The Frontiers of Service-Learning at Canadian Universities

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ABSTRACT   Service learning is a form of experiential learning that cultivates academic development, personal growth, and civic engagement. Students contribute to and learn from community. Service learning empowers students, enabling them to recognize their ability to act as agents of social change. Service learning is gaining momentum as a movement, given its ability to prepare students for the "real world" after graduation. The authors of this article come from health sciences, psychology, and environment and sustainability. Here, we illustrate service learning through four case studies: 1) An innovative team-based service-learning course partnering with older adults, healthcare providers and community agencies (Gerontology in Practice, Western University); 2) A unique curriculum design that includes service learning and interdisciplinary graduate problem-based training and research focused on experimental education (Environmental Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan); 3) An international service learning course that combines intensive coursework and a 3-month placement with a non-profit, community-based organization in Africa (Psychology and Developing Societies, University of British Columbia); and 4) An extraordinary example of an institutional-level commitment to service learning involving 50 courses, 40 faculty, 100 community agencies, and 900 students per year (St. Francis Xavier University). Our goal is to inspire other educators to engage in the pursuit of excellence in higher education through service learning.

KEYWORDS   service learning, case study, multilevel programs, higher education, Canada.

Service learning cultivates academic development, personal growth, and civic engagement (Jacoby, 1996). Through engaging in service learning, students provide direct community service as part of their course. In the process, they learn more about the context of the community in which they work, and realize how the service-learning component of the course contributes to the course objectives (Driscoll et al., 1996, 1998; Bowen, 2010). In service learning, students may also be expected to use credible methods of data collection and use the data collected to develop a sound strategy for action to the benefit of community (Brundiers & Weik, 2013).

Effective service-learning practice requires assigning relevant service projects that meet real community needs, while supporting purposeful civic learning (Mintz & Hesser, 1996). Projects can be designed using a service-learning or community-engaged model, wherein the community serves as the client and receives the final project (Fourie, 2003).

Service learning poses challenges for all participating parties. Brundiers et al. (2010) note that faculty may be reluctant to teach such courses because workload is high, and in some cases, they do not know how such teaching will reflect in the tenure and promotion review process. Further, the authors suggest that students may not know the expectations and actions required for self-directed learning, while community partners may not be familiar with how to collaborate with academic researchers.

Notwithstanding these concerns, service learning is gaining momentum as a teaching strategy because it a) engages students in real-world applications (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Bowen, 2010), b) integrates theory and practice (Perkins, Kidd & Smith, 2006; Roberts, 2016), c) promotes interdisciplinary approaches to academic study (Eyler, 2002), and d) provides benefits for students, faculty and community (e.g., Al-Kafaji & Morse, 2006; Mintz et al., 2013; Krasny & Delia, 2015).

In this paper, we illustrate service learning through four case studies[1]: 1) Gerontology in practice at Western University is a project and team-based undergraduate service-learning course with local community (A. Zecevic); 2) Environmental sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan integrates service learning, interdisciplinary research and professional practice in a graduate course focused on experimental education (V. Kricsfalusy); 3) Psychology and Developing Societies at the University of British Columbia (UBC) involves an international service learning experience that combines intensive coursework at UBC and a 3-month placement with a non-profit, community-based organization in Africa (S. Assanand); and 4) The Service Learning Program at St. Francis Xavier University presents an extraordinary example of institutional-level commitment to service-learning (A. Bigelow and M. Gaudet). Our goal is to inspire other educators to engage in the pursuit of excellence in higher education through service learning.

Case Study One: Gerontology in Practice: An Innovative Undergraduate Team-Based Community-Service Learning Course

Gerontology in Practice is an elective community service-learning course in which seven teams (six students each) of fourth year students in the School of Health Sciences at Western University work alongside community partners on projects related to health and aging (Figure 1). The course is based on the principles of service-learning course design (Howard, 1993; Jacoby, 1996, 2014) and is supported by the Student Success Centre's Community Engaged Learning (CEL) office. By researching authentic real-life problems that have been identified by community partners, students explore the theories behind the issue, discern and critically evaluate available solutions, and develop a proposal to advocate for change. Students learn through civic engagement and provide community partners with innovative solutions that promise to improve lives of older adults. The course is delivered in the Western Active Learning Space (WALS), an innovative technology supported classroom (http://www.uwo.ca/wals/).

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[1] This paper stems from presentations at the workshop, The Frontiers of Service-Learning at Canadian Universities, which was presented at the 2016 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) annual conference held at Western University (21-24 June 2016, London, ON). The workshop was initiated, designed, and organized by A. Zecevic.

The purpose of this case study is to inspire and encourage readers who are considering the addition of service-learning to their pedagogical repertoire. The following is a brief overview of nine innovative elements of the course, followed by a brief reflection on the impact of the course on its diverse participants.

Course Content. The course content is guided by real-life problems. Every summer the professor visits potential community partners to explore

Figure 1. Gerontology in Practice WALS classroom, Western University.

current issues. Through brainstorming, the professor and the partner identify a question to be answered and create a project that the students will work on. The professor then anchors topics in theories, frameworks, and policies governing health and aging today. This approach produces original and contemporary content every year that is delivered to students through book chapters, recently published research articles, literature reviews, and policy documents. Although time consuming and instructor resource intensive, this approach to creation of course content assures relevance and continuous refinement.

Teamwork. Group work is one of the corner stones of the course. Special time and attention are dedicated to properly inform and match students with community partners, maximize team cohesiveness, and resolve conflict in a timely fashion. At the beginning of the course, each student ranks all project proposals to prepare for "speed dating." A very popular feature, already adapted by colleagues across the University, "speed dating" allows students and community partners to meet, discuss the project, and determine if this is a good partnership. Once all students meet all partners, students select their project topic and form a team of six members. The first task for teams is to meet socially out of the academic environment and get to know each other on personal level. After that, they visit the community partner site for orientation. A professional team-development expert (funded by student donations) delivers a guest lecture, where teams learn how to utilize personality traits to maximize talents and minimize weaknesses.

Reflection. Reflection is at the core of service-learning and, in the course, it takes many forms. During community engagement, students individually complete six bi-weekly one-page reflection narratives. The last is a reflection on their overall experience in the course. Reflection is ever present in preparation of videos and in-class presentations. The final implementation report asks the teams to provide a team statement in response to the question: "What did we learn by conducting this project?"

E-modules. Two custom-made online learning e-modules on Teamwork and Reflection were created for this course. Given that other instructors might be interested in adopting these modules, the content was intentionally kept course non-specific. The modules can be easily copied from one course's website to another to help other instructors. The modules contain numerous links to tools, resource materials, and videos to help students learn from good and bad examples.

Quizzes. To assure students' accountability for pre-class preparation, every week students take a Readiness Assessment Test, a web-based, seven-minute quiz with 10 randomly selected questions from a pool of 15. Quizzes are based exclusively on required readings and students are provided immediate feedback. This shifts the use of class time from coverage of concepts to peer teaching, informed discussion, and potential application.

Peer teaching. In this "flipped classroom" where the instructor is "a guide on the side" instead of "sage on the stage," responsibility for teaching and learning is shared. As the course evolved, students became more involved in the presentation of course content. Each team provides a 20-minute presentation on the academic content (i.e., compulsory readings) related to their project. Students feel empowered by the opportunity to facilitate discussion and receive feedback on their proposed solutions and presentation skills. Every opportunity to learn is maximized. At the end of the semester, when teams present for grading, they have knowledge, presentation skills, familiarity with technology, and connection to the audience.

Assessments. Student learning, engagement, and quality of deliverables are evaluated in nine different ways. Fifty percent (50%) of the final grade is based on individual performance and 50% on team performance. Five different evaluators provide input: peer team members, the whole class, the community partner, the teaching assistant, and the professor. For team performance grade, the same mark is assigned to all students in the team. Team participation grade is based on peer evaluation and is modeled after Michaelsen et al. (2004). Each team member distributes 100 points to other team members, meaning that each student could get more or less than 100%. This team participation grade is used as a coefficient and multiplied with an average grade for all team activities. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the nine aspects of the course grade.

Table 1: Gerontology in Practice student assessment grade components

Grade	Grade component	Evaluator
Individual performance 50%		
5%	In-class participation	Professor/TA
15%	Team participation	Peer evaluation
7.5%	Quizzes	Professor/TA
7.5%	Reflections	Professor/TA
15%	Community engagement–individual	Community partner
Team performance 50 %		
10%	In-class team presentation	70% prof/TA, 30% class
10%	Video	70% prof/TA, 30% class
5%	Implementation report/group grade	Community partner
25%	Implementation report	Professor

Deliverables. True to course's pragmatic nature, students prepare three deliverables that can be readily adopted by the community partner. A presentation, video, and implementation report provide an answer to the question or a solution to the problem. The findings have to be supported by evidence from research and practice. Teams exercise leadership by inviting to presentations their community partner, clients and family caregivers, influential leaders such as politicians, hospital administrators, public health representatives, and policy makers.

Teaching-learning space. WALS is a new learner-centered, activity-based, interactive classroom that facilitates creativity, communication, and teamwork (http://www.uwo.ca/wals/). It does so through the use of electronic whiteboards, video streaming, video conferencing, multimedia, and file sharing. The students connect up to four laptops, iPads, or iPhones to an electronic whiteboard in order to work collaboratively on their project. The WALS allows communication with community partners from afar, supports whole-class engagement, and fosters a student creativity that is not possible in traditional classrooms. In short, the WALS is the perfect match for Gerontology in Practice course.

Impact. Over the past five years, the 38 service-learning projects in the course have had a profound impact on 28 community partners, 215 students, numerous older adults and their families, and other agencies serving older adults in London, Ontario. The course was awarded a Pillar Nonprofit Community Innovation Award in the category Community Collaboration and the 2015 Brightspace Innovation Award in higher education. Students presented to the Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne when she visited Western; one team published a manuscript and another team contributed to a book, 35 students presented posters at provincial and national conferences; and many students continued to work with and volunteer for their

community partner after the course. More importantly, through joint efforts of all involved in the course many families living with Alzheimer's disease can now enjoy periods of less agitation, more dance, and greater connection; and London (ON) is a more age-friendly city with better marked walking paths in parks, more public washrooms, better ways to engage isolated seniors, and greater awareness about ageism and ways to stop it.

Case Study Two: The Practice of Environmental Sustainability: An Experiential Course for An Interdisciplinary Graduate Program Tied to Community Needs
The course described here—Field Skills in Environment and Sustainability—is required for a professional-style graduate degree program, the Master of Sustainable Environmental Management (MSEM). The MSEM program is offered by the School of Environment and Sustainability (SENS) at the University of Saskatchewan. The program is designed to be completed in one year and to provide advanced knowledge and professional skills, an appreciation of the breadth of environmental and sustainability issues, and an ability to interact with stakeholders outside a university setting.

The course evolved from an emerging community-university partnership with Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve (RLBR), which is the only biosphere reserve in the province of Saskatchewan. Biosphere reserves are sites designated by UNESCO to be models for demonstrating and learning about sustainability (UNESCO, 2008). In 2012, the SENS and RLBR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that supports on-going educational opportunities. The conveners of RLBR were keen to partner with SENS because student experiential learning in the biosphere reserve helps the organization achieve its mandate.

Between 2011 and 2014, natural and social science courses in SENS provided short immersive experiences at RLBR, but these courses were focused on pure science and did not produce any practical applications for the local community. In 2014, SENS restructured its curriculum to develop a field course that combined natural and social science research methods within a single offering. Hence, we sought a new model that might provide pedagogical benefits for students as well as value-added opportunities for both academic and community partners. Our goal was to deliver a course that would simultaneously train the next generation of sustainability professionals by building critical, interdisciplinary and professional knowledge and skills; develop innovative pedagogy integrating experiential learning and community engagement; and broaden the benefits through a community-based research project.

The centrepiece of the course is a one-week field school that occurs at the beginning of September each year (Figure 2). Prior to the field school, students spend two days in the classroom learning about agricultural and rural sustainability and getting acquainted with their teams. Because the students accepted into the MSEM program have graduated in a range of disciplines and had different life and professional experiences, instructors form diverse student teams to ensure interdisciplinary collaborations and sharing professional experience. Students participate in team-building exercises and individual expectations in team-based work are discussed. Further, team-work is modeled through the team-teaching model of the course. Because of the high ratio of instructors to students and the high level of interaction between

students and instructors, faculty members undertake formative assessment of teamwork to improve learning while it is happening rather than merely determine success or failure after the event. Similarly, community partners (farmers and ranchers) are also asked to rate students across a range of criteria. Students receive a copy of the rubric that describes the professional skills being evaluated. Many of the skills–for example, communication skills and project management skills–are learned in both field and classroom settings.

Figure 2. The MSEM students interacting with community partners in the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve, Saskatchewan.

By getting feedback from instructors and community partners, students' skills are assessed from different vantage points, allowing for well-rounded evaluation of the students' growing professional abilities.

During the first three days of the field school, students are taught methods for data collection used in both the natural and social sciences. Six hands-on training and half-day modules were delivered. Module 1 covers ethical and conceptual issues in social science research. Module 2 explains how to design instruments for data collection from interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Module 3 covers principles of plant classification, and identification of common native and exotic vascular plants found in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Module 4 delivers agricultural land assessment methods (croplands and pastures), weed identification and soil sampling. Module 5 addresses rangeland assessment methods, including plant identification, habitat mapping techniques and soil sampling. Module 6 focuses on wetland assessment methods, including wetland classification, water quality sampling and aquatic invertebrate community. The course is designed to vary the number of modules depending on the availability of faculty and funds to better serve needs of the academic (SENS) and community (RLBR) partners. Each module offers different exercises and modes of assessment. These include traditional assignments in lecture classes (short reports and questionnaire design) and field-based assignments (field skills examinations and quizzes). Beyond data collection, the field school includes guest presentations, meals prepared by community members, and informal discussions with local people (farmers, ranchers, school groups and/or community representatives). Additionally, pupils from the local school are brought into the field demonstrations to learn more about a range of agricultural practices in their region and how students conduct assessment of farm operations.

During the second part of the field school (days four, five and six), students are placed into one of the teams (four-five people per group). The number of teams varies depending on the course enrollment (15-21 students per year). Each team is assigned to work at a single farm which

produces livestock on rangelands, crops and has some wetlands and/or conservation lands.

They imagine that they have been contracted by an environmental consulting firm to conduct a sustainability assessment at the farm level. From the suite of indicators discussed in the classroom, students select indicators of environmental and social sustainability suitable for this agricultural and rural setting and assesses the sustainability of the farm operation using data that they collected. Groups conduct rangeland, cropland and wetland assessments (including vegetation, soil and water sampling), and interview community partners to evaluate the sustainability of their farm operations. Each team is also to provide clear, reasonable recommendations for the community partner to consider for improving his/her effectiveness in promoting sustainable practices. Students are also required to prepare suitable mappings and data analysis, and to write the consultant-style report for an informed, public audience. Students are provided with a formal template to assist in maintaining quality and consistency across reports. Additionally, instructors review draft reports and offer recommendations for revision before delivery to each client.

Following the field school, students analysed their data, gave team presentations on their project findings (individual farm assessments) and developed a written report for their community partner, offering suggestions for improving agricultural and rural sustainability. After completing the reports, students discussed their results with the individual community partners and then provide a reflective public presentation to the whole community about regional sustainability.

Our experience in designing a field course with community partners suggests that with careful planning and on-going commitment to assessment and revision, students, faculty and community partners can attain a range of benefits that go beyond standard pedagogical outcomes. The course allows students to develop sustainability competencies and professional skills, gives faculty enriching and productive scientific interactions that contribute to their research programs, provides usable knowledge directly to farmers and ranchers, and offers a meaningful service to communities with real recommendations to work towards sustainability in the biosphere reserve. This strategy is unique in sustainability courses, and offers the benefit of catalyzing larger-scale changes within the community, as well as research focused on addressing sustainability challenges.

Case Study Three: The International Practice of Psychology: An Innovative Capstone Course for Psychology Students

Increasingly, institutions of higher education are being called to internationalize curriculum and educate students who are both civically engaged and globally aware (Larson, 2016; Plater, 2011). In response to these calls, international service learning (ISL) is emerging across institutions of higher education in North America and worldwide (Crabtree, 2008). In their seminal work, Bringle and Hatcher (2011) describe ISL as an integration of service learning, study abroad, and international education. Like service learning, ISL is an academic endeavor. Faculty engage students in community service experiences that relate to their discipline of study and structure reflection activities that generate academic growth, alongside personal

and civic development. Like study abroad, ISL exposes students to new countries, cultures, and peoples, increasing their appreciation of diversity, intercultural competence, and global engagement. Like international education, ISL adds global content to curriculum, involving students in the study of distinct regions of the world. Bringle and Hatcher (2011) provide the following definition of ISL:

> A *structured academic experience in another country* in which the students *(a)* participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; *(b) learn from the direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others*; and *(c)* reflect on the *experience* in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of *global and intercultural* issues, a broader appreciation of the *host country* and the discipline and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and *globally*. [emphasis in original] (p. 19)

ISL may be implemented in many forms. For example, ISL may be implemented in a course or program; faculty may reside in the home country or host country; service contact may be high or low; students may serve individually or in groups; service may be integrated with study or occur after study (Jones & Steinberg, 2011). This case study is an example of ISL implemented at the University of British Columbia (UBC), in a senior undergraduate psychology course—Psychology and Developing Societies. The course is offered to up to 20 students each year.

Psychology and Developing Societies examines the application of psychology to international development in African contexts (Figure 3). The course content draws attention to five themes: the role of psychological inquiry in international development, ethnocentrism in psychological theory and research, participatory action research, indigenous African psychologies, and the ethical responsibilities of psychologists who work in developing societies. These themes are introduced early in the course and subsequently embedded into a series of case studies. The case studies reflect development priorities in African contexts, including HIV/AIDS, female oppression and empowerment, educational access, disability, and mental health and well-being. Following intensive study of the

Figure 3. UBC students engaged in a micro-finance program for impoverished women in rural Uganda.

course content through class activities on campus, students travel to one of four African countries—Kenya, South Africa, Swaziland, or Uganda—to undertake a 3-month service

learning placement with a local non-profit, community-based organization. During their placement, students engage with the course content, attempting to apply their classroom learning to the "real world." Students are asked to grapple with psychological theory and research through their placement work—to consider the five themes of the course as they undertake project work for the community organization. Assignments include a review of the work of the community organization prior to departure, a series of structured reflection activities while abroad, and a program assessment upon return from the field. The structured reflection activities draw from the work of Ash and Clayton (2004, 2009), who proposed the DEAL model of reflection. In brief, the DEAL model requires that students Describe, Examine, and Articulate their Learning, noting the academic, personal, and civic significance of their community service experiences. The program assessment requires that students examine a program undertaken by the community organization from a psychological perspective, noting the strengths of the program and opportunities for psychological theory and research to enhance its outcomes. The program assessment is shared with the community organization to facilitate program development.

Students' course-specific training is accompanied by co-curricular training through the ISL Program, housed in the Faculty of Arts at UBC. The ISL Program provides pre-departure preparation and re-entry debriefing, in addition to in-country support, to students who participate in ISL courses (Baldwin, Grain & Currie, 2016). The need for rigorous pre-departure preparation and re-entry debriefing has been noted by other authors (e.g., Martin, 1989; Quiroga, 2004); the ISL Program is a response to this need. The ISL Program adopts a social justice orientation (Butin, 2007); drawing from post-development theory, the ISL Program emphasizes anti-colonial and self-reflexive engagement among students. Students are required to participate in presentations, group discussions and activities, mentoring, and assignments, all of which are designed to foster critical consciousness among students— that is, "a reflective awareness of the differences in power and privilege and the inequities that are embedded in social relationships" (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009, p. 783). Pre-departure assignments include a personal learning and development plan and a concept paper in which students articulate their understanding of their project work with the community organization. The concept paper is forwarded to the community organization and reviewed with students during the first week of their placement, allowing the community partner to correct misplaced assumptions and reinforcing the role of the community partner as the project leader. In-country and re-entry assignments include an analysis of a critical event that occurred in the field and a presentation to the campus community upon return in which students share their project work and discuss the ethical complexities of international community engagement. Preliminary longitudinal research indicates that 87% of students who participate in the ISL Program demonstrate gains in one or more of the following: Awareness of self and relations with others, understanding of global issues, enactment of change agency, and educational impact (Baldwin & Currie, 2015).

Built upon principles of good practice in service learning (Henry & Breyfogle, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000), students' placements are designed to be non-exploitative and mutually

beneficial, characterized by collaboration and reciprocity between the community and university. Critically, the community partner takes the role of co-educator, offering sector and community expertise. Through engagement with the community partner as co-educator, students' capacity to participate meaningfully in community is increased, ensuring that students act *with* community, rather than *for* community (Plater, 2011). Co-education enables all participants to benefit. As a point of illustration, I present the outcomes associated with the placement of students in rural Uganda, at a school for children who are deaf. Under the supervision of the community partner, the students drew from psychological theory and research to contribute to the development of a "social inclusion program." The program incorporated several initiatives that were designed to reduce prejudice and discrimination directed toward children who are deaf. The initiatives included joint activities between deaf and hearing children, sign language training for community members, and educational initiatives to debunk common myths regarding the causes and consequences of deafness. Following implementation of the program, the community partner observed reduced stigma and increased integration of deaf children into the local community; shortly after implementation, the program received an innovation award for its positive impact on community. As this example illustrates, ISL has the capacity to empower students *and* communities to tackle the complex challenges and social inequities that characterize communities worldwide.

Case Study Four: A University-Wide Service Learning Program: An Example of an Institutional-Level Commitment

St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) has a university-wide Service Learning Program that is in its 20th year of operation.[2] From its fledgling beginnings, we now have, on average, 50 courses per year with a service learning component, involving 40 faculty members across the Faculties of Arts, Science, Business, and Education. StFX is a primarily undergraduate institution with 4000 students, situated in a small town in northeastern Nova Scotia. Our Service Learning Program partners with approximately 100 community organizations to provide an average of 900 service learning experiences yearly for our students, which constitutes approximately a quarter of our student population.

Figure 4. In a Spanish course, students read books to the children at the public library. The books contain Spanish words or elements of Hispanic culture.

Course-based service learning involves service learning components in existing academic courses. Instead of, or addition to, a traditional term paper

or laboratory assignment, students are in the community doing work developed in conjunction with community organizations that involves the subject matter of the course (Figure 4). The professor structures an assignment so that the student experience with the course content. Typically, students spend 20 hours engaged the service learning component; the student's grade is based on demonstrated learning via the assignment, not just fulfilling the community service.

The service learning experiences can be direct service or skill-based. In direct service experiences, students are placed in organizations working directly with their clientele. The course assignments connect those activities with specific course content. For example, students may be placed in the Food Bank, where they assist patrons, pack food boxes, etc., like others who assist at the Food Bank. A Human Nutrition student may have a service learning assignment to write a paper on the nutritional value in the food boxes that go out; whereas an Economics student may be incorporating the experience into a research paper on the economics of food banks. In skill-based experiences, students apply their academic skills to community needs. For example, Psychology students provide respite for parents with developmentally delayed children while providing the children with activities to stimulate development; Engineering students adapt household appliances for individuals with physical disabilities.

Our Service Learning Program is an academic endeavor under the Academic Vice President, who chairs the Service Learning Advisory Committee, consisting of elected faculty, community partners, students, and the Coordinator of the Service Learning Program (who is a faculty member). The Service Learning Office, which currently is a four-person team,[3] provides liaison between the university and the community. Service Learning staff matches community partners' requests/needs with faculty course content/requests. Community partners value dealing with a central university office. When requested by the professor, the Office helps students choose appropriate community experiences, does orientation sessions, and runs mid-term reflection sessions on the service learning experience. The Office provides ongoing support for students, faculty, and community partners by dealing with risk management, monitoring the students while they are in community, and problem solving and troubleshooting as necessary. The Office does evaluations of the service learning experiences with the student, faculty, and community partner at the end of each term—what worked, what did not, what needs tweaking if it were to be done again.

The stakeholders of service learning are students, faculty, community partners, and the university administration. There are challenges for each, but there are also tremendous benefits. The faculty member determines the learning goals for the students, and designs and grades the academic assignment that accompanies the service learning experience. The challenges for faculty can be several. They have to acknowledge that community partners have something

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[3] The Service Learning Office also oversees Immersion Service Learning, which involves faculty taking small groups of students to developing countries or to unique communities within Canada, where they work with people in community and learn about history, politics, culture, and development issues within that particular community context. Each year there are five to seven Immersion Service Learning experiences that take place during February break or in May, and a six-week Immersion Service Learning course in the summer.

to teach their students. For some faculty this is a novel idea. The faculty have to structure the service learning assignment so that students can see the connection between what they are doing in community and the course content. Just like a term paper or laboratory assignment is structured so that students see how their library or lab research is connected to the course, so the service learning assignment is structured so that students can connect what they are doing in community with the course content. The faculty member cannot totally control the outcome of the service learning component of the course and has to be open to unexpected learning. Even if the experience did not work out as planned, much learning can come from it.

For students, the challenge is often to realize their dual responsibility to the community partner and to the course assignment. The student must do the tasks expected by the community partner. However, their grade is based on their demonstrated learning; it is the assignment that is graded, not simply working in community.

The community partner is a co-educator of the students. The partner identifies, with the faculty member, what the students will be doing in community. Challenges can revolve around the timeline in which the service learning experience gets done. For example, sometimes the community partner needs the work completed as soon as possible, but in reality the work will be completed by the end of the term. Also the partner needs to be clear about the skill set or knowledge base that is needed for the work. The experience should provide learning for the students, so should involve and push their academic skills; but at the same time, the partner must recognize that the students are not professionals.

The University Administration establishes the vision and parameters of the Service Learning Program, sets the policies and guidelines, and provides structure and support. This involves financial support, particularly by providing the human resources to operate the Service Learning Office. Administrators also must be advocates of service learning and acknowledge service learning as scholarship and an avenue for many faculty to develop community-based research collaborations. Rank and Tenure Committees must recognize service learning not only as service to community, but also as teaching innovation and, in some cases, research.

Service learning benefits all the stakeholders. It allows students to see the connection between theory and practice, how what they are studying affects real-world problems. It enhances their sense of social responsibility, and promotes their personal as well as professional development. For faculty, it is an innovative teaching practice that enriches classroom discussions because students are more engaged and motivated to learn. For many faculty, it also facilitates research partnerships with community groups. For community, it adds resources to community organizations, allowing them to accomplish things that otherwise they would not have the resources to do. It raises the profile of community groups and adds a youth perspective, energy, and enthusiasm to programs. For the university, it enhances recruitment and retention of students. It improves university-community relations and helps transform the university into a community-engaged institution.

Conclusion

The four case studies presented in this article reflect the multiplicity of approaches to service learning in higher education in Canada. The order of case studies was deliberate to demonstrate diversity of types and levels of service learning engagements: starting with an undergraduate course close to home, the classroom, and local community partners; to a graduate course with an in-field week-long stay away from academic walls; to an international 3-month service learning course with great impact on communities in Africa; ending with an exemplary university-level commitment to longitudinal engagement in service learning. In each example, service learning cultivates students' academic development, personal growth, and civic engagement. In its various formations, service learning provides students with opportunities to apply disciplinary expertise and skills to solving practical problems, enables students to contribute to community, and supports students' ability to act as agents of social change. Reflection and reciprocity with community, the key concepts of service learning, assure that all parties involved are both learners and teachers. Service learning is gaining in importance in educational institutions as a path for preparing students for the "real world" after graduation. Our goal is to inspire other educators to engage in the pursuit of excellence in higher education through service learning and in so doing, move universities toward greater social engagement.

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