Undergraduate and Graduate Level Perspectives: A Pedagogical Examination of the Meeting of Service-learning and Instructional Engagement in Communication Disciplines

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Abstract

Incorporating and advocating service-learning options in the classroom foster a deeper sense of civic participation among college students. Academia has an opportunity to bring more proactive and practical lessons in the classroom by continuing the tradition of bringing the 'college into the classroom.' This article reviews how service learning can be done effectively in the liberal arts communication classroom and how it can enhance classroom instruction, revitalize student comprehension, and provide strategic opportunities for civic participation and philanthropy within the community. Class service-learning projects are advantageous for the overall progress of students, because they help them to develop and master leadership, time management, research, planning, presentation, and technological skills that are integral for academic and professional advancement and success. Benefits such as these are what make service learning experiences successful and worthwhile.

Keywords: Service learning, pedagogy, communication discipline, project-based learning, instructional engagement, English, mass communication

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1. Introduction

The last decade has seen many changes take place in academia. For instance, the inclusion of technology in the classroom, an increase in online and distance learning education options, massive open online courses (MOOC)s, and universities' and colleges' continuous endeavor to foster a deeper sense of civic participation among the millennial generation by incorporating and advocating service learning options in the classroom.

The academy, in returning to its historical commitment to be of service to the communities where it is located, has taken a leadership role in responding to the challenges that face society today (Jacoby, 1993). Boyer (1994) suggests that universities should do more than prepare students for just their professional careers, but more so, it should also prepare them to be life-long citizens of their local communities and in the global arena (Boyer, 1994). Academia has an opportunity to bring more proactive and practical lessons in the classroom by continuing the tradition of bringing the 'college into the classroom.' Boyer suggests that "emphasizing service has the potential to enrich learning and renew communities but will also give new dignity to the scholarship of service" (Boyer, p. A48).

Service learning in the classroom has become a popular trend with teachers throughout post-secondary institutions. The opportunity to incorporate altruistic and civic participation correlated with the theoretical underpinnings of an academic curriculum has teachers exploring ways to integrate service learning into their course content. As with any innovative approach to education, it is crucial to gain a clear understanding of the concept and its prescribed uses for classroom instruction. This article will review how service learning can be done effectively in the liberal arts classroom and how it can enhance classroom instruction, revitalize student comprehension and provide strategic opportunities for civic participation and philanthropy within the community.

In its simplest sense, service learning asks students to gauge the learning experiences from the classroom and apply that accumulated knowledge through practical experiences outside of the classroom as volunteers, in social agencies, schools and other agencies that serve the community. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) define the practice of service learning as "a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (p. 222). This definition acknowledges the mutuality involved in the service learning process between the academic community and the social agency. Jacoby (1993) suggests that service learning is defined as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (p. 20). Although Sigmon initiated what is considered to be the first notable definition of service learning, there is a plethora of existing descriptions utilized to define, label, and discuss service learning. Clearly, no one definition can cover the immense number of service learning pedagogical projects that take place every year throughout the thousands of institutions, among the various disciplines, throughout this country and abroad. Yet, educators continue to look for ways in which they can successfully incorporate this experiential learning process in their classrooms and with their students.

However, not everyone is a proponent of universities' promotion of service learning agendas. Egger (2008) argues that service learning is an attempt to promote self-identified social agendas, and these agendas and attempts are educationally harmful. Eby (1999) believes that the communities should have a voice in the agenda and the planning; however, he suggests that most often it is the academic institution, the faculty and student objectives that carry the most weight in the decision for service learning collaborations. Sheffield (2005) adds that service learning has been over-defined and lacks any true philosophical foundations upon which thorough traditions can evolve. There is always a chance when incorporating service learning or community service in the classroom; it can be more self-serving than useful to the communities that are being served. Pompa (2002) insists that "unless facilitated with great care and consciousness, service, can unwittingly become an exercise in patronization. In a society replete with hierarchical structures and patriarchal philosophies, service-learning's potential danger is for it to become the very thing it seeks to eschew" (p. 68). Yet, because of the benefits associated with these activities, faculty take the time to research the community needs, plan and organize a curriculum that collaborates with those community needs and develops an opportunity that includes both reciprocity and mutuality in its completion. Educators then have a chance to continue the age-old tradition that college and universities are trying hard to recapture: being of service to the community and the general welfare of its citizens.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have, as part and parcel of their underlined institutional mission, been committed to being of service to the populations served. Now more than ever, with dwindling social services and drastic cuts in financial incentives, it behooves academic institutions to incorporate service learning as an opportunity to begin civic-minded preparedness among its student body, who will hopefully return to their communities, willing to serve and participate in the local communities.

Scales and Roehlpartain (2005, cited in Patterson, Dunston, Daniels, 2011) posited that students who take an active role in service learning projects have a stronger political commitment and social responsibility. Of course, it can be argued that HBCUs have participated in service learning before it became a popular trend. They have been stakeholders in communities, that have often been neglected or partially serviced, yet now the focus is not only the HBCU as stakeholder, but teaching the students, the future constituents of these communities, about taking an active role in their communities, thus in their promise and objectives. This article examines the aforementioned benefits of service-learning pedagogy in a liberal arts communication undergraduate course and graduate-level course.

2. The Undergraduate Example: English 202/English 212—Humanities (Spring 2013)

The section details description of the required Service Learning component that was executed by students enrolled in English 202: Humanities and English 212: Humanities for English and Mass Communications Majors at Jackson State University (JSU) during the spring semester of 2013. English 202 and English 212 are continuation courses of English 201 and English 211. English 201 examines the cultural, social, and political development of humankind from the prehistoric era to the Middle Ages, and as a continuation of English 201, English 202 looks at man's social, political, and cultural advancements from the late Middle Ages through the twenty-first century, while noting the gradual unification and blending of world cultures. English 211, like English 201, looks at the cultural periods of humanity from the prehistoric era to the Middle Ages. In the JSU course catalog, English 211 is described as being "a course that focuses on the ways in which human beings express their creativity through music, art, literature, dance, film, and other media. In this course, the student studies those expressions of man which best reveal how he has viewed himself over the centuries: his art, his music, his literature, ranging from social and political concepts to poetry and drama" (2011, p. 248). As a continuation to this course, English 212 continues to examine man's creativity and expression in art, literature, and music from the late Middle Ages to the twenty-first century.

2.1 The Assignment

Group service learning projects and presentations must be in the form of workshops, seminars, or an informational format that addresses issues concerning image and identity among African American women and how these issues impact the African American community as a whole. The subtopics that students should consider are Historical Perceptions of African American Women; Mainstream Standards of Beauty and the African American Woman; The Hip Hop Culture and Its Impact on African American Women's Identity, Sexual Promiscuity and the African American Woman; The Influence of Religion on African American Women's Identity; The Politics of Hair Care and the African American Woman's Identity; The Deterioration of the African American Family; Improving Relationships Between African American Men and Women; The Importance of the Father Figure in the African American Woman's Identity; Sisterhood and Rivalry Among African American Women.

Each group must identify the topic that they want to address and then develop and implement a series of 1 hour workshops (3 hours total) for a target audience of African American females between the ages of 12 and 18. In an effort to secure an audience for these workshops, each group is responsible for contacting local area community organizations such as The Boys and Girls Club, The Bethlehem Center and Operation Shoestring, as well as local area schools, churches, fraternities, and sororities.

The purpose of this project is to help address some of the questions and eliminate some of the myths surrounding African American women and the African American community; therefore, in addition to the workshops, students are also expected to make use of social media outlets to help achieve this purpose. Groups are expected to use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to post interesting facts and statistics regarding their topics, to pose thought provoking questions about their topics, and to post pictures and quotes that promote a positive image of African American women and the African American community.

Additionally, each group must create a public service announcement/commercial/promotional ad regarding their topic and post it to YouTube. Groups must use research (include reliable sources such as books, journal articles, and published essays) in developing this service project and must submit a service project proposal to the instructor for approval by the third week of class.

The proposal must include a proposed argument for the topic chosen and an outline. After the projects have been approved, researched, developed, and implemented, each group must do a detailed presentation of their service project. The presentation should include data and statistics regarding the topic, information about the workshops, excerpts from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram postings, and the YouTube video.

On the day of the presentation, students must submit a detailed outline of their topic, a list of references used in their research, a two to three page summary of the service project, and a copy of the YouTube video. The outline and reference page must be typed, double spaced, in 12 pt Times New Roman font and follow MLA format. By the end of this project, each student should have logged between 15 and 20 service learning hours. Please keep a time log of your hours so that you can receive credit for graduation.

During the first day of class, students will be allowed to choose their groups; each group must be prepared to make their presentations two weeks before the final exam. A presentation that consists of only reading from the paper without any use of visual or audio effects will result in an automatic grade of "C." Therefore, please be creative. Feel free to use videos or PowerPoint. Students are encouraged to incorporate poetry, music, or any other artistic supplements in their presentations. Students are required to be creative, use their imaginations, and make the presentations relevant. Please be reminded that this project will count for twenty percent (20%) of the final grade.

2.2 Initial Thoughts and Decisions

Despite the fact that English 211/English 212 are courses designated for English and Mass Communications Majors, due to misinformation and scheduling conflicts, English and Mass Communications Majors are very often enrolled in the English 201/English 202 courses.   Due to this occurrence and the fact that the textbook used for English 211/English 212 is the same one used for English 201/English 202, there is no difference in the way that these courses are taught (i.e., the information covered, the required readings, the evaluations, and other graded assignments are the same.) All of these courses examine the social, political, and cultural achievements of humanity throughout history and how those achievements manifested themselves in mankind's music, art, literature, philosophies, and religions.

In an effort to supplement the textbook and make up for its lack of diversity in content, the humanities courses have for the last several years, focused on gender roles and the various social, political, and cultural representations and misrepresentations of women throughout history. The focus on women and gender roles has added a new perspective and a different epistemological approach to these courses that has proven to be quite successful and, for most students, very enlightening. In an effort to further enhance the success of Humanities and make the courses more interesting for the student population at Jackson State University, during the spring semester of 2013, the English 202 and English 212 courses began to examine gender roles and the way that image and identity are shaped in African American women. Through an examination of the art, music, literature, philosophical and scientific theory, laws, and social norms and customs of various historical periods, students were exposed to some of the social, political, and cultural influences that have shaped the African American woman's identity over time.

The added focus on the development of the image and identity of African American women and the incorporation of technology and social media in the service learning project came about as a result of the instructor's participation in the Global Inquiry Faculty Training Seminar (GIFTS) Program. Although GIFTS participants were encouraged to begin piloting these innovative instructional strategies with freshman level courses such as English Composition, some of the teaching methods were so useful and effective, that they were used in English 202/English 212 during the spring 2013 semester. More teaching innovations from the GIFTS Program were incorporated into the Humanities course sequence during the 2013-2014 academic year.

2.3 Considerations and Collaborations

2.3.1 Benefits to Consider

The English 202/English 212: Humanities service learning project that was described earlier proved to be very beneficial to the students for several reasons. First, because the subject matter of the courses focused on gender roles and more specifically on gender roles, image, and identity among African American women, a service project designed to educate by examining history, addressing questions, combating myths, identifying stereotypes and discussing issues surrounding the development of African American women's identity was very appropriate.

And it cannot be overlooked that such a project was also very appropriate for these courses because it related directly to the needs and interests of the student population at Jackson State University which is sixty-two percent (62%) female and ninety-three percent (93%) African American. Also, the readings and class discussion, along with the independent research required for this project, were beneficial because they allowed students an opportunity to not only analyze how historical perceptions and mainstream influences impact image and identity among African American women in the twenty-first century but to compare and contrast black women's image and identity to that of other minority women and Caucasian women.

Additionally the assignment's requirement that the students incorporate the technology of social media in their projects served two useful and very beneficial purposes.

The creation and posting of the YouTube video as an original artistic piece was beneficial because it required students to use technology for artistic expression, which directly paralleled with the courses' examination of arts as a mode of human expression and communication. The incorporation of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media outlets allowed students to work within a familiar and comfortable technological space and to use that technological space for academic and intellectual productivity by posting questions, quotes, statistics and pictures regarding African American women's image and identity and by discussing how social media outlets have begun to influence African American women's image and identity. Lastly, this assignment was beneficial because the focus on developing workshops and seminars designed to educate African American youth and women, afforded students with an opportunity to better serve the Metro-Jackson community, which has a large African American population.

2.3.2 Evaluating Success

This project was very successful for those students who devoted the necessary time to researching the topic, developing the workshops, identifying an audience and rendering the service. There were several groups that were able to research their topics, develop their workshops and then implement them on campus and in the surrounding Metro-Jackson area. For example, one group in the English 202 course did a workshop for the JSU Women's Volleyball Team while another group from that class presented to a group of juniors and seniors at Jim Hill High School in the Jackson Public School District. Another group from that same class was able to provide workshops for a group of students at the Sykes Unit of the Boys and Girls Club of Central Mississippi. All of the groups were successful in posting YouTube videos and PSAs as well as incorporating social media in their research and presentations, and most of the students seemed very excited about the opportunity to include social media as a part of their project.

The greatest success came from a group in the English 212 course. These students did a three hour long workshop for the B.R.I.D.G.E.S. Ministry of Anderson United Methodist Church in Jackson, MS. Anderson is the largest African American United Methodist Church in Mississippi and one of the largest African American United Methodist Churches in the United States. B.R.I.D.G.E.S., which stands for Better Roles in Developing Girls Equals Success, is a ministry designed to help guide and nurture adolescent girls and foster strong, positive relationships between mothers and daughters. The students from the English 212 course did a workshop during the ministry's annual GLO (Girls' Lunch Out) Luncheon where both mothers and daughters were in attendance. During the workshop, which included group discussion, games and video clips, issues pertaining to the development of African American women's image and identity, such as building self esteem, etiquette for social media, self-respect, inner beauty vs. outer beauty, and the importance of a father's love, were covered in great detail. The workshop was well attended and the students received very positive feedback from the participants, particularly those mothers who were in attendance. This group's project is especially viewed as a success because they were invited to present their research and discuss their service learning experience at the Annual JSU Women's History Month Forum.

2.4 Lessons Learned

Even though all student groups in English 202/English 212 successfully implemented and completed their service learning projects, there were certainly problems and complications encountered along the way that could have been avoided. One of the biggest problems concerned planning and time management. The service learning project is designed to be a semester long endeavor with time devoted each week to planning, organizing, researching, developing and, lastly, implementing the project. This procrastination hinders the students' ability to fully benefit and learn from the project, while at the same time negatively impacting their overall grade for the course.

In an effort to alleviate some of this last minute work, students will be given a Service Learning Project Pacing Guide at the beginning of the semester. This guide will require student groups to log the hours that they spend working on the project and will also require students to complete the project in phases with specific due dates for each phase of the project and periodic updates and reports. Students will also be required to complete a service-learning binder, which must include all of the research, the pacing guide, the service log, and all pertinent information regarding the implementation of the project. To eliminate this type of procrastination, at the beginning of the semester the instructor will assign each group a venue for service and a list of possible dates for implementation.

Although these changes may slightly limit the students' autonomy and create more work for the instructor, they will help to make the projects more successful by alleviating some of the pitfalls, challenges, and failures caused by procrastination and last minute planning.

2.5 Student Incentives and Inducements

To help motivate students to fully engage in and commit to this service learning project, certain incentives will be offered to students in the course in the future, such as the opportunity for exemption from the final exam. Each group will submit its service learning binder and a copy of the YouTube video to be scored by a panel of faculty judges, and the group that receives the highest score will be exempt from the final exam and receive a grade of 100 for the exam. Other possible incentives that might appeal to students, especially English and Mass Communications majors, would be the chance to have their YouTube videos or Instagram pictures for the project featured on the JSU website or to have their Twitter quotes and postings run on the electronic scrolling banner in the JSU student center. Another possible incentive would be to have the students write and publish a series of stories about their projects for JSU's *Blue and White Flash* or for local area papers such as *The Mississippi Link* or the *Jackson Advocate.* These types of incentives will help to encourage students to dedicate the time and effort necessary to successfully research, develop, and implement quality service learning projects.

2.6 Reflections

Despite the challenges and complications, the service learning component that was implemented in English 202 and English 212 during the 2013 spring semester was definitely successful. Because of its overall success, this project would be used during the 2013 fall semester in English 201 and English 211, the first part of the Humanities sequence. By making a few changes and implementing the improvements that were previously mentioned, it is possible to foster an even more successful service learning experience that will be beneficial for all students and provide them with an opportunity for positive civic, social, and academic development.

3. The Graduate Example: MC 526: Television Documentary-Spring 2012

There has been much written about the benefits of service learning pedagogy utilization with undergraduate students (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000; McGill, 2012). However, there are many professional graduate programs including counseling, nursing and public health which routinely utilize service learning in their graduate curriculums; however, in general, the same pedagogical benefits that are discussed in implementing service learning into undergraduate curriculums have not been discussed as often in the pursuit of graduate education and experiences (Lu & Lambright, 2010). Thomas and Lambert (2005, cited in Beckman, Brandenberger & Shappell, 2009) maintain that new graduates share a lack of adherence to professional ethics, and a commitment to service within local communities, in that service learning options added to the graduate curriculum would be an effective and efficient way to respond to some of these misgivings. Yet, it would seem that more faculty would incorporate opportunities to utilize the professional and graduate skills that are accumulating for students enrolled in graduate programs; however, this does not seem to be the case.

During the spring semester 2012, a service-learning component was included in the curriculum for a graduate documentary class at Jackson State University. The following will document the process, and discuss the limitations, benefits and lessons learned throughout the process.

3.1 The Assignment

During the first class of the semester, students were informed about the service-learning component for the graduate class. It did not take long for students to decide during the three-hour first class, after brainstorming ideas, before they had an idea that would allow them to incorporate the learning techniques and pedagogy from our class into several classes at a local area high school. Specifically, students decided that they wanted to work with younger students to produce a public service announcement on bullying.

Graduate students would work with high school students to create, write, film and edit a public service announcement on bullying. After students were clear and in agreement on the direction of the service learning component, their first assignment was to begin working on creating a formal proposal.

Formal Proposal Writing Assignment

The objective is to complete a group project which integrates course content with the service-learning component. An effective service-learning project proposal will include components that can be evaluated according to well-defined criteria:

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- Define objectives
- Include project learning outcomes
- Incorporate project timeline
- Provide opportunities for both private and public reflection
- Foster civic relationships
- Be continuous, connected, challenging and contextual
- Include many forms of communication (writing, drawing, rap session, class discussion, etc.).

Project Read-Student Proposal for PSA Project

Compose a formal proposal which outlines the project's objectives, goals, plan of action, learning outcomes, media and communication plan, and timeline. Compose a formal proposal to be presented to the Jackson Public Schools District (JPSD) office:

- Develop a project theme (already accomplished)
- Examine the strengths of team members and determine role assignments (Please note that while individuals are assigned with the responsibility of taking leadership of certain areas, all final decisions should reflect the group's objectives and desires at-large)
- Develop a procedure whereby an effective flow of communication is maintained, utilizing social networks and other communication venues
- Develop a timeline which includes active research, group brainstorming, group discussion, participant classroom instruction, reporting, execution, production, debriefing and reflection
- Develop a project theme
- Create a budget ($500.00)
- Establish a timetable of group meetings
- Incorporate supporting materials (scholarly references on graduate service learning project, service learning projects working with middle school or high school students and service learning projects for mass communication)
- Develop parental consent forms
- Complete IRB forms.

Define roles and assignments:

- Producer
- Researcher(s)
- Segment Producers/Directors
- Production
- Scriptwriter
- Scheduler
- School Liaison/Classroom Instruction (All students will be scheduled to present one module of instruction during the project)
- Documentary Graphics/Credits/Copyright.

The final proposal should also include the following for administrative approval:

- Script and Storyboard
- Classroom Modules
- Production Schedule
- Filming Dates
- PSA Viewing
- Student and Faculty surveys
- Parental Consent Forms
- Departmental Chair Letter.

After the Formal Proposal is completed, it will be submitted and reviewed by the school district and administration at the local school. The formal proposal is necessary to obtain administrative approval before graduate students can begin the actual project.

3.2 Initial Thoughts and Decisions

Many of the students in the class were interested in media production, so the inclusion of a service learning project in the television documentary class was an excellent opportunity to incorporate the pedagogy into the curriculum and give the graduate students a chance to utilize some of the professional and practical skills they would need upon graduation. The initial idea was formulated during the Mass Communications Graduate Seminar class, which was taught the previous semester. Some students had an unrealistic perspective of the required professional toolkit they needed to assemble in order to get a job. In many cases, graduate students do not prepare portfolios or have evidence of their work: writing or production. A service-learning project could illustrate a student's willingness to work in the community, the incorporation of teamwork and collaborative skills. Writing and producing the documentary would provide them with visual representation of the multimedia skills and writing skills so needed in the industry today. The students were intrigued by a service learning project, because many of them had not participated in a service-learning experience as an undergraduate nor in graduate school, and many of them wanted to connect to the communities in which they lived.

After discussing several readings in class and discussing the mutuality of benefits available in doing a service-learning project, students inquired about the possibility of making it work with the television documentary class. They were looking for experiences other than simply doing routine assignments; they wanted opportunities to communicate with different audiences, work on a project from beginning to end and to progress through all of the stages of project implementation. Some classes, especially graduate classes, are not conducive to a service learning option; however, this class lent itself to the goals and objectives of a basic service learning project, such as making connections between course content and practical experiences. By working with the secondary students to produce a public service announcement as part of their class documentary, the students would be able to really put into practice the planning, scheduling and writing for the project. Also, by preparing the students to write a script about the bullying topic, helping them to choose the talent, setting up for production and taking care of administrative tasks, they would be incorporating course content while teaching real-time skills to the students, giving them an opportunity to talk about issues that are important for them and finding ways to address those issues in a positive, non-violent manner, illustrating for the students different ways of coping.

Developing 21st century skills would be another objective for this project. All students would be required to participate in the production and/or writing of the script and story boards and the filming and production. Students would be working with new software and production equipment; they would be working with social networking sites, to upload information, and to upload material to the departmental website. It was definitely an opportunity to load up on activities in order to increase the functionality of their digital toolkits. Another objective would be to increase their social responsibility and awareness. Many of the students had discussed their lack of connection to their communities. Some did not even know if there were elementary, middle, or secondary schools in their neighborhood. They were not sure of the local city council and suggested that the only time they were involved in the community would be during the holiday season or with a religious event, so this project would provide students an opportunity to become familiar with some of the issues in the community. Students chose the topic of bullying, and until this project, most of them were unaware of the intensity of bullying and its widespread presence on the Internet. Finally, the project would help students examine the personal connections with communities and society. According to Pope John Paul II (1987), "Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all" (para. 38).

During the fall semester, students organized, brainstormed and came up with several possible ideas and options for this project. It was important to reiterate that the project is only part of the class, and so students would still be expected to continue other assigned learning activities.

3.3 The Assignment (Continued)

Class readings included "Issues in Contemporary Documentary," "Documentary in the Digital Age," "The Art of Documentary-Style and Storytelling," and "New Documentary."

Another assignment included viewing several documentary videos and YouTube options. The video assignments included *Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary*, a video which has over 163 available clips on the documentary process and the art of storytelling, *A Class Divided*, the class project conducted by Jane Elliot about race and division in 1968 in a small predominantly white town, *Waiting for Superman*, a project completed in 2010 that illustrated the problems with public education by focusing on several students in the system, and *God Grew Tired of Us*, a project about the Lost Boys of Sudan who fled the war and tyranny and chronicled their journeys.

Another assignment required students to create a mini-documentary as an individual assignment before the initial process began. Students were required to utilize their phones or iPads to create a documentary on *love*. The video should be a maximum of 3 minutes, should include 1 - 2 interviews, an opening graphic, use of transitions: fade in/out, cross dissolve, shots: wide/establishing, medium, close-up, over the shoulder, b-roll of subject matter, music (optional), and narration (optional).

3.4 Considerations and Collaborations

All of the students who were in the previous class that discussed the project for the television documentary class were also enrolled in MC500 – Graduate Seminar.   However, several other students who enrolled in the documentary class were not in the graduate seminar class, so the project theme, goals and objectives would need to be re-reviewed, possibly amended and re-evaluated.   Students had many concerns regarding this process, specifically, they were concerned with extra time that would be needed to create and develop this project, working in groups, and the overall organization of the class in addition to the project.

After meeting as a group, students decided that they would continue with the initial idea that had been discussed previously, which was to work with students at one of the local high schools to create, write, and produce a documentary on bullying for their high school. One of the students in the class was an employee at one of the local high schools in the community. She spoke to the principal and one of the teachers, and they were excited and appreciative about the project. Identifying the need to address social media and cyber-bulling was a high priority, but with budget decreases and loss of staff, this service learning project answered a needed advocated by the community; this opportunity would give the students experience in everything from beginning storyboarding, to working with administrators, writing scripts, teaching students about production and working with parents.

3.5 Lessons Learned

3.5.1 Teamwork and Practical Experience

As the process unfolded, students were not prepared for the initial onslaught of tasks that had to be done: all of the smaller tasks, such as creating permission slips for students to appear on camera, to scheduling times to shoot video on campus, to beginning the storyboarding process, or finding experts to appear on camera and doing the research. Understanding these tasks and others and the logical organization in which they occur will be required, once they are working in their profession, so this experience and the experience of working in teams not only gave them some practical experiences but also illustrated some of the areas that they will need to work on to be prepared for the real world.

The graduate students who were in the first year of their Master's program, indicated that the biggest surprise came in how they felt about working with the high school students. They had the opportunity to spend several weeks with these students, taking them through the writing and video process. The most important contribution, according to these students, was being in the middle of their community, doing something meaningful, and giving back and making a difference.

3.5.2 Project Issues and Shortcomings

One of the major shortcomings was the students' inability to share the work equitably and to collaborate effectively in groups. In hindsight, teams, whether they are professionals or graduate students, are going to include worker bees and those who are not worker bees. This project was no exception. By the end of the project, most of the same students were doing all of the tasks. Minor frustrations developed, and time was wasted trying to reorganize team commitments.

There were concerns also about the reality of documentary. Everyone always wants to do the production work, but lack of experience was evident, because students were totally unaware that creating a documentary includes not only production and filming but also analytical experiences. There has to be a vision before one can begin any production work. Organization, planning and research must be considered before any production begins. In addition, students realized that creating a storyboard and writing a script, eventually save time, money and provide a more succinct thorough production experience. Professional documentaries are rarely improvised or unplanned projects. This entire process was an excellent learning opportunity for budding media professionals. They had to create, develop, brainstorm, organize, plan, interview, research, research and do more research. Several students confessed that they had not anticipated all of the elements and all of the work it would take to produce a video of 25 minutes.

3.6 Student Incentives and Inducements

Surprisingly, for this class, the experience and final grade were the only incentives. The documentary produced was not the only assignment project for this class in correlation with the student learning outcomes. However, as an incentive for this class and because there would be extra work for the team to complete including working with secondary students, the final research paper/summary was removed as an additional assignment. Instead, students wrote several short reaction papers on the video assignments. That was a plus for the students. Time was crucial, and most of the students worked in this class during the day. The students needed lecture and class time, but they also needed common meeting times to organize and plan. So instead of using the class time for lectures every week, some of the lectures were conducted utilizing the virtual classroom and the class alternated week by week, so students could use the scheduled class time to accomplish project objectives. This was positive because it meant that students would have more time to collaborate, and they could watch or listen to the lectures and view class materials at their convenience during those alternate weeks. Working these options into the class made it easier for the students and suggested to them that the professor was willing to make some substitutions or amendments, so they could successfully complete this process.

3.7 Reflections

In facilitating this project, the professor would definitely be continuously present in the process. As graduate students, they were expected to be able to work through the outcomes and objectives with minimal instruction. However, that meant that sometimes students had to second-guess decisions, figure out project substitutions, and manage collaborations. Although this was a graduate class, they needed more leadership and initial instructor presence. After working on the formal outline and getting administrative approval, the professor was reluctant to continually enter into the project development. In addition, incorporating any assignments that did not directly relate to the creation, management or execution of the projects should be reconsidered. By including other assignments, students would have to choose what to work on, and in most cases, the other assignments would sometimes take precedence over the group assignments. The readings and the videos should still be provided to the students to review and read at their leisure. Finally, downsizing the project objectives should be revisited; attempting to have class instruction and complete a video was a stretch to complete in a semester. Either look at doing just a production project or an instructional module, if working with high schools again, however, doing a video or documentary for one of the local agencies would also be an option for this particular unit. If the project includes too many objectives, one runs the risk of completing the project but not absorbing the rationale for incorporating the option into the curriculum in the first place.

The professor was generally pleased with the outcome. The graduate students decided that the next time, the theme should be preparing the students for digital citizenship, which works with the social media and networking class. By planning and implementing service in our classes, we can, in effect, prepare our graduate students to be effective media professionals and civic contributors, one class at a time.

4. Conclusion

In her article entitled "Passion for Learning, Passion for Life," Margit Watts (2003) provides the following assessment of service to student enhancement:

Involvement in community service might actually raise the level of engagement of our students. …Meaningful experiences can be seen as inspiration for our students to view themselves in the greater context and to begin to act for the common good.

They might even learn to value themselves and their contributions more highly. In the end, community service validates their whole college experience. They can't help but learn. And we can't help but allow this learning to flourish. (pp. 66-67)

The service learning experience is an important and necessary part of students' college matriculation, because it provides both academic and social benefits to the students. Service learning projects such as those featured in this article are advantageous to the overall progress of students, because they help them to develop and master leadership, time management, research, planning, presentation, and technological skills that are integral to academic and professional advancement and success. These projects are also important, because they give students the opportunity to develop a commitment to community and a sense of civic duty and social awareness that will ultimately help them to be more active, informed, responsible, and productive members of society. Benefits such as these are what make service learning experiences successful and worthwhile.

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