MICHIGAN JOURNAL
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SPECIAL ISSUE

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Institutional Impacts and Organizational Issues Related to Service-Learning

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The implementation and sustainability of service-learning depends on a large part on our better understanding of the institutional impacts of service-learning, and of the organizational changes that are often needed to make service a central element of academic work and study. Recent literature has outlined the features of an "engaged" institution, and identified organizational characteristics that seem to contribute to the success of service-learning. Future research must tell us more about the comparative forms these characteristics may take in different institutions, explore the possibilities of stages of implementation, and clarify our language regarding service as scholarship. Research on institutional change processes, strategies, and policies is especially urgent.

Change in higher education is a ubiquitous topic of discussion. Many conference programs and journal manuscripts start out with a focus on pressures for change (including this one!). Change issues have received massive attention in the higher education marketplace, often following a "Paul Revere" pattern: "the public (i.e., legislators, accreditors, donors) is coming to get us, and we'll better change and prove we're going a great job, or they'll do something bad to us."

Few can still doubt that higher education needs to respond to some of the calls for changes. Yet a culture, more rational perspective can be drawn from higher education's history, which reveals that our institutional forms and functions have changed many times over the years to bring into alignment education's roles within society's expectations (Boek, 1982; Rudolph, 1967). The current pressure for change is emanating from sweeping negative generalizations and stereotypes about higher education. These characterizations, some of which may have at least a grain of truth, have been taken by many as a sign that higher education has lost touch with societal issues and communities (Boek, 1992; Edgerton, 1994). All the colorful rhetoric and cries of alarm, along with relatively limited attention given to systemic education's roles with society's expectations (Boek, 1982; Rudolph, 1967). The current pressure for change is emanating from sweeping negative generalizations and stereotypes about higher education. These characterizations, some of which may have at least a grain of truth, have been taken by many as a sign that higher education has lost touch with societal issues and communities (Boek, 1992; Edgerton, 1994). All the colorful rhetoric and cries of alarm, along with relatively limited attention given to systemic.

The current revolutionary movement of higher education has as one of its major elements the call for greater institutional attention to the role of service. For many institutions, the heart of their efforts to reconnect the university to societal purposes has focused on building institutional programs and strategies to make the intellectual assets of the university accessible to communities. Among these strategies, service-learning is indisputably a major institutional movement, as evidenced by almost 75% of the nation's public and private colleges and universities (Harland, 1994). The research questions suggested in this article will mostly focus on broad organizational issues, but necessarily will touch on aspects of these other topical areas. Because a research agenda on institutional impacts can cut across all the other research topics, it may provide an integrating framework for exploring the relationships among the other elements of service-learning policy. For example, many of the questions raised about the role of service-learning programs depends on our understanding of the institutional implications and organizational practices that must occur to service-learning's emergence as effectiveness for students, faculty, and communities. Questions have been posed about the relationship of service-learning to other conceptions of service, outreach or engagement (Lyon, 1995; Piloter & Briegle, 1999). In addition, some of the needed research on institutional impacts of service-learning will likely provide new educational information about organizational change processes in general. In 1998, Giles and Eyler posed two key questions related to research on institutions and service-learning:

- How does service-learning affect educational institutions, especially in regard to higher education reform?
- What institutional policies and practices support and enhance effective service-learning?

(p. 65)

These two questions are, as Giles and Eyler predicted, persistent and enduring questions that warrant continued attention. This article will explore what we have learned so far about these institutional issues and suggest some next questions. Similar to the Giles & Eyler approach, the research agenda proposed here keeps in mind two broad areas of research interest that are deeply inter-related: institutional issues related to the exploration, implementation, expansion, and sustainability of service-learning as a programmatic endeavor; and issues related to service-learning's role in institutional change, impact, response, and adaptation.

What's the Password? Issues of Definition and Language

Without a clear definition and set of standards for service-learning, assessment of effort and evaluation of quality are debafed. For example an important aspect of assessing institutional commitment is to identify current levels of service-learning courses. But this raises issues of which courses to include, which is partly a surrogate for the more covert and critical issue, What is to be valued?

A number of terms are currently in vogue: "service-learning," "service," "outreach," "engage ment." What do these terms mean? How are they defined from one another, and how do institutions use them? What organizational issues are raised by each term and to what other institutional issues are they connected?

With many different terms in use and different institutional types interpreting them, is consistency in language a realistic or desirable goal? The lack of uniform definitions may be an advantage for institutions in an early stage because those campuses can thus locally flavor their service-learning initiatives according to institutional history and custom. Terms such as "service" or "service-learning" may have local histories that carry bias or negative memories, but the same activity called by another name might be more palatable to the faculty. On the other hand, sustainability and national impact may require that we develop at least a basic framework of common conceptualizations. In addition, given the academy's traditions for standardization of performance criteria, clear definitions of service-related terms seem essential to creating new and equitable models for faculty rewards and evaluation that would translate across institutional lines.

Language is evolving quickly. For example, consider the short history of the terms, "service," "outreach," and "engagement." Edgerton first wrote of the "engaged campus" in 1994, but service was still the more common term from the traditional triad of teaching, research, and service. In 1995, Ernest Lyon wrote his important work, "Making the Case for Professional Service," distinguishing service to the institution (committee, etc.), service to the discipline (professional societies, etc.), civic service (volunteerism, etc.), and professional service (work that applied a faculty member's academic expertise toward public issues in ways that reinforce the academic mission of the university.

In an attempt to further distinguish scholarly service from campus service, some institutions such as Michigan State University turned to the term "outreach." By the time Lyon and Amy Driscoll wrote the companion volume to "Making the Case for Professional Service," the title used was Making Outreach Visible: A Guide to Documenting Professional Service and Outreach (1999). A more recent publication, the 1999 report of the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, specifically speaks to the sense of the imperfections of the terms service and outreach, and makes a case for the term "engagement."

It is time to go beyond outreach and service to what the Kellogg Commission now defines as "engagement." Engagement goes well beyond extension, conventional outreach, and even most conceptions of public service. Inherent concepts emphasize a one-way process in which the university transfers its expertise to key constituents. Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity (1999, pp. viii, 11).

This understanding of the distinction between one-way traditions and newer models of two-way partnerships represents a major transformation in higher education culture, especially among the land-grant institutions. As the essential role of community-univ-
The history of good change in terms highlights the ongoing inadequacy of change and the continuing need for change. This also strongly suggests that the current emphasis on service-learning is an important step in meeting the needs of students and faculty. The need for change is apparent and it is an important step for higher education.

**What is an Engaged Institution?**

An engaged institution is one that has a strong commitment to and active involvement in service-learning. This commitment is demonstrated by the institution's mission, values, and policies. The institution also has a history of engagement and a commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. The institution also has a strong commitment to student success and to the well-being of the community.
institutional planning? How are they used? How effective are these questions or benchmarks in guiding campus decision-making? What impact does participation in affiliate groups such as Campus Compact have on institutions?

• How do campuses get serious about their mission? What process helps a campus articulate the role of service in its mission? What factors influence an institution’s sense of mission?

• How do campuses characterize the challenges of implementing and/or expanding service-learning (as a change issue, image, enrollment or retention, moral issue, etc.)?

Issues of Infrastructure and Support

Regarding factors that help implement and sustain service-learning, the one that has elicited widespread agreement has been the vital role of institutional support and infrastructure. Waishok (1999) reminds us that infrastructure is needed to support community engagement at all levels, including service-learning. There has been broad discussion of the central importance of infrastructure for service-learning, because of its labor-intensive nature and the importance of having faculty ongoing support in this new pedagogy (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Buco & Busch, 1996; Cutler, Holland, Stillman, & Couros, 1998; Holland, 1999; Hudson & Trudea, 1995; Rabin, 1996; Ward, 1990).

So many advocates and scholars of service-learning mention the importance of service-learning centers that offer support, but what do we really know about how they do and do not work? Research is needed to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of these centers in providing ongoing support, the implications of centralization or decentralization of support units, strategies for funding, and models for evaluating infrastructure efforts (Bochman, 1998).

Another aspect of “infrastructure” includes the impact of policies and resources on faculty participation and motivation. The adequacy of faculty evaluation policies regarding the inclusion and valuation of service-learning in reward systems are clearly seen as being of critical importance to sustain service-learning programs (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Driscoll & Lyston, 1999; Lyston, 1995; Morton, 1996; O’Meara, 2000). Adequate resources are important. Ward (1996) argues that the adequate funding for basic operations and incentives are the most critical factors that influence adoption of service-learning, along with faculty participation in planning, and presidential leadership. Infrastructure and support questions that need to be researched include:

• What approaches are used to organize institutional support for service-learning? What are the functions and tasks of a center for service-learning? Who leads them and what factors influence the choice of leader? What are the implications of creating centralized support? What are the costs associated with service-learning?

• How is infrastructure funded and placed in the organization? Are there patterns that relate to mission or classification?

• Given that infrastructure is closely linked with the sense of institutional capacity to implement and sustain a commitment to service-learning, and that capacity can be thought of in terms of mission characteristics and institutional goals, what level of performance reflects the achievement of mission in relationship to service-learning? Is there a capacity issue in achieving alignment between the rhetoric of mission and service-learning? How many service-learning courses are enough, not enough, or too many to manage or afford? How can a faculty be involved? How’s enough to fulfill the campus vision, and how would we know?

• How are faculty incentives, rewards, recognition being used? What is the role of faculty development programs? What development strategies seem effective?

• What is the role of the faculty senate or other governance in leading institutional discussions and decisions? What organizational strategies foster institutional capacity to adopt innovative ideas, to experiment with new programs or to assess effectiveness of current programs? Who participates in task forces and committees, how are they chosen, how are they rewarded? How are their recommendations used by the administration.

The Challenges of Change

In the preceding discussions of definitions, organizational characteristics that foster commitment to service-learning, national trends and institutional motivations, and strategies for developing infrastructure for service-learning, there is an implicit message that universities and colleges need to change if they are to implement and sustain service-learning programs. Important research has been done regarding the factors and strategies that promote institutionalization of service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher 2000; Holland, 1997; Jacoby, 1996; Ward, 1990; Zinckemski, 1990, to name a few). The realization of these factors and strategies involve significant, even sweeping, changes in higher education organizations.

For example, in my 1997 article that appeared in this Journal on analyzing institutional commitment to service-learning, a matrix of seven organizational factors with differing levels of implementation was proposed as a way of helping institutions articulate their vision for service-learning, assess their current level of progress toward that vision, and identify areas for change and improvement. What’s needed next is additional research that explores the relationships among and across these factors, and evaluates strategies or processes that promote institutional progress toward full realization of its vision.

Bringle and Hatcher (2000) recently have written about the different perspectives of faculty, students, communities, and administrators toward service-learning as well as toward issues of change related to the institutionalization of service-learning. Their Comprehensive Action Plan for Service-Learning (CAPS) assesses institutional progress toward institutionalization and planning from the perspectives of different campus constituencies, providing a systematic method for identifying areas for improvement, strategic action, and change.

However, while many other authors cited here have presented their model of key factors that influence the implementation of service-learning and expanded faculty involvement, few have suggested means to actually promote change or organize a change process. Therefore, future research questions that will help identify processes and strategies that would promote necessary changes in campus organizations, programs, policies, and culture include:

• What do organizational theories tell us about change in higher education? Can and should theories be adapted? What process are we used to employ change?

• How is institutional change described by campus that are engaged in promoting service-learning? What factors seem to facilitate or inhibit progress toward change or advancement toward realization of the service mission? How does change occur along the key organizational characteristics identified as important to commitment to service?

Driscoll and Lynn (1999) have provided a framework for understanding how faculty attention to service helps integrate all the forms of scholarship, Plater & Bringle (1999) also see service-learning as associated with wider faculty adoption of the scholarship of service. Their work prompts questions such as:

• In what ways does institutional commitment to and support for service-learning promote attention to or implementation of other types of engagement activities? If service-learning is associated with wider engagement activities, do lessons learned about institutionalizing service-learning apply to institutionalizing other forms of engagement?

• What’s the link of service-learning discussions to overall campus strategic planning? Does the implementation or expansion of service-learning require a planning context? What is the role of leadership in implementing service-learning? Can it be a top-down decision or must it be a grassroots effort among faculty and students? Are there differences or are there triggering conditions that make one approach more effective than another?

• What is the role of department chair and department culture in making service-learning part of the institutional strategy? Does the introduction of service-learning affect other learning strategies or pedagogies?

• Given that some institutions are changing their reward guidelines, is their culture changing and are faculty being rewarded for service-learning? What happens to faculty who do not participate in service-learning? O’Meara’s (2000) recent dissertation provides a foundation for future work in this area, which will necessarily require longitudinal studies.

• How do community interactions influence campus decision-making regarding service-learning? To what degree are service-learning efforts changing community impacts on the institution?

• What are the implications of service activities on functions such as fund-raising, alumni relations, public relations, enrollment management, and community relations?

What’s Missing? Summary and New Topics

The questions suggested here are derived from the current literature on both service-learning and on the overall civic mission of higher education. All the questions reflect critical elements of decision-making and organizational change that can affect service-learning efforts. Questions will be of varying interest to institutions, depending on the respective missions, motivations, past experiences,
current practices and campus capacities. These factors raise the possibility that there may be distinctive evolutionary stages in the implementation of service-learning. In this case, different questions may be raised by different institutions at different points in their adoption of service-learning. A critical question may be whether the dynamics or issues of "in situ" change regarding the introduction or expansion of engagement activities such as service-learning. In addition, what critical infrastructure or action at each stage is essential to advancing an institution's use of service-learning? Campus Compact's current effort to build toolkits for institutions at different stages in the implementation of service-learning is a worthy endeavor that will help researchers to date more accessible to a wider institutional audience.

While there is tremendous diversity among institutions in their interest in, readiness for, and sustainment of service-learning, this is not to say there are no commonalities (Robins, 1996). All of the questions suggested above will likely be posed by every institution at some phase of its experience. What is needed is systematic study of diverse campus experiences so that common, fundamental elements or issues can be articulated which, in turn, can be applied by each institution for its own local context. Nationally-supported studies will assist the largest number of institutions by using valid methodologies to answer these fundamental questions. Cluster studies and projects undertaken by such organizations as the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) will prove useful in this regard. In addition, other multi-institutional studies of campuses with advanced experience are needed if we are to respond to many of the proposed questions, especially those that involve evaluation of the long-term impacts of particular strategies.

For example, an area where little work has been done but great need exists is for a project to develop methods measuring the impact of service-learning on community capacity. The majority of projects might begin by gathering examples of assistance from some of the institutions who have been working on creating a new approach to the measurement of service-learning (such as Portland State University, California State University-Sacramento, and Indiana University Indianapolis). These and other diverse examples could be explored for the possibility of creating more standardized strategies for evaluation, measurement, and assessment which could then be piloted for a larger group of institutions. I concur with Giles and Elyer (1998) that a study of this type might have a participatory action research component and that collaborative engagement of the community in measurement of service-learning's impacts on their capacity. Another area of rich possibility but little exploration is the role of technology in service-learning. To some, the mechanical and technical issues of technology are anathema to service-learning and partnerships. Yet, given the growing applications of technology in community development, knowledge-sharing and access to education and resources, the question of its relationship to service-learning deserves exploration. "Virtual Volunteering Project" is being managed by the University of the Sun and premise of "highlighting and encouraging the development of opportunities can be developed by vol- unteers working and reporting via home or work computers" (Craven, 2000). Their web site offers a newsletter, data-bases, and other services to help link volunteers and agencies in creative ways, including online mentoring projects between volunteers and youth that involves volunteers with disabilities. The orientation/learning/regular communications for volunteers and among volunteers more efficient through technology. What other ways might technology expand participation in the use technologically? And how might service-learning contribute to closing the digital divide?

Research-to-date on institutional issues reveals a great deal about the reasons that campuses begin to explore their sense of their service mission and has identified some basic characteristics of institutional issues that have led to the implementation and institutionalization of service-learning. The research-to-date has ed to build on that literature by suggesting institutional critical challenges that remain about the institutional impacts of service and the ongoing operational requirements to support service. Many institutions have demonstrated that they work and offer fertile ground for exploring these questions. However, individual institutional self-studies that tackle some of the large questions will continue to be difficult to do well, given that a variety of challenges in implementing a research agenda at the institutional level. Hence, the investment most institutions make in their own institutional research and planning services. Few institutions have the capacity for institutional research and what is needed for mandatory data collection and external reporting. As with other issues related to the explo- rate, the need for the transition from the major, higher education, and multi-institutional efforts to provide the most useful and practical data for learning about institutional impacts of service-learning.

The most urgent area for research is organizational change and processes. What helps an institution launch and sustain a discussion about mission in general and about service-learning? If it is true that higher education is rich in tradition that slow to change, what is facilitating the progress at some institutions that have been described in much of the literature? The focus on this and other articles in this quarter of the MSCN?

When we think about institutional change and the forces that inspire universities to take action about these "knowledge practices" about the role of service in accreditation, rankings, and institutional classifications systems. Higher education's "agreements" or hierarchies shaped and sustained by a system of prestige and excellence drawn to the next stage? Early adopters of service-learning have been motivated by the desire to con- nect higher education to larger societal purposes, and to "make a difference" by inspiring students to action and expanding knowledge into the community. To expand into the broader community of faculty and institutions, there must be a pathway to individu- al and institutional success and recognition, just as there is for research. Linking service-learning to these central, status-oriented goals that shape higher education's priorities will have the greatest impact on leading institutions to consider their commitment to service-learning and civic engagement.

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Institutional Impacts and Organizational Issues


Author

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higher education, the role of service in institutional missions, and community-university partnerships. She has held administrative posts at Portland State University and Northern Kentucky University, and for September 2000 has accepted an appointment as a Senior Scholar at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. During 2000-01, she will be on leave from IUPUI to serve as the Director of the Office of University Partnerships for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She also continues to serve as Executive Editor of Metropolitan Universities.

Insofar as the question of how service-learning can enhance subject matter learning is important, researchers cannot avoid paying special attention to the norms of the disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) communities where service-learning is practiced. Unfortunately, what we know at this point about its discipline-specific efficacy is very limited. Several recent developments are promising, but the magnitude of the task awaiting us can hardly be overestimated. For in every instance we must understand what naturalizing service-learning into a discipline’s discourse community would actually entail. Such an understanding would, perforce, have to deal with a wide range of topics—from a discipline’s historical traditions and self-understanding, its key concerns, and basic assumptions to its embodiment in departments, curricula, and professional programming. Only with the active cooperation of national and regional disciplinary/interdisciplinary associations can this agenda begin to be successfully addressed.

In their article “A Service-Learning Research Agenda for the Next Five Years,” Giles and Eyler (1998) identify as the first of their “Top Ten Unanswered Questions in Service-Learning Research:” “How can service-learning enhance subject matter learning?” Insofar as this question is indeed one of the field’s top unanswered questions, one of the most important items on the service-learning research agenda must be a careful consideration of service-learning’s relationship to individual disciplinary/interdisciplinary areas.

Indeed, the importance of such a focus would be hard to underestimate. The influence of the disciplines—through their organization into academic departments—has been repeatedly recognized in numerous studies of and statements on higher education reform. An observation by Donald Kennedy (1995), former president of Stanford University, is typical. Addressing the sometimes weak commitment of faculty to their home institutions, especially in the case of research universities, Kennedy asks:

Can the academic "center" — that is, administrative leadership — move us out of this vacuum of commitment? That will be difficult, because the action is all peripheral. It takes place at the level of departmental faculties...there is a pow

Granted, at many smaller and/or less exclusive institutions, institutional priorities and administrative leadership do exercise significant influence. Nonetheless, even in these cases, it is most often the department rather than the administration that determines how, if not what, policy decisions are implemented. Furthermore, on a personal level, the agenda of a faculty member’s discipline continues to exercise significant influence regardless of the kind of institution with which he/she is involved.

It was this consideration that led to what eventually became the American Association for Higher Education’s (AAHE) 18-volume series on service-learning in the disciplines. It is this consideration that underlies the Minnesota Campus Compact’s ongoing series of discipline-specific service-learning workshops and the national Campus Compact’s grants to national disciplinary organizations to develop service-learning strategies appropriate for their members. It is the same consideration that must inform any comprehensive service-learning research agenda, especially if Giles and Eyler’s question about how service-learning can enhance subject matter learning is to be addressed adequately.

Unfortunately, what we know at this point about