

Exploring service-learning from all sides

By Rachel Kennedy This semester, I took on dual roles for my work at the Center for Community Work and Learning (CWL). I work through the office both as a service-learning student coordinator and as the volunteer coordinator at the Cedar Riverside Adult Education Collaborative. Having this opportunity to work both in the CWL office and as an off-campus community partner has allowed me to gain a well-rounded perspective on service-learning and how it affects students, professors, and community organizations.

One of the most important things to remember when working on service-learning courses is to make sure that the service-learning experience benefits everyone involved. The professor and students want to have a meaningful learning experience, and the community partners, while wanting this as well, also need to keep their organizations running without feeling too overwhelmed with needing to find projects to keep service-learners busy and happy.

I have seen that the best way to work through the sometimes difficult task of creating a service-learning experience that benefits everyone is to keep open communication. The more communication between the service-learning coordinating office, the professor, and the community partner, the more

successful the service-learning will be. By knowing what everyone wants and needs out of the partnership, the professor will be able to find a meaningful hands-on way of structuring her class, students will learn more in a more meaningful way, and community partners will be able to have student help with organizational needs while actively helping students in their education.

And always keep the communication going throughout the whole experience. Community partners really do want to know that the students are having a meaningful experience that they can connect back to their classroom learning. So always let community partners know how students and the professor are enjoying their time at the organization. Community partners should also be expected to communicate how they feel the service-learners' time with them is going.

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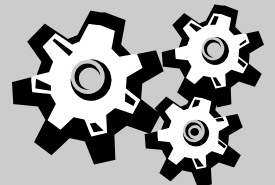
Of course, for the most beneficial service-learning experience, students and community partners need to be both engaged in and committed to working with each other. It helps for each side to show active interest in the goals of the other. Service-learning in courses really should be a reciprocal partnership so that everyone can benefit and enjoy the experience.

Putting Theory into Practice: Academic Excellence Through Community Collaboration

Learn about resources for integrating community work and learning into courses.

Rafael Cervantes and Martha Malinski discuss “Rhetoric, Civic Participation and Social Justice,” a recent Community Work and Learning course, as part of *Setting the Wheels in Motion for Academic Excellence*.

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Departing students reflect on CWL and the St. Kate's Experience

This semester marks the ending point for two dedicated students involved in Community Work and Learning. Before they continue on in the next step of their journey, the two reflected on the mission of the College of St. Catherine and their involvement with CWL.



Megan Prosen

Ever since I arrived on campus for my first visit to St. Kate's, I have been reminded of the college's mission to "educate women to lead and influence." Though my four years in the classroom have pedagogically enriched my experience and understanding of this vision, the most authentic way that it has been realized for me has been through my efforts in the America Reads program and the service-learning discipline in the Center for Community Work and Learning.

The Center for Community Work and Learning was one of my first contacts when I began my life as a college student. My level of commitment to the office started as an America Reads tutor at Anishinabe Academy. As the year progressed, I became more and more excited about the work that I was doing and the America Reads Program. My second year I was given the opportunity to take on a formalized leadership position in the office as an America Reads Coordinator for Jane Addams School for Democracy.

From my first day in the CWL office, I was told that I would need to come up with a project that was entirely mine. I had never been given this type of opportunity so I fully embraced ownership of my passion for the Spanish Department and grabbed the reins of a brand-new initiative to make service learning an integral part of the curriculum. Although the daunting task of cold-calling and interviewing prominent organizations in the Latino community and pitching my ideas to revamp the department lie ahead of me, my nervousness mixed with hopes for improvement and change.

Energy seems to be the backbone of my role here at the Center for Community Work and Learning. I have found that my work here can be synthesized into my culminating project as the America Reads Coordinator and organizer of our program's first secondary education tutoring program at Roosevelt High School. I consider this to be the most representative example as an influential leader because I have been able to create something entirely new for St. Kate's and for Roosevelt based on the assets and needs of both institutions.

Although the College of St. Catherine has played a multifaceted role in supporting me as I shape myself into a passionate, educated woman, I feel that the bulk of my transforma-

tion has been aided by my involvement in the Center for Community Work and Learning.

As I move into the next chapter of my life, I hope to take with me all that I have learned here and leave behind what I have discovered to enrich the community and encourage infinite cultivation of influential leaders for years to come.



Hillary Spreizer

Reflecting on my time at St. Kate's and my work in the Center for Community Work and Learning, I find myself examining my work and education within the framework of the ever catchy St. Kate's phrase, "To lead and influence." My time in CWL has been filled with experiences that range from excitement to fear and everything in between.

When I came here, I was well-versed in organizing at St. Kate's, and to be honest; thought I wasn't half bad at leading or influencing. It wasn't until I realized I would be working with community organizations that the red flags went up. As soon as the words, "it's always exciting to get out of your comfort zone" were spoken, I was petrified.

I began working with service-learning courses and networking with community organizations. I worked on every logistical aspect of facilitating students within the community. The site visits got easier after the first month—alright maybe the third—and I actually began to look forward to them. I was encouraged to think critically about how course curriculum and community experiences could connect in a meaningful, balanced and reflective way. Everything I worked on was coupled with an intentional call to reflect and build on my previous work.

I will be transitioning from student to alumnae in a week and while I know very little about where my life will take me, I am confident that without the guidance and mentoring, I would not be where I am. As a student, I encourage other students to seek out nurturing and challenging environments that constantly ask you to dig deep. Examine your roles in life and your studies critically to find connections. Beyond this, know that there is nothing you cannot learn and accomplish when working with mentors, friends and peers.