

ARGOSY RESEARCH BRIEF

SERVICE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Definitions of service learning vary, but core aspects include organized community service that meets a community need and is integrated into a course, and where students engage in structured reflection on their service. Current assessment of service learning outcomes is often done using self-administered surveys, although other methods (e.g. evaluation of writing) are being increasingly used. Evaluations of service learning programs in higher education have attempted to measure: student problem solving, student empathy/intention to help, student perspective on their service learning course, student skills, student values, and community organization outcomes. Short descriptions of different measures are presented, as are two case studies on well-regarded assessment programs at Tufts University and Portland State University. Finally, a review of the literature finds positive student outcomes associated with participation in a service learning course, although few studies employ rigorous methods or incorporate large samples of students.

Service Learning

Definitions of Service Learning

- A literature examination in 1990 counted 147 different definitions of service learning;¹ this number has certainly increased since 1990; listed below are definitions from some of the most cited articles/books
- One paper defines service learning as “credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility”²
- Another summary paper defines service learning as “any activity that involves students in volunteer work for education purposes; when service learning occurs as part of the formal curriculum, we use the term course-based service learning”³
- The “central claim” of service learning is that “service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both”⁴
- To hyphenate (i.e. service-learning)? “We have embraced the position that service learning should include a balance between service to the community and academic learning and the hyphen in the phrase symbolizes the central role of reflection in the process of learning through community experience”⁵
- A survey of service-learning programs identified common criteria used to designate a service learning course:⁶
 - Syllabus incorporates service experience into learning objectives
 - Partner community groups identify the needs that students will fulfill and are involved in the planning and evaluation of service
 - Prior to beginning service students receive training and information about their community group
 - Academic credit is earned from the learning gained from experience not for the service itself
 - The service is informed by knowledge learned in class and is integrated into the course using readings, projects, class presentations, and reflection

¹ The original count is from Jane Kendall, ed. 1990. *Combining Service and Learning*. This count was referenced in Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*. The original count could not be validated as the book was not available in any local library. However, multiple sources cited the same count from the Kendall book.

² Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher. 1996. “Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education.” *The Journal of Higher Education*, p. 222.

³ Maryann Gray, Nancy Campbell, Elizabeth Ondaatje, Kathy Rosenblatt, Sandra Geschwind, Ronald Fricker, Charles Goldman, Tessa Kaganoff, Abby Robyn, Melora Sundt, Lori Vogelgesang, and Stephen Klein. 1999. “Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education.” Rand Research Report, p. 5.

⁴ Sarah Poulsen and Ellen Honnet. 1989. Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning, as cited in Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*, p. 7.

⁵ Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*, p. 4.

⁶ Christine Solari. 2003. California Campus Compact. Information can be viewed at: http://www.cacampuscompact.org/resources/documentation/course_designation.html

- Students must complete a minimum number of service hours; the service component should comprise between 15-30 percent of the course grade
- Students must have opportunities to learn from each other

Not Service Learning

- Unlike extracurricular voluntary service, service learning directly relates to course material, and unlike a practica/internship, service learning is not skill-based⁷
- Unlike community service, service learning has an academic component and unlike experiential learning, service learning includes a focus on social problems⁸
- “In practice, however, the boundary between service-learning and other forms of volunteerism or experiential learning is fuzzy at best”⁹

Other Relevant Terms

- *Constituency*: stakeholders that impact the success of service learning programs; a popular model (see below) categorizes four constituencies: institution, faculty, students, and community
- *Reflection activities*: “activities (e.g. journals, small group discussions, directed writing) in a service learning class that (a) intentionally link the service experience to course-based learning objectives, (b) are structured, (c) occur regularly, (d) allow feedback and assessment, and (e) include the clarification of values”¹⁰
 - A survey of Campus Compact members found that 98 percent of service learning students engaged in formal reflection activities; the most common were: final paper (91 percent), classroom presentation (87 percent), regular class discussion (87 percent), and journals (86 percent); online student interactions are becoming a more popular activity (43 percent)¹¹
 - Although there are a few promising results, “the empirical service-learning literature itself is a bit thin on the practice and effects of reflection”; however, other fields (e.g. cognitive science) have identified how reflection can improve learning¹²

⁷ Robert Bringle and Hulie Hatcher. 1996. “Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education.” *The Journal of Higher Education*.

⁸ Maryann Gray, et al. 1999. “Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education.” Rand Research Report, p. 5.

⁹ Maryann Gray, et al. 1999. “Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education.” Rand Research Report, p. 5.

¹⁰ Robert Bringle, Mindy Phillips, and Michael Hudson. 2004. *The Measure of Service Learning: Research Scales to Assess Student Experiences*, p. 5.

¹¹ Campus Compact is coalition of almost 1,100 college and university presidents who are dedicated to helping communities through their programming, including service learning. The survey was conducted in Fall 2005 on Campus Compact member institutions and received 484 responses for a response rate of 50 percent. Survey results can be obtained at: <http://www.compact.org/about/statistics/2005/index>.

¹² Janet Eyler. 2002. “Reflection: Linking Service and Learning—Linking Students and Communities.” *Journal of Social Issues*.

- *Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement*: describes/classifies the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities; institutions participate voluntarily by evaluating and documenting their programming; this classification is relatively new and is open to new participants in 2008
 - The classification basically measures how much a community orientation permeates the institutional structure (e.g. budgeting, mission, etc); there are two categories of community engagement: curricular engagement (including service learning) and outreach and partnerships
 - Applying to Carnegie for classification may be a useful method for having outside recognition of an institution's community engagement and can force an institution to think more about its programming
- *Service learning office*: most Campus Compact institutions (86 percent) reported having at least one office/center (but often two or more) that was dedicated to coordinating service, service-learning, and/or civic engagement activities, and 79 percent had at least one staff member dedicated to these programs¹³
 - The service offices reported to: student affairs (40 percent), academic affairs (34 percent), president's office (4 percent), ministry (3 percent), career services (3 percent), and other (16 percent)

A How-to Model of Service Learning in Higher Education

- Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning (CAPSL)¹⁴
 - A model of institutional change based on studying 44 institutions that were integrating service with academic study
 - The model identifies four constituencies that programs should focus on: institution (often administration), faculty, students, and community
 - The model proposes a ten-step sequence of activities, tasks, and outcomes that should be pursued for each constituency; these activities are classified as planning, awareness, prototype, resources, support, expansion, recognition, monitoring, evaluation, research, and institutionalization¹⁵
- A rubric has been developed and used by many schools to measure the institutionalization of service learning¹⁶

¹³ Survey results can be obtained at: <http://www.compact.org/about/statistics/2005/index>

¹⁴ Robert Bringle and Hulie Hatcher. 1996. "Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education." *The Journal of Higher Education*.

¹⁵ For example, the planning activity for the faculty constituency consists of: survey faculty interest and service learning courses currently offered and identify faculty for service learning planning group and advisory committee.

¹⁶ The rubric evaluates progress in five categories (e.g. philosophy and mission, faculty support and involvement, student support and involvement, community participation and partnership, and institutional support) and codes progress into three categories (e.g. critical mass building, quality building, and sustained institutionalization). Andrew Furco. 2002. "Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education." Project of Campus Compact at Brown University.

Goals

Student Goals

- A survey of students at multiple institutions who completed a service learning course were asked if any of the following were a “major reason” why they took the course: 64 percent stated an interest in subject matter, 41 percent due to a requirement, 40 percent wanted to participate in service, 40 percent to enhance their resume, 21 percent due to the professor, and 17 percent because the course was offered at a convenient time¹⁷
- A different survey of students at multiple institutions who completed a service learning course asked respondents why they enrolled in the course: 59 percent thought it would be interesting, 54 percent were interested in the subject matter, 46 percent because it was a required course, 34 percent thought the instructor was a good teacher, 25 percent because it filled a general requirement, 17 percent because it fit their schedule, 6 percent because their friends were taking the course, and 5 percent thought the course would be easy¹⁸

Faculty Goals

- A large survey of faculty found that 61 percent believe that preparing students for responsible citizenship is a very important/essential goal for colleges and 38 percent believe that instilling a commitment to community service is a very important/essential goal for college¹⁹
- Nineteen percent of faculty view community service in coursework as a poor use of resources²⁰
- A survey of Campus Compact members found that 85 percent reported “rewarding community-based research or service-learning in faculty review, tenure, and/or promotion”; the survey did not appear to ask how much weight is given to this community work (i.e. is such work equal to one-third of a publication in a B-level journal?)²¹

Program Goals

- A RAND survey completed by 246 program directors in 1996 asked respondents about the goals of their service learning programs; the following responses were most likely to be cited by directors as one of their first, second, or third most important goals: develop civic skills (49 percent), increase disciplinary knowledge and skills (46 percent), commit to community involvement (45 percent), build

¹⁷ Alexander Astin, Lori Vogelgesang, Elain Ikeda, and Jennifer Yee. 2000. “How Service Learning Affects Students.” Higher Education Research Institute, p. 46.

¹⁸ Maryann Gray, et al. 1999. “Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education.” Rand Research Report, p. 44.

¹⁹ The sample size was 40,670 and the response rate was 38 percent. Alexander Astin, Lori Vogelgesang, Kimberly Misa, Jodi Anderson, Nida Denson, Uma Jayakumar, Victor Saenz, Erica Yamamura. 2006. “Understanding the Effects of Service-Learning: A Study of Students and Faculty.” HERI Report to Atlantic Philanthropies, U.S.A.

²⁰ Alexander Astin, et al. 2006. “Understand the Effects of Service-Learning: A Study of Students and Faculty. HERI Report to Atlantic Philanthropies, U.S.A.

²¹ Survey results can be obtained at: <http://www.compact.org/about/statistics/2005/index>.

- career-related skills and knowledge (33 percent), learn the value of volunteer work (26 percent), learn how to create social change (24 percent), increase involvement in studies (22 percent), develop leadership skills (18 percent), and enhance ethical and moral development (18 percent)
- The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, the field journal for service learning, published a “Principles of Good Practice for Service-Learning Pedagogy” list in 2001; the list was comprised of the following ten principles:²²
 - Academic credit is for learning, not for service
 - Do not compromise academic rigor
 - Establish learning objectives
 - Establish criteria for the selection of service placements
 - Provide educationally-sound learning strategies to harvest community learning and realize course learning objectives
 - Prepare students for learning from the community
 - Minimize the distinction between the students’ community learning role and classroom learning role
 - Rethink the faculty instructional role
 - Be prepared for variation in, and some loss of control with, student learning outcomes
 - Maximize the community responsibility orientation of the course

Measurement

Basics

- Service learning is intended to complement traditional methods of learning by teaching students how to apply concepts they learn from lectures or course readings; consequently, traditional measures of learning, like tests that require memorization and regurgitation of principles, may be poor measures of learning from service learning²³
- There are multiple ways of measuring service learning outcomes, but the most common are self-administered scales,²⁴ that are often an indirect measure of student learning because they only ask students what they have learned; other methods include: structured evaluation of student writing/interviews (can be coded on a variety of dimensions depending on interest), focus groups, classroom observation, and in-person interviews

²² Jeffrey Howard. Summer 2001. “Service Learning Course Design Workbook.” *Companion Volume to Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.

²³ For example, one study found that there were no differences in performance between service learning and control students on multiple-choice questions, but there were significant differences on essay questions. Amy Strange. 2000. “Service-Learning: Enhancing Student Outcomes in a College-Level Course. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. Consequently, the literature often recommends broadening the definition of learning beyond “inert knowledge” that “was memorized but went unused when the learner confronted real-life problems.” Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning*, p.64.

²⁴ Pamela Steinke and Stacey Buresh. 2002. “Cognitive Outcomes of Service-Learning: Reviewing the Past and Glimpsing the Future.” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, p. 6.

Argosy Foundation: Service Learning in Higher Education

- The length of exposure and intensity of service are important factors when evaluating the effects of programming; one class, in isolation, should not be expected to have dramatic impacts
- Ultimately, it is important to assess service learning among all constituencies not just students:
 - Programs will not receive adequate funding/priority/implementation if administration and faculty do not support service learning
 - Programs are not sustainable if community organization staff do not believe they are benefiting²⁵
- Based on reviews of the literature, scholars have developed categorizations of student service learning outcomes (there is significant overlap):
 - Five outcomes: personal development and interpersonal skills, ability to apply knowledge to new situations, critical thinking ability, desire for broader systemic change, and citizenship²⁶
 - Six outcomes: civic responsibility, interpersonal skills, leadership ability, critical thinking, ability to apply knowledge, and general life skills²⁷
 - Simpler dichotomy: cognitive (i.e. a change in processing or knowledge) or affective (i.e. a change in attitudes)
- *Rankings*: U.S. News and World Report asked college presidents, chief academic officers, and admissions deans to nominate up to ten schools with “excellent” service learning programs; like other U.S. News rankings, this one is subjective, idiosyncratic, and whether the opinions are well-informed is debatable

Outcome Measures²⁸

Student Outcomes

- Problem Solving

²⁵ An evaluation of staff opinions of multiple service learning programs found generally positive results. For example, roughly 75 percent of organizations thought the benefits of the volunteer program “far” outweighed the costs and another 15 percent thought the benefits “slightly” outweighed the costs. Based on the surveys and site visits, the report authors make six recommendations to building a strong relationship between the higher education institutions and community organizations: a committed contact person at both institutions, addressing scheduling to ensure that organizations truly benefit, clear expectations of student volunteer and community organization responsibilities, connecting students to organizations as quickly as possible, and address transportation issues. Maryann Gray, et al. 1999. “Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education.” Rand Research Report.

²⁶ Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning*.

²⁷ Mark Toncar, Jane Reid, David Burns, Cynthia Anderson, and Hieu Nguyen. 2006. “Uniform Assessment of the Benefits of Service Learning: The Development, Evaluation, and Implementation of the SELEB Scale.” *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*.

²⁸ There are many other scales/measures that have been used to evaluate service learning programs. The measures described below are the ones I believe are especially useful and/or have good psychometric properties (e.g. reliability). Many of these measures are from: Robert Bringle, Mindy Phillips, and Michael Hudson. 2004. *The Measure of Service Learning: Research Scales to Assess Student Experiences*. Where I do not cite the specific paper in a footnote, I did not read the original paper, but read the book description of the scale.

- *Problem Solving*: students are presented with a social problem and asked what caused the problem, to develop a plan to deal with the problem, and to describe other perspectives on the problem; student responses are then rated by a trained coder on causal complexity, solution complexity, locus of problem/solution knowledge application, personal/solution strategy, critical thinking, multidimensionality, considered obstacles, considered solutions, differentiation, uncertainty acknowledgement, and information seeking²⁹
- *Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal*: respondents are asked to evaluate reading passages that include problems, statements, arguments, and interpretation; other tests include the *California Critical Thinking Skills Test* and the *Cornell Critical Thinking Test*
- Student Empathy/Intention to Help
 - Journal entries have been coded to identify: community needs, helpful actions, sympathy, intentions to assist, and whether reasoning exhibits internalized norms³⁰
 - *Interpersonal Reactivity Index*: a self-administered scale designed to measure empathy (research has found that empathy plays a role in eliciting helping behavior); a similar scale is the *Emotional Empathy Tendency Scale*
 - *Volunteer Functions Inventory*: a self-administered scale that measures what motivates respondents to volunteer (e.g. personal values, social reasons, career goals, etc.)
 - *AIDS Caregiver Scale*: measures emotional satisfaction (i.e. fulfillment) and emotional stress from helping others; the scale can be used for any care provider
 - *Community Service Attitudes Scale*: a measure of global attitudes toward community service
 - *Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)*: includes an eight-item subscale that measures plans for future involvement in community service³¹
 - *Community participation behavior*: scales measuring how much respondents have participated in political or community activities³²

²⁹ Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*, Resource C. Thomas Batchelder and Susan Root. 1994. "Effects of and Undergraduate Program to Integrate Academic Learning and Service: Cognitive, Prosocial Cognitive, and Identity Outcomes." *Journal of Adolescence*.

³⁰ Thomas Batchelder and Susan Root. 1994. "Effects of and Undergraduate Program to Integrate Academic Learning and Service: Cognitive, Prosocial Cognitive, and Identity Outcomes." *Journal of Adolescence*.

³¹ The last item has somewhat lower factor loadings and, in my opinion, may be more likely to measure attitudes about the environment than community service. Barbara Moely, Sterett Mercer, Vincent Ilustre, Devi Miron, and Megan McFarland. 2002. "Psychometric Properties and Correlates of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ): A Measure of Students' Attitudes Related to Service-Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.

³² Alexander Astin, et al. 2006. "Understand the Effects of Service-Learning: A Study of Students and Faculty." HERI Report to Atlantic Philanthropies, U.S.A.

- Student Perspective on their Service Learning Course
 - *Service Learning Benefit*: a self-administered survey that measures students' opinions about how much their service learning course affected their practical skills, interpersonal skills, citizenship, and personal responsibility³³
 - *Evaluation of Service Learning*: measures general perceptions of the learning experience³⁴
- Student Skills
 - *Leadership Skills, Communication Skills, and Tolerance*: self-administered survey that measures students' assessment of their own skills/values/behavior³⁵
 - *Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)*: a twelve-item subscale measures interpersonal and problem solving skills and a five-item subscale measures leadership skills³⁶
- Student Values
 - *Personal Values*: multiple scales (e.g. *Goal and Mode Values Inventory* and *Personal Social Values* scale) attempt to measure values such as a positive orientation toward others, benevolence, etc; in my opinion, these scales may often elicit the socially desirable answer and they have not been validated enough³⁷
 - *Moral Development*: there are multiple scales (e.g. *Defining Issues Test* and the *Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure*) that present situations and ask respondents to evaluate; responses are then coded to measure values

³³ This scale is new and has not been sufficiently validated, i.e. it has not been demonstrated that this scale correlates with other measures of course quality (contrary to the authors claims, in my opinion, Study 3 does not provide evidence of validity). Mark Toncar, Jane Reid, David Burns, Cynthia Anderson, and Hieu Nguyen. 2006. "Uniform Assessment of the Benefits of Service Learning: The Development, Evaluation, and Implementation of the SELEB Scale." *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*.

³⁴ Thomas Batchelder and Susan Root. 1994. "Effects of an Undergraduate Program to Integrate Academic Learning and Service: Cognitive, Prosocial Cognitive, and Identity Outcomes." *Journal of Adolescence*.

³⁵ Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*, Resource C.

³⁶ For the first subscale, the last item has somewhat lower factor loadings. Barbara Moely, Sterett Mercer, Vincent Ilustre, Devi Miron, and Megan McFarland. 2002. "Psychometric Properties and Correlates of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ): A Measure of Students' Attitudes Related to Service-Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.

³⁷ One study notes, in another context, that "creating scales entirely free of social desirability responding may not be a realistic goal for the kinds of items typically used in service-learning assessment." Barbara Moely, Sterett Mercer, Vincent Ilustre, Devi Miron, and Megan McFarland. 2002. "Psychometric Properties and Correlates of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ): A Measure of Students' Attitudes Related to Service-Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, p. 24. However, while some scales have mild-moderate correlations with social desirability (see above paper), I think many of these value scales may be especially susceptible. Moreover, Bringle et al. (2004), were not able to find any studies that examined correlations between these scales and social desirability scales.

- *Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)*: a five-item subscale measures openness to individuals who are different culturally or otherwise³⁸

Community Organization Outcomes

- *Assessment of Value*: as part of the Community Impact Survey, RAND surveyed hundreds of organizations and asked them to rate student enthusiasm, interpersonal communication, ability to work with staff/clients, skills, and ability to work independently; the survey also measured impressions of how students affected the overall quality of service, staff morale, and the amount/variety of services provided
- *Recipient Impact*: some studies examine how and whether service learning participants actually help their intended beneficiaries; for example, one study found that service learning participants who tutored elementary school students had a positive impact on their math and spelling achievement test scores³⁹

Case Study #1: Tufts University⁴⁰

Background:

- Administrators from the Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service are working with the Office of Institutional Research & Evaluation to conduct a longitudinal study on civic engagement that examines the relationship between students' experiences and their civic and political actions and attitudes
- One of the major goals of the study is to evaluate the Citizenship and Public Service (CPS) Scholars program that was begun under a grant from Omidyar Network; this evaluation was a component of the grant and utilized later funding from Jonathan Tisch when he awarded a \$40 million grant
- The study was begun in 2003, and is a multi-year time-series study to assess Tufts' success in instilling civic knowledge, skills, and values; repeated administrations allow an analysis of change over time and data collection is planned until 2012

Goals:

- The Tufts University Vision Statement includes "we will strive to be a model for society at large. We want to foster an attitude of 'giving back,' an understanding that active citizen participation is essential to freedom and democracy, and a desire to make the world a better place."⁴¹
- The longitudinal study has two specific goals⁴²

³⁸ Barbara Moely, Sterett Mercer, Vincent Ilustre, Devi Miron, and Megan McFarland. 2002. "Psychometric Properties and Correlates of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ): A Measure of Students' Attitudes Related to Service-Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.

³⁹ Adeny Schmidt and Matthew Robby. 2002. "What's the Value of Service-Learning to the Community." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.

⁴⁰ Recommended by Robert Bringle.

⁴¹ <http://www.tufts.edu/home/about/?p=profile>

⁴² Dawn Geronimo Terkla, Lisa S. O'Leary, Nancy Wilson, and Ande Diaz. Forthcoming. "Civic Engagement Assessment: Linking Action to Attitudes." *Assessment Update*.

Argosy Foundation: Service Learning in Higher Education

- To what extent does participation in specific activities affect students' attitudes toward civic engagement, both during the undergraduate years and after graduation?
- How do students' civic and political attitudes, knowledge, and skills develop and change during the undergraduate years?

*Tisch CPS Scholars Program:*⁴³

- The program seeks to “develop the skills, knowledge, and values that allow [Scholars] to serve as leaders for elevating active citizenship”
- Scholars “work with community members and organizations to create positive change and build capacity in Tufts' host communities”
- Scholars “are a *community* of students learning from each other, providing each other with support, and developing together”
- Scholars are provided with training and advice, take courses, participate in weekly meetings and retreats, collaborate with community organizations on projects, and act as catalysts in the general student population

Evaluation:

- The principal data collection instrument is an annual Internet survey (Civic and Political Activities and Attitudes Survey (CPAAS)) administered to participants each school year and two years post-graduation; this data is combined with student responses to other assessment instruments and student transcripts; ten percent of participants are also interviewed for qualitative assessments
- The CPAAS measures student behavior (e.g. community service activities, civic actions, and political actions) and student attitudes on five dimensions (value and commitment to the public good, personal efficacy through community service, personal efficacy through politics, appreciation of dynamics of diversity, and awareness of and interest in community and national issues)
- Each cohort consists of 60-80 undergraduates (a stratified, representative sample of students) who are classified into one of three groups: CPS Scholars, students highly involved in community service in high school (average of 19.3 hours a month), and students less involved in community service in high school (average of 2.7 hours per month)
- Preliminary results find statistically significant differences both between the three groups and over time (all students' participation in civic activities significantly increased during their first two years at Tufts)⁴⁴

⁴³ Many of the quotes below are from the Tisch College Citizenship and Public Service Scholars Program information sheet.

⁴⁴ Dawn Geronimo Terkla, Lisa O'Leary, Nancy Wilson, and Ande Diaz. Forthcoming. “Civic Engagement Assessment: Linking Action to Attitudes.” *Assessment Update*.

Case Study #2:⁴⁵ Portland State University (since adopted at other institutions)⁴⁶

Background:

- Portland State University developed/pilot-tested this assessment framework due to grant reporting requirements and a desire to promote accountability; since then, the framework and material have been refined and enhanced through application at multiple institutions domestically and internationally⁴⁷
- The framework: proposes “concepts” that should be assessed (e.g. commitment to service), identifies “indicators” that can measure the concept (e.g. plans for future service), describes the “methods” that can be used to measure the indicator (e.g. a survey), and identifies the constituency that provides the data (e.g. students and faculty)

Goals:

- Assessment that uses multiple methods to address the impact of service learning on multiple constituencies: students, faculty, community organizations, and the institution
- The assessment articulates what has been learned, evaluating whether the program has had an impact and identifying opportunities for improvement; the audience is both internal constituencies and the broader educational, scholarly, and civic community

Evaluation:⁴⁸

- Students
 - *Concepts:* awareness of community, involvement with community, commitment to service, career development, self-awareness, understanding of course content, sensitivity to diversity, sense of ownership, and communication skills
 - *Methods:⁴⁹* each concept is measured using multiple methods, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observation
- Faculty
 - *Concepts:* motivation/attraction to service learning, professional development support, impact of service learning on teaching/research, barriers/facilitators to improvement, and general satisfaction

⁴⁵ Recommended by Robert Bringle and Barbara Holland. Although not examined in this report, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) was also recommended as a case study. IUPUI also has a set of comprehensive civic engagement goals that are assessed annually. For more information: <http://www.iport.iupui.edu/pi/ce/details.aspx>.

⁴⁶ The information presented in this section is predominantly based on a monograph that was published by Campus Compact. Sherril Gelmon, Barbara Holland, Amy Driscoll, Amy Spring, and Seanna Kerrigan. 2001. *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*. Campus Compact. For more information about service learning programming at Portland State University, see: <http://www.pdx.edu/cae/>.

⁴⁷ Communication with Sherril Gelmon.

⁴⁸ The framework now includes a fifth constituency, partnerships, that is not discussed here.

⁴⁹ For each constituency, all methods (e.g. survey items, interview and focus group questions, and evaluation rubrics, etc.) are detailed in: Sherril Gelmon, Barbara Holland, Amy Driscoll, Amy Spring, and Seanna Kerrigan. 2001. *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*. Campus Compact.

- *Methods*: interviews, focus groups, surveys, classroom observation, analyses of curriculum vitae, and analyses of syllabi
- Community Groups⁵⁰
 - *Concepts*: capacity building, cost reductions, networking, nature of partnership, satisfaction with partnership, and sustainability of partnership
 - *Methods*: interviews, surveys, focus groups, and potentially on-site observation
- Institution
 - *Concepts*: engagement in community, orientation to service learning teaching, resource acquisition and devotion to service learning, reputation/image on service learning, visibility of service learning on campus, infrastructure and leadership
 - *Methods*: analysis of documents (e.g. budgets, course catalog, media, organization charts, etc.), interviews, and surveys

Overall Evaluation of Service Learning

- Changing curriculum is difficult, and before adopting service learning, faculty and administration often want to be presented with empirical evidence demonstrating the benefits⁵¹
- In general, the empirical literature is inconclusive on the benefits of service learning;⁵² although many studies have found positive results, with two exceptions⁵³ these results must be interpreted cautiously as there may have been preexisting differences between the service learning and “control” students⁵⁴ that could explain the observed positive impact of service learning, i.e. different types

⁵⁰ It is important to ensure that community groups believe that any assessment is a review of the partnership with the school, not a review of the group’s performance. Moreover, when working with community groups, any assessment must balance the need for accurate measurement with a desire to minimize any burdens imposed on the partner groups.

⁵¹ The type of evidence also matters. Self-report scales “by themselves are among the least convincing measures to faculty considering implementing service learning into their courses.” Pamela Steinke and Stacey Buresh. 2002. “Cognitive Outcomes of Service-Learning: Reviewing the Past and Glimpsing the Future.” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, p. 12.

⁵² “The research that has focused on academic benefits of service learning has had mixed results; “although students do not learn less by these measures in service-learning classrooms, it is not clear that they learn more.” Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning*, p. 14. “In sum, there is limited empirical support for the claims made about the benefits of service learning.” Maryann Gray, et al. 1999. “Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education.” Rand Research Report, p. 6. “Interestingly, this growth of service learning has occurred with only a rather meager knowledge base from which to persuade educators and administrators about its benefits.” Robert Bringle, Mindy Phillips, and Michael Hudson. 2004. *The Measure of Service Learning: Research Scales to Assess Student Experiences*, p. 7.

⁵³ The literature reviews I read and the experts I talked to (Janet Eyler and Robert Bringle) only knew of two studies.

⁵⁴ Studies have found that students who participate in community service are different from students who do not participate in community service.

- of students could have decided to take different types of classes, causing a “selection problem”⁵⁵
- An evaluation of the literature identified multiple limitations with existing research: variation in programming/definitions makes it difficult to compare programs, many studies are self-studies conducted by advocates of service learning, studies often have small samples sizes, a limited number of longitudinal or experimental studies, and studies often use self-report measures rather than measure learning⁵⁶
 - One scholar commented that not only were there too few rigorous comparisons between service learning and non-service learning, there were also too few rigorous comparisons between service learning programs (i.e. to establish best practices and what works within service learning)⁵⁷
 - Studies of traditional measures of academic achievement (e.g. grades) have found conflicting results; this might be because GPA or tests “may not capture the value added to the quality of learning by service”⁵⁸
 - Multiple studies have examined whether service learning in general (i.e. courses at multiple institutions) is beneficial
 - One large study finds that, compared to just participation in community service, participation in a service learning course has a statistically significant and meaningful impact on thinking skills, writing skills, and college GPA⁵⁹
 - Another study found that taking a service learning course was associated with an increase in tolerance, personal efficacy, leadership skills, openness to new views, perceiving a systemic problem locus, complexity of thought, knowledge application, personal strategy, and increasing a level in critical thinking⁶⁰

⁵⁵ During a phone call, Alexander Astin pointed out that randomized designs in this area are difficult because people do not “want to have their life experiences assigned randomly.” Robert Bringle noted that it has been difficult to do these types of studies because, until recently, there were often not enough sections of service learning in a course to do rigorous evaluations.

⁵⁶ Sherril Gelmon, Andrew Furco, Barbara Holland and Robert Bringle. Presentation on “Beyond Anecdote: Challenges in Bringing Rigor to Service-Learning Research.” Obtained from Robert Bringle.

⁵⁷ Conversation with Robert Bringle. One evaluation of service learning found that “placement quality” (e.g. how challenging the experience was, variety of responsibility, appreciation from supervisors) was positively associated with increased self-reports of leadership, tolerance, communication, and career skills. In addition, the degree of reflection/discussion or reflection/writing was positively associated with some measures of critical thinking. Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning*.

⁵⁸ Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning*, p. 61.

⁵⁹ There were statistically significant, but in my opinion not substantively meaningful differences on other measures. Community service and service-learning students were meaningfully different from other students on most measures. Alexander Astin, Lori Vogelgesang, Elain Ikeda, and Jennifer Yee. 2000. “How Service Learning Affects Students.” Higher Education Research Institute.

⁶⁰ These results are based on regression analyses that controlled for various factors including a pretest score (i.e. a student would complete a scale at the beginning of the semester). In my

- A large study that followed up on students ten years after they enrolled in college found positive effects of taking a service learning course in a few areas like civic leadership, charitable giving, and political engagement, but no meaningful differences in many other areas⁶¹
- Many, many studies have also examined whether service learning programs at specific institutions have positive impacts; one literature review summarizes the research from 1993-2000⁶² and there is likely to be a future review summarizing subsequent work⁶³
- Two studies significantly reduced the likelihood of a selection problem by not informing students which sections of the class had a service learning component
 - A small study in a political science class found that students in the service learning sections had more positive changes across a number of personal values, were more likely to think they “learned to apply principles from this course to new situations” and also received significantly higher grades⁶⁴
 - A small study in a pharmacy communications class found that, based on self-report scales, service learning students had significantly better self-perception, self-concept, competency in social situations, and social behavior, but interestingly also significantly lower self-esteem; an analysis of student writing samples found that service learning students had significantly higher integration of practical examples, stronger awareness of others, and increased awareness of diversity, but there was no difference in cognitive complexity⁶⁵

opinion, some of the measures have questionable reliability because the pretest was not a significant predictor of the posttest. Additionally, some of the methodology is left too vague to evaluate the validity of the study. Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. 1999. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*.

⁶¹ These results statistically control for community service participation in college. The authors chose a relatively conservative significance level of $p < .01$. The authors also point out, I think fairly, that this study evaluates, in aggregate, service learning programs of widely varying quality, and the impact of higher quality programs may be obscured by the impact of lesser quality programs. Alexander Astin, et al. 2006. “Understand the Effects of Service-Learning: A Study of Students and Faculty.” HERI Report to Atlantic Philanthropies, U.S.A.

⁶² Janet Eyler, Dwight Giles, Christine Stenson, and Charlene Gray. 2001. “At a Glance: What We Know about the Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities, 1993-2000.” 3rd Edition. Learn and Serve America National Service Learning Clearinghouse.

⁶³ Communication with Janet Eyler.

⁶⁴ Even this study has some validity problems: the study was small (N=89), based on one class, and the same teaching assistant taught both service learning sections but none of the other sections. Gregory Markus, Jeffrey Howard, and David King. 1993. “Integrating Community Service and Classroom Instruction Enhances Learning: Results from an Experiment.”

Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis.

⁶⁵ Randall Osborne, Sharon Hammerich, and Chanin Hensley. 1998. “Student Effects of Service-Learning: Tracking Change Across a Semester.” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.