

## Service-Learning in Nonprofit Organizations: Motivations, Expectations, and Outcomes

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*This article applies theories of giving from philanthropic studies to enhance understanding of service-learning relationships between students and community partners. Focusing on the participation motivations, outcome expectations, and satisfaction levels of community partners who have recently completed work with service-learning students, the authors find that organizations and staff supervisors engaged in service-learning are motivated both by altruistic and self-serving factors. Staff supervisors and community partner organizations are motivated to give time, training, and a laboratory to enhance student learning. In return, community partners expect and generally receive valuable service from the students. The results suggest that the service-learning relationship be viewed as reciprocal in nature, as with other donor-recipient situations.*

Service-learning, a form of experiential learning in which classroom instruction is reinforced by community service (Hunter & Brisbin, 2000), is now a common and well accepted curricular component at many universities (Eyler & Giles, 1999). The service-learning literature has clearly demonstrated the benefits to students in two areas: their education is enhanced and they are more likely to be engaged citizens throughout adulthood. The benefits accruing to students from service-learning include improving critical thinking skills, integrating theory and practice, improving communication skills, and creating sustained civic engagement (Battistoni, 1997; Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000; Hunter & Brisbin, 2000; Jacoby, 1996).

Although service-learning literature is replete with information on the learning benefits that accrue to service-learning students (e.g., Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kenny, 2002), it is relatively bereft of information on the actual, rather than implied, service benefits to the community (Eyler, Giles, & Gray, 1999; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 1997). The overall impression given by the service-learning literature is that the value of service to the community is more or less assumed. As long as the program is well-designed, the value of the service is somehow assured. The definitions of the "service" that occurs in service-learning relate most often to the creation of improved citizens, thus accruing benefits both to the students and society (Kenny). Research demonstrates that those who contribute to society as college students will build social capital—they make more informed voters, better parents, and more likely volunteers as adults (Eyler & Giles, 1999). As important as these bene-

fits are, they are still focused on students as the service recipients, rather than the community partner organizations. Eyler and Giles' *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* (1999) led us to wonder, quixotically, Where's the service in service-learning? More to the point, to whom is the service being provided?

Admittedly, more attention has been paid in recent years to the community partner's perspective. Ferrari and Worrall (2000) offer a program evaluation from the perspective of staff at urban-based community partners, assessing student performance using qualitative and quantitative items. The organization's perception of students, faculty, and community impacts of the service-learning experience are also highlighted in other recent studies (Schmidt & Robby, 2002; Vernon & Ward, 1999). While these studies help shed light on the community partner perspective, more research is needed. Our personal experiences call into question the assumed direction and value of the service in service-learning, and suggest that the service component is complex. Studies assessing the impact of service-learning must go further to understand the reciprocal nature of the "service" in service-learning.

It was not too long ago, that we, now assistant professors, were staff members of nonprofit organizations and fielding proposals from professors and students to establish some sort of experiential/service-learning arrangement. Remarkably, we both had similar experiences and reactions to those overtures: to balance the time required to train and supervise the student—which was certain—against the likelihood that the service provided by the student would actually be useful—which was, in our

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experience, not certain. In the end, our response would have more to do with our interest in assisting the student with their educational objectives or loyalty to the educational institution than with the prospect of receiving free labor or useful service for the organization. Ultimately, our motivations leading to the decision to engage in a service-learning relationship had as much or more to do with our desire to *give* to the student as to *receive assistance* from the student.

Our experiences gave us a hint that maybe service is being provided to students by community partners as often as the other way around. As professors, we now regularly send students out into the community to participate in service-learning. We, thus, wanted to understand better whether the community partners are getting, giving, or some of both. One of the categories of service-learning research (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000) focuses on the student's motivations to participate in community service but no research asks the same questions of the community partners. This study, therefore, examines the motivations, expectations, and satisfaction of community partners with their recent service-learning experiences. In the end, our observations indicate that decisions to participate in service-learning are motivated, like many other donative decisions, by various influences, self-serving and self-giving. We also observe that the respective motivations of individual staff members involved in service-learning and the organizations that employ them are distinct, though they overlap. Finally, we observe a high degree of both pre-experience expectations and post-experience satisfaction among service-learning community partners.

### Theories of Giving in Service-Learning Relationships

"Giving theories inform us about an important aspect of human behavior—donating voluntarily to support the establishment, operations, and survival of organizations and programs in the nonprofit sector" (Ott, 2001, p. 311). We believe that giving theories can also inform the service-learning relationship—the exchange of service by students for knowledge and experience from community partners. In other words, we think that the staff members at nonprofit organizations who agree to participate in service-learning programs are as motivated by a desire to give valuable learning experiences to the student as much as the desire to receive something of value from the student. Thus, the relationship between community partners and service-learning students is a reciprocal relationship motivated by a complex combination of egoistic (self-

serving) and altruistic (other-serving) factors.

As community partner representatives choose whether to participate in service-learning, they must consider what they will be required to give to the relationship and balance this with what they and their organization will receive. They will give of their time—meeting with students to provide information and educate them about the organization. Staffers may also need to train the student, as they would any volunteer, to perform specific functions within the organization. Depending on the task, this training may be financially costly, on top of staff time. The community partner representative must decide whether they are willing to give their time, expertise, and organizational resources to the students. To that extent, the motivations of the staffers, or the organizations themselves, are somewhat like those of individuals who donate time or money to a charity. We, therefore, examine the motivations and related expectations and satisfaction of community partners to participate in service-learning, relying on theories of giving developed in research on philanthropy.

Scholars examining philanthropy study motivations of individuals to donate their time, talents, and treasure to charitable organizations and find that motivations for donating time and expertise mimic the motivations to give money (Ott, 2001). Theories of giving suggest that cultural norms, emotions, and perceived self-interest all converge to trigger acts of giving. Altruistic motivations arise from internalized abstract norms of justice and environmental factors such as culture and institutions (Wolfe, 1998). An individual's inclination to give is reinforced by social norms in their community (Piliavin & Libby, 1985/6). For many, a desire to give derives from the pleasure received from knowing one's gifts will be used to support causes in which one believes, or from the more general satisfaction of providing resources to those in need or to someone with whom one empathizes (Batson et al., 1991; Frank, 1996).

These various influences that lead individuals and organizations to donate to others frequently commingle the altruistic sense of duty to give with other more self-serving motivations such as the accumulation of prestige, access to important social networks, and tax deduction benefits (Ostrower, 1995). That these various effects—some more altruistic, some more egoistic—are frequently intertwined does not mean that one trumps the other. They, in fact, co-exist to form a multifaceted series of intentions on the part of the giver (Frank, 1996). "What emerges from the literature in many forms is a sense that altruism and egoism do not constitute mutually exclusive categories" (Wolfe, 1998, p. 42). Donors may anticipate receive

ing something of benefit to society, through the work their donation finances, as well as receiving something of benefit for themselves, such as recognition or member benefits. Ultimately, we are best able to understand why people give time or money by considering many factors. People give when they are asked and when society expects them to give, when the gift benefits the recipient and also is likely to have a reciprocal benefit for the donor, and when the cause they are supporting through their gift is personally important because they are most likely to have an emotional response to this sort of gift.

To better capture both the egoistic and altruistic components of giving, we utilize Mount's (1996) Model of Personal Donorship, which suggests a gift can be explained through five factors: involvement, predominance, means, past behavior, and self-interest. Although Mount uses her model to explain the largesse of a financial donation, we believe that this model also helps explain the decision on the part of community partners to donate their own time and talent as well as their organization's treasure to a student in a service-learning relationship.

#### *Involvement and Predominance*

Involvement, according to Mount (1996), "springs from expected satisfaction," while predominance is, "the degree to which a cause stands out in an individual's personal hierarchy of philanthropic options" (p. 10). Involvement describes the psychological and emotional satisfaction the staffer receives from contributing, in this case to the education of a service-learning student. The donor feels personal satisfaction from the gift based on their level of emotional involvement with the person or organization to which they are giving. They are motivated to give based both on the altruistic desire to help and the egoistic satisfaction they get from giving.

Predominance is based on how important a particular cause is to the donor. As applied to service-learning, this suggests that the education of students carries weight within the personal hierarchy of interests to which the community partner staffer feels an emotional connection. If predominance exists because the staff supervisor cares about the benefits that accrue to students from service-learning, then the staff person is more likely to be willing to make a sizable investment in the service-learning relationship.

Involvement and predominance are both complex considerations in the service-learning relationship. As with other motivational components, these impulses include a mix of altruistic and egoistic elements. Community partners may be altruistical-

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ly motivated to assist students in furthering educational goals, give back to the educational system in general, participate in a style of learning from which the staffer may have benefited when in college, promote a general ideal of good citizenship among students and the community at large, and work toward the mission of the organization. They may also, however, have egoistic motivations related to the satisfaction they anticipate feeling, based on the perception that the students will benefit from the service-learning experience.

In the giving decision, the involvement and predominance components of the model suggest that the emotional connection of the decision-maker to the university, students, and service-learning will all be important elements in the decision. The greater their affinity and desire to help (e.g., social work students enrolled in a service-learning course at their alma mater), the more likely they will make an investment in that relationship.

#### *Means and Past Behavior*

This emotional connection will also be influenced by considerations such as means and past behavior. As Mount (1996) suggests, donors are more likely to give, and tend to give a larger gift, when they have the financial means to make a significant difference to an organization. Similarly, we suggest, a community partner who has the authority and expertise to create a meaningful service experience for a student will be more motivated to participate. Certainly the staff person must have the means, or authority, within the organization to make the decision to take on a service-learning student. More importantly, the "means" motivating participation in service-learning are also the time, expertise, and experience that the staffer will be donating to the student. A staff supervisor with a great deal of experience is more likely motivated to share that knowledge with a student through a service-learning relationship.

In addition, an important part of understanding who will give and how much they will give to a nonprofit is the donor's past giving behavior. A donor who believes in a certain cause and has given to an organization in the past is more likely to give, and give more, to that organization in the future. Fund development professionals spend a great deal of time cultivating relationships with individual donors based on this trend of increasing donor loyalty over time (Dove, 2001; Rosso, 1996). We believe that community partners who are interested in giving to students through service-learning will also increase their level of giving over time. We, therefore, expect that the past behavior and experiences of community partners, both as service-

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learning students themselves and as community partners, will influence future participation in service-learning. If the staff person has been involved as a community partner in service-learning in the past, they are better able to evaluate potential benefits of the service-learning relationship for the student and for the community partner organization and its constituents. Expectations and satisfaction are part of the cyclical understanding of donor motivations and behavior (Mount, 1996). The more positive the staff supervisor's expectation of positive outcomes and the higher their level of past satisfaction, the more motivated they will be to agree to donate. The motivations of the organizations and staff supervisors to participate in a particular service-learning relationship are impacted by the expectations a staff person has regarding potential outcomes, which are based in part on positive previous experiences. Whether these experiences came when the supervisor was a student or through their current position with a community partner

organization, positive impressions will make them more likely to want to contribute to future students. This too combines egoistic and altruistic motivations. The community partner wants to give to the student and will be more likely to do so when previous experiences have been positive.

*Self-Interest*

Self-interest-based motivations obviously include material benefits that the donor may receive, such as thank you gifts and tax deductions, as well as emotionally-based elements, such as feelings associated with the "joy of giving" (Mount, 1996). In the service-learning context, the employees directly involved with service-learning students may be seeking assistance with work tasks under their responsibility or with activities perceived to promote the organization's mission. Sometimes this will include the completion of products or services that the staff supervisor or the organization does not have the resources to pro-

Table 1  
*Areas of Examination, Objectives, and Sample Questions*

Areas of Examination	Objectives	Sample Questions
Motivation for Participation	Why does the organization participate?	<i>Involvement and predominance:</i> Understanding that your personal reasons for participating in the service/research project might vary somewhat from the organization's reasons, please tell us in your own words . . . the <i>personal</i> reasons why you agreed to participate.
Outcome Expectations	Why does the staff supervisor participate?  Are organizations and their staff motivated by identical factors?	<i>Means and past behavior:</i> Who was involved in making the decision about whether to participate in the student service/research project? (check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> board of directors/trustees <input type="checkbox"/> yourself <input type="checkbox"/> a supervisor/boss" Were you ever involved in [service-learning/internship projects] when you were a student?
Satisfaction with Service-Learning Experience	Are staff and organizations expecting to receive a useful product?  Do staff perceive useful outcomes from service-learning?	<i>Self- or organization-interest:</i> Using the following five-point scale, to what extent did each of the following factors affect the <i>organization's</i> decision to participate? . . . The opportunity to take advantage of free labor. The opportunity to cultivate among the participating students potential future volunteers or contributors.  Before the service/internship project started, what were the general expectations that you or your organization had of the student doing the project?  After the completion of the project, how would you generally describe your satisfaction with the student's work? What value to the organization did the student's completed project actually have? <i>Substantially, somewhat, little or no</i> contribution.



vide. It may also include the desire to cultivate future volunteers and donors, promoting a positive image in the community, fostering a constructive relationship with the university, and recruiting potential new employees. Finally, as noted above, self-interest-based motivations may also include those associated with positive feelings that may accrue to the staff supervisor from the perceived benefit they are giving to the student through the service-learning experience.

As outlined above, the Model of Personal Donorship (Mount, 1996) helps us to understand the influences on the community partner's decision to participate in service-learning from many perspectives. We are able to see that motivations, expectations, and satisfaction with service-learning are interrelated. As with most donors, the employees of nonprofit organizations commit to participate in service-learning projects because they are motivated, both by a series of altruistic impulses as well as the belief that they and their organization will benefit in some way from its participation.

## Methodology

### *Areas of Investigation*

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the motivations, expectations, and satisfaction of community partner organizations and, if different, the direct supervisors of the service-learners (see Table 1). Our research is directed by the following questions: What motivates community partner staff members asked to supervise service-learning projects to agree to participate? Are the motivations of the individual staff supervisors identical to the motivations associated with the community partner organizations? What are the expectations of the staff supervisors when entering in to a particular service-learning relationship? And how satisfied are the staff supervisors with the service-learning experience? The study blends qualitative and quantitative elements, using a mixed methods approach to answer these questions (Creswell, 2003).

### *Instrument*

We administered a survey to all organizations that had participated in one or more service-learning projects through a class at the University of Utah in the 18 months preceding the study. The major portions of the survey related to motivations, expectations, and satisfaction. The motivations portion of the survey posed two open-ended questions followed by 13 Likert-scale questions that sought to identify organizational motivations and respondent motivations separately. The survey asked respondents to place motivations for partici-

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pation on a Likert scale of one (*to no extent*) to five (*to a great extent*). The motivation section posed questions aimed at involvement and predominance-based motivations, such as "it was an opportunity to give something to the community;" means and past behavior-based motivations, such as "Have you assisted a student or students with [service-learning] activities in the past (i.e., before the most recent/current example)?" and self-interest motivations, including "it gave you an opportunity to have assistance with your personal work load" (see Table 1 for more examples).

The outcome expectations section of the survey posed an open-ended question followed by three ordinal-level questions. For example, one of the ordinal questions asked, "Before the start of the project, what value to the organization did you expect from completion of the student's project?" to which the following responses were possible: "I expected the outcome from the project to *substantially* contribute to the organization's work and/or mission," "I expected the outcome from the project to *somewhat* contribute to the organization's work and/or mission," and "I did not expect the outcome to contribute to the organization's work and/or mission."

Finally, the satisfaction portion of the survey consisted of one open-ended question followed by three ordinal questions. The open-ended question in this section asked, "After the completion of the project, how would you generally describe your satisfaction with the student's work?" The ordinal questions asked respondents to rank the level of oversight provided, student competence exhibited, and value of the completed project to the organization.

### *Participants and Procedures*

Organizations were drawn from two lists: one from a course taught by one of the authors in Fall 2003 that required students to contact and study local nonprofit organizations for a class research project, and another provided by the Bennion Center at the University of Utah.<sup>1</sup> The 98 organizations on the combined list were primarily in the Salt Lake City metropolitan area. We sent the survey by U.S. mail in April and May 2004 and followed up with phone calls to nonresponders in June. Those contacted by phone were provided a duplicate copy of the survey either by U.S. mail or electronic mail upon request. We accepted survey responses through July, receiving a total of 38 surveys, for an overall response rate of 38.8%—within the range deemed acceptable in social research, albeit on the low side (Baruch, 1999). We summarized and analyzed the results of the Likert-scale portions of the survey, using SPSS to compute descriptive statistics, primarily frequency distributions, correlations, and cross-tabulations. We

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also entered the qualitative data for each question into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed the responses for content patterns, trends, and outliers in the responses.

**Results**

Qualitative and quantitative data inform our three areas of investigation: motivations, expectations, and satisfaction.

*Motivation for Participation*

As explained in the theoretical framework, the giving decision in a service-learning relationship is complex. The motivations for the donation of the community partner to the student include two components, organizational motives and staff supervisor motives, and are based on involvement and predominance, means and past behavior, and self-interest.

*Organizational Motivations.* The motivations of the organization to participate in service-learning, as reported by the staff supervisors of service-learning projects, varied dramatically but often included a combination of self-interested motivations related to free labor or cultivating future donors, and involvement and predominance-based motivations such as helping students learn and cultivating responsible citizens. In analysis of an open-ended question which asked the reasons why the organization agreed to participate, a dual-purpose motivation emerged. For example, one organization responded “The answer is

two-fold. We need to get things accomplished and we need to teach the students the importance of service.” Although some organizations reported that they simply needed the help, the majority reported their primary motivation was, at least in part, to help others—students, the university, the community. The responses from two organizations characterize the motivations given by many organizations to participate in service-learning: “To have greater community involvement within the agency. To be involved in scholarly learning of a greater social issue.” “It is part of our mission to educate people about our work and we like to support the university.” Several other groups also felt it was a community service to teach students about the organization’s mission through the service-learning process, as illustrated in these comments: “We feel that it serves the whole . . . community to better understand our [organization].” “We felt it was in the best interest of the community to educate as many people as possible about [our mission].” Overall, staff supervisors were motivated by the organization-serving desire to help the organization accomplish work and altruistically wanting to use available means to help educate students, and were motivated by predominance and involvement to give back to the university and broader community.

Responses to the Likert-scale questions concerning organizational motivations reveal a similar combination of organization-serving and altruistic motivations. The responses suggested that the more organization-serving motivations of getting free

**Table 2**  
*Spearman Correlations between Organizational and Staff Supervisor Motivations*

		Staff Supervisor Motivation					
		Cover some of my job responsibilities	Right thing to do	Give to community	Give to university	Give to students	Help with work load
Staff Supervisor Mean		3.34	3.91	4.29	4.00	4.49	2.91
Organizational Motivation	Organizational Mean						
Help students learn	4.54	-.297 (.084)	.101 (.565)	.186 (.285)	.329 (.054)	.286 (.096)	-.401 (.017)*
Foster positive relationship with university	3.74	.017 (.923)	.322 (.059)	.279 (.105)	.511 (.002)**	.087 (.620)	-.387 (.022)*
Get free labor from student	3.00	.115 (.510)	-.028 (.875)	.049 (.779)	-.047 (.789)	-.116 (.508)	.457 (.007)*
Service-learning participation part of mission	3.86	-.050 (.773)	.056 (.751)	.174 (.318)	.341 (.045)*	-.034 (.848)	-.050 (.774)
Enhance community image	2.69	.195 (.262)	-.105 (.550)	.212 (.223)	.314 (.066)	-.081 (.643)	.000 (.998)
Cultivate good citizens	4.11	-.077 (.660)	.451 (.006)*	.291 (.090)	.355 (.037)*	.352 (.038)*	-.166 (.341)
Cultivate future volunteers and donors	3.80	.209 (.228)	.167 (.337)	.355 (.036)*	.337 (.048)*	.192 (.269)	.378 (.025)*

Note. Scale: 1 (to no extent) through 5 (to a great extent). \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .005$

labor and cultivating future volunteers were primary for some organizations. Twenty-two groups (57.9%) said these factors motivated their participation *to a great extent*. Other organizations, however, were not motivated by these organization-serving factors and were instead motivated by more altruistic factors. Eleven organizations (28.9%) reported they were motivated *to no extent* by the free labor, six organizations (15.8%) were motivated only *to a slight extent* by the opportunity to cultivate future volunteers and donors, and eight organizations (21.1%) reported they were motivated *to no extent* by the opportunity to improve the organization's community image. Rather, most organizations were motivated *to a great extent* a desire to give—to the community, to the university, or to the students. Finally, many organizations ( $n = 16$ ; 39.5%) also saw participating in such projects as related to the mission of the nonprofit. In addition, 14 of the 38 staff supervisors (36.8%) reported that they were motivated *to a great extent or to a moderate extent* by both the organization's need for free labor and desire to help educate students.

These Likert scale items were also examined for correlations between the organizational motivations and the staff supervisor motivations (see Table 2). Notably, the correlations between the staff supervisor's desire to help the university and organization's various motivations were the most frequently statistically significant correlations. Statistically significant correlations also exist between the staff supervisor's desire to help the community and organization's need to build connections with future volunteers and donors, and the staff supervisor's desire to do the right thing and their desire to generate labor for the organization, as related to the organization's desire to make good citizens. Though not strong correlations, at .355, .451, and .378, respectively, these connections reveal that the motivations of the staff supervisor and those of the organization as identified by the staff supervisor are distinct but interrelated. The staff supervisor's desire to generate labor for the organization is inversely related to the organization's commitment to help students learn as well as its connection to the university.

Organization-serving motivations seemed to be less important overall than the involvement and predominance-based motivations. Although respondents were not asked to rank order their motivations, the mean response for each motivation reflects its average importance to all staff supervisors and generally the mean values for the "helping others" motivations were consistently high. The mean value reported (on a scale of 1 [to no extent] to 5 [to a great extent]) for the motivation to help students to learn was quite high at 4.54

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and the modal response for this motivation was a 5 (to a great extent), the motivation to cultivate good citizens mean value was 4.11, and the mean value for fostering a positive relationship with the university was 3.74. Generally, the mean values for organization-serving motivations were lower. The free labor motivation was 3.00 (which equated to some extent on the Likert scale) and the modal category for this motivation was a 1 (to no extent), the mean for cultivating future donors and volunteers was 3.80, and the mean value for motivation to "improve community image" was 2.69. Many respondents indicated in the open-ended questions that they felt working to meet the mission of their organization was also working to improve society, and thus we consider the mission-based motive to be both altruistic and organization-serving; the mean value for the motivation to participate in service-learning because it is part of the organization's mission was 3.86.

*Staff Supervisor Motivations.* Staff supervisor motivations were distinct from organizational motivations in 29 of the 38 (76%) survey responses and generally more personal in nature, as one might expect. Sentiments in the following quotation are typical of many expressed by staff supervisors about their own motivations for participating: "I thought it would be great to give others an opportunity to work with this fantastic population. Part of gaining an education should include some hands-on experience. We are able to offer that to students."

The responses on the Likert scale questions were also predominately based on predominance and involvement-type impulses. The highest mean value related to the motivation to help students in general at 4.49, followed closely by the desire to help the community at 4.29, and the motivations to help the university at 4.00, and the purely altruistic "because it was the right thing to do" at 3.91.

The purely self-interest-based motives were on average much lower. For example, the motivation to have help with one's own workload was a mean of only 2.91 and the motivation to have someone else cover the staff supervisor's normal job responsibilities was 3.34. The correlation between the staff supervisor's motivation for labor and the organization's need for labor was .457 and significant at the  $p = .01$  level (see Table 2). This correlation suggests that the self-interest and organization-serving motivations are related to one another and those with a self interest in having service from students may more easily recognize the organization's need for their contributions.

The degree to which the staff supervisor's job description includes facilitating service-learning relationships is obviously important in evaluating the rel-

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for Staff Supervisor Expectations of Service-Learning*

Expected Value of Student's Work	Expected Staff Oversight	Expected Student's Competence
Mean = 1.53	Mean = 1.93	Mean = 3.31
Categories:	Categories:	Categories:
(3) Substantial contribution	(3) Substantial Oversight	(1) Above Employees
(2) Some contribution	(2) Moderate Oversight	(2) Same as employees
(1) No contribution	(1) Minimum Oversight	(3) Between employee and volunteers
		(4) Same as other volunteers
		(5) Below volunteers

Note. Spearman's correlation (statistical significance).

ative importance of motives. If the staff supervisor is required to participate in service-learning as a condition of employment, their other stated motivations can rightfully be viewed as secondary. The mean Likert response testing the degree to which a staff supervisor was affected in their decision to participate in service-learning because it was part of their "normal job responsibilities" was 3.3, indicating a moderate level of influence. From our experience with nonprofit organizations, however, there are many staff members who loosely understand their job to include a variety of unspecified activities, including arrangements such as service-learning projects. Then, on the other hand, there are those who have service-learning or other similar types of volunteer arrangements explicitly stated in their job descriptions. The degree to which the staff supervisors in this study are either in the former or latter categories cannot be disaggregated from this data. Moreover, even within the latter category, we cannot assume that those tasked with volunteer coordination would necessarily interpret that component of their job description to include service-learning.

#### *Outcome Expectations*

The Model of Personal Donorship (Mount, 1996) suggests that the level of involvement of a donor is an important predictor of the giving behavior of that donor and that involvement is the result of expected satisfaction. Further, Mount (p. 10) asserts, "the belief that one's gift can make a difference is a precondition of the warm glow known as the joy of giving (for example, Panas, 1984)." To understand the donation of community partners to students in the service-learning relationship, therefore, we evaluated the expectations of the staff regarding the service-learning project.

To better understand the motivation related to past experience and expectations for service we asked, "Before the start of the project, what value to the organization did you expect from completion of the student's project?" Seventy-six percent of the staff supervisors chose either "I expected the outcome from the project to substantially contribute to the organization's work and/or mission," ( $n = 15$ ) or "I

expected the outcome from the project to somewhat contribute to the organization's work and/or mission" ( $n = 14$ ). As the average number of service-learning projects that the staff supervisors have participated in prior to the survey was 14, we believe that their expectations were not simply idealistic, but rather may reflect prior positive experiences.

The mean value for expected oversight of service-learning students is 1.93 (see Table 3), which indicates staff supervisors expected they would need to exercise slightly less than a moderate level of oversight. Finally, the expected competence was 3.31, indicating that the staff supervisors expected that the competence level of the students would be slightly higher than that of their typical volunteer. This may be related to the additional supervision and learning associated with the class links for service-learning projects.

The responses were mixed to the open-ended question addressing staff supervisor expectations of the students. Although a few organizations expressed reservation, (e.g., students "don't expect too much and have a back-up plan"), many organizations have positive expectations, as indicated by these typical comments:

Materials [developed] to use long-term [and] more relationships in the community.

The project would be completed well and in the appropriate time-frame.

We expect the students to be reliable and dependable.

They would give to staff and (clients) what they could get back....that way we all learn something together.

Our expectations were that we would give students an opportunity to learn more about [our mission] and they would assist us in [our mission-related work].

#### *Satisfaction with Service-Learning Experience*

Finally, the theories of giving suggest that past behavior is an important predictor of future dona-



tions. We expected that not only past involvement with service-learning (either as a staff supervisor or as a student), but also the level of satisfaction with those experiences, would be important in understanding the motivation to participate in current and future relationships. We were, therefore, interested in the community partner's perception of the outcomes of student competence and the value the service-learning contributed to the organization.

Most respondents (52.6%), reported that the value of the completed project was substantial ( $n = 20$ ) and no respondents indicated that it was of little or no value. In addition, the staff supervisors generally seem to have been satisfied with the competence of the service-learning students. Staff supervisors reported most often that they expected the competence level of the service-learning students would be either at the same level as other volunteers ( $n = 13$ ) or between the level of an employee and a volunteer ( $n = 13$ ).

The actual outcomes do not seem to be related to each other (see Table 4). Assessment of actual project value, actual oversight required, and actual student competence do not correlate strongly with one another and none of these Spearman's correlations are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level. We also calculated the correlation between each personal motivation variable, and the expectation and satisfaction criteria, and found that regardless of the motivations for participation, staffers expected to receive something of value from the organization's participation in service-learning.

More than one-third (36%) reported that the actual competency of the students was higher ( $n = 14$ ) than they expected prior to beginning the service-learning project, and another 34.2% performed at the anticipated level of competence ( $n = 13$ ).

### Discussion

As these surveys were administered after the service-learning projects were complete, and there had been in many cases several months to a year of time lapsed, we are mindful of the potential for errors in the data. Although we asked staff supervisors to address their responses specifically to the most recent service-learning occurrence, many seemed to

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be communicating overall impressions of their total experiences with service-learning. This does not, however, reduce the value of these results. We sought to understand why organizations choose to participate in service-learning and the perceived benefits of the process. We believe that these surveys, though post-hoc, will allow us to draw relevant conclusions regarding these questions.

### Motivation for Participation

As discussed above, the motivation to help others was expected to be an important reason that the staffers supervising service-learning projects chose to involve their organizations as community partners. As the research on donor motivation suggests (Ott, 2001), many people give in a "pay it forward" fashion because they received a gift or service that was helpful in the past, and they want to provide a similar kind of assistance to others now and in the future. Given this cultural norm, we expected the motivation to participate in service-learning would be strongest among those staff supervisors who had participated in service-learning as students and had a positive experience. Unfortunately there were not enough respondents without service-learning experience to allow us to test this correlation. No pattern emerged, however, that would suggest staffers without service-learning experience were less likely to be motivated to help students. In other words, the motivation to help the students seems to be equally strong, regardless of previous exposure to service-learning on either side of the relationship.

Motivations for both staff supervisors and organizations did, however, clearly follow the remaining aspects of the Personal Donorship model. Motivations to participate in service-learning clearly involved some self-interest and also emotional connections to students, to the university, and to the community. The model helps to identify important factors in this reciprocal relationship between student volunteers, staff supervisors, and nonprofit organizations.

### Outcome Expectations

This analysis endeavored to understand how much effort the staffer supervising the student expected to put into the project, and the staffer's

Table 4  
*Assessment of Actual Outcomes of Service-Learning*

	Value to Organization of Completed Project Mean = 1.31	Actual Oversight Required Mean = 1.62	Actual Student Competency Mean = 1.62
Value to Organization of Completed Project	—	-.114 (.558)	.115 (.554)
Actual Oversight	-.114 (.558)	—	.341 (.070)

expectation of the value of the project to the organization. As discussed above, the authors shared a similar experience regarding the limited contributions from service-learning projects as former staffers in different types of nonprofits in different parts of the country. Anecdotally, we found there was often minimal value to the nonprofit organization as a direct result of the various service-learning projects we supervised. Through the survey results, we observed that both organizations and staffers were somewhat motivated by the organization-serving and self-interest variables, but they were also motivated, often to a greater degree, by the primarily altruistic variables related to means, past behavior, involvement, and predominance.

Based on these outcomes we expected to find that our own anecdotal experiences might prove to be representative of the experiences of other staffers supervising service-learning projects. In other words, if staffers and organizations express a higher level of motivation relating to giving to students, the university, and the community than they express for the value received by the organization, they may not have high expectations of the service-learning projects. This is not, however, what we found. Rather, staff supervisors expected the value of the work to be fairly substantial. We believed that the reasons a person enrolled their organization in the project and the reasons they themselves agreed to supervise the project may be different and both may be important. For example, while education may be unrelated to the organization's mission, the overworked service-learning supervisor may have been motivated to get additional help on a specific project within the responsibilities of her job.

We also anticipated that those staffers who expected to provide a great deal of oversight, and those that did not expect a high degree of competence from students, would need to be more motivated by altruistic factors to participate. We found, however, that there was no significant relationship between expectations and altruistic motivations, indicating that regardless of the amount of work the supervisor expected to contribute to the service-learning effort, they were sufficiently motivated by their desire to help students to learn and for the organization to receive something of benefit.

#### *Satisfaction with Service-Learning Experience*

In many of our own experiences as staffers supervising service-learning projects, the students' work did not lead to valuable contributions to our organizations. This outcome was reflected in only two responses to an open-ended question on satisfaction:

[A] few early experiences were nightmarish—

especially with group work. Some groups never worked together and our office was left with mixed messages or confusing deadlines. We would orient one person to our vision for a project and that information was not successfully passed along to others. Some students never took the initiative to make a writing project worthwhile, the[n] passed the work back to us. One Web site group sapped hours of our staff time and gave us a ridiculous end product—something we would never use ([one] student was more excited about getting software to do cool things than listening to our vision and needs as an organization). One group of students had a pilot experience for a teacher and in the end, [neither] they (nor the teacher) had a clear idea of what they could do for our organization that made sense with the class. All of that aside, our past two [service-learning students] have been excellent.

We had a student design a Web Site. It was great, but they never got around to loading it and they didn't leave it for us to do.

In responses to the ordinal questions on satisfaction, only four staff supervisors indicated that they had prior experiences with service-learning that were either "somewhat negative" ( $n = 1$ ) or "neutral," ( $n = 3$ ) and no staff supervisors indicated that they had prior experiences with service-learning that were "very negative" ( $n = 0$ ); this from a pool of respondents that had collectively supervised more than 300 service-learning situations.

As nonprofit staffers, we continued to participate in service-learning projects, notwithstanding the mixed quality of many of the work products, because we believed that there was intrinsic value in the effort. As professors, we carry out our belief in the intrinsic value of service-learning by constructing service opportunities as part of the learning for the students enrolled in our courses. We are pleased to find that this study provides some evidence of the value of these service-learning projects, not only to the students, but also to the community partners.

#### Conclusion

Clearly not all service-learning situations are ideal. It is important for educators constructing service-learning projects to take into account the needs of both students and community partners. Existing research (Jacoby, 1996) suggests many criteria that will enhance student learning courses and cautions professors to be mindful of community needs rather than creating service-learning projects in their ivory towers. Although no existing research examines the responsibilities of the nonprofit organizations, our study suggests it is also

important that community partners evaluate their own needs and prior service-learning experiences objectively, and use these assessments to improve future service-learning projects.

Some staff supervisors, according to our survey results, are currently considering adjustments for future service-learning participation. Approximately one-third of the staff supervisors ( $n = 13$ ) indicated they would make changes in managing service-learning students, including more direct contact with the professor, better planning and scheduling with students, and clearer communication of organizational mission and needs.

This study suggests that the community partner perspective of service-learning projects undertaken at the University of Utah in the past 18 months is extremely positive. Although there is certainly the possibility that those staffers with positive outcomes were more likely to respond than those with negative outcomes, 100% of the organizations that responded to the survey said they would be willing to participate as community partners in future service-learning projects. One characteristic at the University of Utah that may not be present at all universities is the support of the Bennion Center in facilitating service-learning for the students and the community partners in various ways, and it is likely that this contributed to the positive outcomes reflected in our study. Despite these important caveats, the study results suggest the potential for value from service-learning both for the student and nonprofit organization.

As positive as these results appear to be, there are, of course, many areas of additional research suggested by this study, including before and after studies of community partner organizations and their staff. Ideally, these would include organizations or staff without prior service-learning experiences.

Finally, the evidence from this investigation supports our theory that organizations and staff supervisors of service-learning are motivated both by altruistic and self-serving factors. These results support our contention that the service-learning relationship should be viewed, as any other donor-recipient situation, as reciprocal in nature. Staff supervisors and community partner organizations are motivated to give time, training, and a laboratory to enhance student learning. In return, as evidenced here, community partners expect and receive valuable service from the students who choose to participate in service-learning.

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<sup>1</sup> The Lowell Bennion Community Service Center at the University of Utah was founded in 1987. The mission of the center is to foster lifelong service and civic participation by engaging the University with the greater community in action, change, and learning.

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