline (noon)

Dec 6 Registration for Dec 10 On Teaching Seminar: “Q&A on SIDP Clusters”

Jan 2 FIDC grant monthly deadline (noon)

Feb 3 SIDP Cluster deadline (noon)