

## Course-linked Service-Learning in Management Education: Lessons Learned

[SUSAN R. MADSEN](#)  
Utah Valley State College

One reason that academic service-learning is still not utilized in some schools of business is that their faculty and administrators remain uninformed and uneducated about this pedagogy. This article was written to help bridge the gap between theory and practice with regard to the actual design and implementation of service-learning in management education. In this article, I will discuss the design, implementation, experiences, student suggestions, changes, and reflections related to a human resource course taught during the springs of 2003 and 2004.

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Although there is a growing movement in business education to incorporate academic service-learning into the curriculum, in many schools of business this pedagogy is still just beginning to be utilized. Five primary reasons include the following: 1) some faculty members and administrators remain uninformed and uneducated about service-learning (e.g., course and project design, benefits, and challenges); 2) some faculty do not want to change their current and established curriculum; 3) some faculty are uncomfortable with ambiguity, learning projects they cannot control, and experiences outside the walls of the classrooms; 4) some faculty do not feel they have support (e.g., a center to help coordinate with community partners, department chair or dean, educational opportunities, tenure and promotion applicability) for implementing these projects; and 5) some faculty members assume that the personal effort and time requirements of service-learning are not worth the actual benefits and learning the students receive.

Yet, many management educators and researchers have been clear about its need, potential, and benefits. For example, Zlotkowski (1996) explained that:

*A major criticism of contemporary business education centers on its failure to help business students achieve sufficient educational breath, particularly with regard to the external environment of business. The service-learning movement offers business faculty an excellent opportunity to address this deficiency. By developing curricular projects linked to community needs, faculty can further their students' technical skills while helping them simultaneously develop greater interpersonal, inter-cultural, and ethical sensitivity. (p. 5).*

In addition, Bilimoria (1998) stated,

*Recent shifts in prevailing worldviews, characterized broadly as a change from the modern realities of order, reason, totality, absoluteness, linearity, domination,*

*and hierarchy to postmodern acknowledgements of discontinuities, multiplicities, relativity, cyclicity, relationality, and community, are encouraging the diasporic movement of learning beyond the spatial and temporal walls of the management education classroom. (p. 265).*

Further, Porter and McKibben (1988) explained that business schools “ought also to concern themselves with the education of the whole students” (p. 316), and that “because of the increasingly complex environment in which business operates, business schools must give more consideration to whether they have an appropriate balance between an internal and an external focus” (p. 85). Porter and McKibben (1988) believed that “any move by business schools toward broadening the academic experience of their students beyond the technical and functional will find enthusiastic endorsement by many employers” (p. 317). In fact, according to McCarthy and Tucker (1999) service-learning is “changing the way that professors view the connection between classroom pedagogy and learning” (p. 554). Finally, Godfrey, Illes, and Berry (2005) recently argued that the “service-learning pedagogy, and the associated educational experiences provide a partial solution to the problem of narrowness in business education precisely because the pedagogy blends academic rigor with practical relevance, set in a context of civic engagement” (p. 310). Hence, several primary reasons service-learning should be a more frequently used teaching modality include the following: 1) it provides educational depth for students while also broadening the academic experience; 2) it provides opportunities for students to further develop their technical skills and other competencies/skills as described previously; and 3) it is one of the few pedagogies that address the development of the whole student by seeking an appropriate balance between internal and external foci.

As was mentioned, this pedagogy is still not utilized to its fullest in many schools of business today partly because faculty members and administrators remain uninformed and uneducated about academic service-learning. To address this issue, faculty members need more cases, essays, and research that focus on the basics of course and project design. Much of the current literature remains at the theoretical and conceptual levels and does not provide in-depth concrete examples and details to help guide professors in the design and implementation of service-learning assignments. This article was written to help bridge this gap by providing help to faculty with regard to the actual utilization of the service-learning pedagogy in management education today. I will do this by briefly presenting and describing the following: definition, research, and theoretical framework; description of the original service-learning project; student suggestions for improvements and changes; and revisions and reflections.

### **Definition, Research, and Theoretical Framework**

The number and variety of service-learning definitions found in the literature is quite staggering. For this article, I determined that it was important to present one specific definition so that readers can find some clarity around this issue. The definitions from the existing literature (e.g., Godfrey, 1999; McCarthy & Tucker, 1999; Rama, Ravenscroft, Walcott, & Zlotkowski, 2000) were explored and compiled to form this comprehensive definition:

*Academic service-learning is a multidimensional pedagogy (a form of experiential learning) that is integrated within a credit-bearing course in the form of an*

*organized, thoughtful, and meaningful project. Students are paired with agencies or organizations (community partners) that have specific needs related to the content of a particular course. Students then perform the needed community service while, at the same time, utilizing course content and reflecting on their experiences for enhanced learning.*

It is important to note that academic service-learning is different from an internship or co-op experience. Service-learning is focused on learning the concepts taught in a specific course. For example, in a compensation and benefits course the students would participate in service-learning related to understanding content and developing skills centered on compensation and benefits. The students do a service-learning project as an assignment within the course. The students continue to attend class to discuss textbook chapters and other readings while, at the same time, participate and complete a project that helps them practice and implement what they are learning from the particular course. Internships and co-ops are typically more general in nature and are positioned at the end of a student's college work. The real-world work is generally the whole experience of the internships or co-op. Service-learning projects can be designed in most courses students can or may take throughout their entire college experience.

Although many business educators may primarily use service-learning to help the students learn core course concepts, most also use the pedagogy to provide students with opportunities to develop the other competencies important for successful business professionals such as critical thinking, writing, speaking, analysis, teamwork, interpersonal communication, and problem-solving (Godfrey and Grasso, 2000). If designed and implemented effectively, researchers and academics have found that students can learn many skills and concepts through academic service-learning (see Table 1). In addition to these learning advantages, researchers and academics have also found other benefits students obtained through service-learning experiences.

As mentioned previously, Bilimoria (1998) called for a "diasporic" shift away from classroom to real-world learning. She purported that service-learning is one destination of the diaspora, one that has instrumental and intrinsic value and argued that both should be discussed and valued. With regard to intrinsic value, many educators believe that it is the responsibility of the educational system to assist in the development of ethical and effective community members and over-all citizens. According to Rama et al. (2000), academic service-learning can be a powerful tool in doing just that. Godfrey, Illes, and Berry (2005) argued that:

*Because business students have received much (in terms of educational opportunity, skill development, and job opportunities), much can and should be expected of them in strengthening community life. If social betterment in a capitalistic system depends on noblesse oblige, then the principle of responsibility helps reinforce oblige, while traditional business education focuses on noblesse. Students are now, and always will be, citizens of their communities (local, regional, national, and global). Responsibility holds that in addition to their wealth-creation goals students should assume the obligations of citizenship; there is a moral imperative for them to use their business skills, talents, and knowledge to better those communities where they live and work. (p. 318).*

**Table 1**  
**Competencies, knowledge, and benefits gained through service-learning**

<b>Competency or benefit</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Business world understanding and view	Kenworthy-U'Ren (1999)
Career exploration	Astin et al. (2000); Robinson (1999/2000)
Citizenship	Eyler & Giles (1999); Godfrey & Grasso (2000); Godfrey et al. (2005)
Communication skills	Eyler & Giles (1999); Kenworthy-U'Ren (2000)
Confidence	Konwerski & Nashman (2002)
Conflict resolution and leadership skills	Thomas & Landau (2002)
Course concepts/technical knowledge	Rama et al. (2000); Tucker & McCarthy (2001)
Critical thinking	Eyler & Giles (1999)
Cultural Awareness and diversity	Robinson (1999/2000); Vernon & Foster (2000)
Decision-making and consequences	Waddock (2000)
Exploration of personal attitudes and values	McGoldrick et al. (2000)
Leadership	Astin et al. (2000)
Motivation to perform well and learn	Munter (2002)
Networking skills	Tucker et al. (1998)
Organization strategy	Rehling (2000)
Personal satisfaction and fulfillment	Rehling (2000)
Problem-solving skills	Eyler & Giles (1999); Rama et al. (2000); Zlotkowski (1996)
Professional and real-world work experiences	Gronski & Pigg (2000); Gujarathi & McQuade (2002)
Self-efficacy	Tucker & McCarthy (2001)
Social responsibility	Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, & Colby (1996)
Teamwork and interaction skills	Eyler & Giles (1999); Tucker et al. (1998)
Time-management skills	Tucker et al. (1998)
Values and beliefs	Astin et al. (2000); Eyler & Giles (1999)
Volunteerism desires	Bush-Bacelis (1998)

Some educators are intrigued and enthused with regard to the multidimensional aspects and benefits that well-designed service-learning can provide. This could also include desired and explicit learning goals related to the development of civic and moral engagement, the mission-driven nature of the non profit agencies as part of the equation, and the exposure to the professional work world.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle provides one of the most powerful, practical, and theoretical frameworks for the academic service-learning pedagogy. Kolb (1984) stated, "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). It appears that Kolb drew from three frameworks (Dewey's educational philosophy, Piaget's developmental psychology, and Lewin's social psychology model) to create this multidimensional learning model (Petkus, 2000). His model illustrated that the most effective learning occurs in

four different ways: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. He explained that, for an optimal learning experience, lessons, projects, and assignments should incorporate all of these types of learning. Instructors experienced in requiring service-learning assignments agree that a well-designed service-learning assignment that includes all four (including reflection) will result in the most effective and long-term type of learning a student can experience (e.g., Petkus, 2000).

### **Description of the Original Project**

During the spring of 2003 I taught the course *Compensation and Benefits* for a group of primarily nontraditional undergraduate seniors. A representative from our campus *Center for Service and Learning* introduced me to the president of the county-wide United Way organization before the start of the semester. I worked with him to secure sites in which the students could conduct their service-learning projects. I was able to take a tour of each facility and was briefly introduced to the directors of the affiliate organizations. The projects included students performing job analysis (data collection and the writing and compilation of job descriptions and task inventories), job evaluation (research on the industry and market to compare salaries and benefits), and then providing suggestions and recommendations for compensation and/or benefit adjustments. I included some general information about the project in the syllabus and introduced the students to it the first day of class. I explained that I had provided four Thursday afternoon class periods (we met twice a week) during the semester for students to have class time for site and group work. The students appeared very overwhelmed during the first class and three students immediately dropped. Service-learning was new to our institution and none of the students had ever been assigned such a project. Two of these students talked to me before dropping. They explained that the project not only made them feel uncomfortable (according to one student, it “will take me out of my comfort zone”) but they felt it would take more time than a traditionally designed class. They both had heavy work schedules and family responsibilities. One noted that “a traditional course is more predictable, and I need predictability in my life right now.” This is a helpful insight that speaks to issues that arise when educators move outside the traditional course design model, one being that students immediately form assumptions (some accurate, some not) about the time commitment, expected effort, and prerequisite intellectual and skill-based requirements.

Seven weeks into the semester, a contact at United Way, as well as a representative from our *Center for Service and Learning*, came to class to talk about the pedagogy and introduce and describe United Way and the specific agencies the students would be serving. Students were given a handout with the agency names, contacts, and information. Prior to this class period, I had taken time to have each student present his or her general schedule to the other students. It was hoped that students would self-select into groups with others who had similar schedules. After the presentations, students were asked to create groups and decide on an agency. They struggled to complete this assignment, and I had to step in and assist. I then asked them to meet with their agency contact as soon as possible to start their projects. Although I was excited about the projects, after reflecting on this semester and experiences, I believe that I must have appeared somewhat unsure. The students knew that it was a new type of project for me, the school, and the college. Most of the students were somewhat frustrated and stressed during the project period. Most of the teams did not immediately meet with their community partners. Half of the groups struggled with obtaining initial appointments, and others found unprepared community partner

contacts. Some agencies did not seem interested in having the students and did not communicate and acknowledge (to the students) that the projects were needed or would be valued. In addition, students were not accustomed to the ambiguity and the flexibility inherent in this type of project. They often asked for exact examples and wanted to find the one “right answer” to any situation (similar to taking a multiple choice test). I spent many hours working with individual groups reviewing their materials and giving them direction.

Once a week, during class, we spent 15 to 20 minutes in large group verbal reflections. I asked students how they were doing, and they discussed their issues and challenges. They provided ideas to each other regarding issues. The students were also required to keep reflective journals during the semester. I did not provide much direction and did not check them during the semester. When I collected them at the end of the semester I found that most students did not do well. I had just assumed they knew how to “reflect,” and they did not. Most entries were short and focused on the tasks they had completed each visit (similar to a travel log).

The projects were not completed until the week of finals. In fact, we had group presentations during the final exam period because the groups were not ready until then. The groups did not give their presentations to the agencies until after the semester was over and grades were given. Two weeks after the semester ended I emailed the students and asked them to meet with a research assistant and me to discuss their experiences. I completed most of the interviews three to six weeks after the semester had concluded. Some groups still had not presented to their agencies at the time of the interview but all had completed them shortly thereafter.

At the end of the semester, all students felt that the service learning project was a beneficial experience for them although the levels of enthusiasm varied from student to student. Most struggled with some elements (e.g., ambiguity, uncertainty, teams, and schedules), but all explained that they learned more from this experience than from any other assignment they had done in their college careers. Data collected from student reflections, interviews, end products, and examinations clearly demonstrated that they had learned the intended course concepts and skills (i.e., job analysis and job evaluation). In fact, the students rarely struggled with understanding the link between the course material and the service-learning project. The project was designed to provide them with the opportunity to practice the skills and utilize the knowledge they were learning in many chapters of the textbook. Throughout the lectures and class discussions the students would ask questions or make comments based on the readings and their applicability and possible utilization for their service-learning projects. Importantly, because of the project design, students could clearly see the connection between their projects and the course content.

Data also showed student learning in other important intended areas: critical thinking, writing, presentation, teamwork, synthesis, organization, citizenship, conflict management, and professionalism, to name a few. Many reported that they had received internships and job offers, in part, because of these experiences. Their confidence had clearly increased, and they noted many other benefits. Although the students felt it was a challenging and difficult assignment, all recommended that I use this service-learning assignment for future classes. While I have noted various problems throughout the semester, I felt good about the experiences and felt that the students learned and the community partners benefited.

## **Student Suggestions from First Seminar**

As previously mentioned, after this first semester I conducted in-depth phenomenological interviews with the students who had completed the service-learning projects. One of the interview items included a question asking for their suggestions to improve the experience. A total of 83 related phrases were extracted from the transcripts. These suggestions were then combined into the following 12 suggestions:

1. Show examples of projects.
2. Don't give everyone in the team the same grade, and let us know it before we begin.
3. Encourage us (require us) to start earlier in the semester.
4. Don't have a research paper and a service-learning project at the same time.
5. Keep group size at three members.
6. Let teams self-select.
7. Provide a more specific outline of the pieces and steps of the project.
8. Help us understand the big picture better before we start including exactly why the organization needs this information and how they can use it after we are done.
9. Work more with the organizations so that they understand the projects before we arrive and are supportive.
10. Choose community partners who are really interested in the project and who will value what we can provide for them.
11. Walk through each step of the project during class time as we are going through it at our sites, but don't tell us every single thing to do so that we can still use our own style and creativity.
12. Provide more structure to the written reflections.

## **Redesign and Reflections**

Although the projects had generally gone well during the first semester, I wanted to make changes and improvements so that the students would more fully enjoy the experience and not feel the high level of continuous stress the students had the previous year (Note: I do believe that some struggle and ambiguity adds to increased learning). After this initial semester, I conducted a detailed literature review (nearly 100 scholarly articles and books) and learned a great deal more about service-learning. These readings as well as the student suggestions just listed laid the basis for the redesign of some of the elements of the project and course.

## **Course Syllabus**

The first change I made was to add more detail to the course syllabus. I subdivided the related class points for the service-learning project (i.e., proposal, reflective essays, class presentation, community partner presentation, and final report) so that students could obtain points in different ways throughout the project period. I made it clear that many of the points were not based upon other team member's efforts. The revised syllabus provided a more specific outline of the project which better helped students understand the "big picture" (see Appendix A). It also brought more clarity to the students with regard to the specific course concepts and skills from the textbook and readings that they were applying in their projects.

The first class period went very well this second semester. The students appeared to be more interested and excited rather than stressed. I believe that I portrayed and exhibited more excitement, knowledge, calmness, and confidence as an instructor. I brought the final projects from the prior semester for them to glance through. Only one student dropped after the first class. Many of the other students knew before taking the class that it would include a service-learning component and were prepared. I shared quotes from my previously interviewed students on how much they had learned and how much it had helped them in interviews for jobs and internships. I also better prepared them for some of the expected struggles and difficulties.

As I revised the syllabus, I also moved the starting date of the project three weeks earlier in the semester. I asked students to be at certain phases during certain weeks of the semester. I had them submit sections (e.g., proposal, job description, and task inventory) to me prior to submitting them to the organization. This worked well, and the first draft for the community partners was more professional in content and format. The groups started their projects earlier. I spent more time in class preparing them (and having them role play) for their initial community partner appointments. I required that they dress professionally each time they visited the site (I had not emphasized this the first semester). They were able to finish the projects earlier and then present them to the community partners a few weeks before the end of the semester. I also separated the assignments so core projects did not conflict.

The students had positive reactions to these changes and the project in general. One student reflected,

*A lot has taken place since the last reflection, namely more observations as well as our web research and the formulation of our recommendations for each of the positions we have analyzed. Each of these events has contributed to the overall grand experience the service-learning project has been. Yes, it does take time away from our busy schedules to meet with the clients and group members, but the knowledge and practical skills gained from the various activities associated with this project far outweigh the costs of time, effort, and cognitive devotion.*

Another student explained,

*I am very happy and pleased that I had the opportunity to perform a job analysis and evaluation as part of the service-learning project. I learned so much from building this job analysis from the ground up and experiencing first-hand the process and steps involved. It is very rewarding to see the final results from the hard work that was put into this project. I feel confident that I could perform this same task in the workforce in the future. I would highly recommend that this service-learning project remain a part of this course requirement. It has been one of the best experiences I have had in my college career.*

A third student discussed the impact this project had on her:

*What I think made the greatest impact on me was that we were basically let loose to research and to learn through our own participation and experience. We were given the knowledge, the organization, the positions to analyze and evaluate, and we were expected to perform what we had previously learned. What better way to learn something than by actually doing it on your own with the tools that have been given you to use? I can honestly say that I now feel confident that I could perform this type of work on my own. Before participating in this assignment I could not have said that. I am truly pleased that this opportunity was given to me. I learned a great deal from the service-learning project, as well as my team, and I know that it will benefit me in my future.*

## Community Partners

Second, one of the greatest struggles for my first semester students was that some of the agency contacts did not know what the service-learning project was about and how they could benefit from it. To address this issue I created a one-page (front and back) information sheet that could be sent to potential student sites. Before the semester began, United Way and our *Center for Service and Learning* distributed this handout to various affiliate organizations throughout the county. The sheet provided contact information for the *Center for Service and Learning* and me as well as a course description, project description, project details and processes, and other student requirements (see Appendix B). I also organized a short information luncheon for the community partners at one of their locations. These efforts worked very well. The community partners not only had a deeper understanding of the project, but learned about the benefits and value of these materials for their agencies. For example, updated job descriptions and task inventories are not only useful for compensation and benefits, but also for legal issues, recruiting and selection, training and development, and performance management efforts.

The community partner contacts appeared to greet these second semester students with more enthusiasm and helped them feel more valued and needed (this was very important to my students). One student exclaimed,

*Our team was greeted well, and I was very impressed with their agency and their excitement toward our project in general. They seemed as eager to help us as we were to help them.*

Another student explained,

*I think the thing that I liked the most (and really what drew upon my interest) was the fact that I felt like I was doing something useful while gaining experience and learning. I honestly felt like our community partner needed our help in this area. I feel like they will actually use the material and the research we will be doing.*

Throughout the reflection essays, one student reflected often about his relationship with the community partner: 1) “The people at our organization were very kind and caring towards us”; 2) “I was very impressed with her and could tell that she worked there because she really wanted to help the clients”; 3) “she was very helpful and gave us any information we needed to complete

the project”; 4) “I believe these job analyses are definitely going to help them out”; and 5) “It is comforting to see that we will be able to make a difference.”

In a previous section, the internal tension between service-learning's instrumental value and intrinsic value was addressed. As Butin (2003) explained, it is through experiences and reflection that knowledge is deepened, the links between knowledge and action are explored, and awareness of one's place in the world is enhanced. For this second class, I asked the students to do more in-depth research about the agency and its role and purpose within the larger community. This led to more discussions (written and verbal) of the worth and respect of these agencies and what they offer. I found that the students obtained a deeper understanding of the purpose and activities of the community partners. They discovered that as students they were not only providing a service to the agencies and community but that they were learning from them as much or more as they were serving and helping them. Some lectures and discussions then focused on differences, similarities, and applicabilities between nonprofits, civil service, business, and other settings. Student reflections did demonstrate a deepening of knowledge, a discovery of links between knowledge and action, and an awareness (or at least a glimpse) of their own place in the world.

I also spoke to the contact at each of the community agencies at the end of the semester to obtain feedback regarding the student projects. All partners involved in the second semester student projects stated that the students' work and contributions were highly valued and would be used for multiple purposes including grant writing, performance management system restructuring, training design, staffing, and so forth. This semester, all students felt their work had been valued and that they had contributed to the community and learned from the experience. When both the students and community partners feel they have benefited, it is true reciprocity at work.

### **Teamwork**

Third, I also made some changes related to project teams. As noted earlier, I separated points within the service-learning project so the entire project grade was not based upon the group effort. I added project points that would be given based upon critiques of team members for other team member's efforts and contributions. In addition, during the second semester, I did not intervene to assist students in selecting teams. There was some argument about which teams would get which agencies, but I asked them to come up with a method of deciding and left the room for ten minutes. When I re-entered the room, all teams were created and agencies chosen. During the previous semester some students had blamed me for assigning them to teams with dysfunctional team members. This time no blame was given, and students worked harder to resolve and deal with team member problems. There were still problems that arose, but students did not complain as much about them.

During the class period verbal reflections, I spent the last few minutes helping students link their experiences to real life. I explained many times, for example, that by working through and resolving team problems they would learn skills they would use in their jobs after graduation. Although the students had already worked in teams in either professional work settings or school courses, most reported they had not reflected on related struggles and experiences in a learning and development framework. This reflective experience helped students link service-learning

experiences with opportunities for personal growth and development. Finally, I designed the project teams with three members each. At the end of the prior semester most students had recommended that I assign three members to each group. They had found that with four or more members, at least one felt left out and/or did not contribute. With only two team members, students felt they didn't have enough hours to do the in-depth analysis required. One student wrote,

*I am pleased not only that my group is working so well together, but that we have an organization that is eager and interested to help participate with this project. It is rewarding to know that this project will make a difference for everyone involved. I am very optimistic that this project will be a success!*

Another explained,

*Overall, I was pleased with the work that we did as a group and very happy with the results of the projects. We worked hard and everyone did his part, so I learned to trust team members again. There is a sense of gratification that comes when you've put forth the effort and spent the time to work hard on a project. It is that intrinsic reward that motivates me to try just as hard, or harder, on the next project I do. We were talking about this project the other day, and I think my team agrees that the experiences we're receiving now will help us to know how to work hard and stay self-motivated when we get into the workforce and into our careers.*

## Written Reflections

Fourth, I redesigned my required written reflection assignments. Instead of a journal, I assigned five two-page (double-spaced) reflections approximately seven to ten days apart. However, I still decided not to guide their reflections by having them answer specific questions. I wanted them to reflect on anything they felt important or interesting. However, because reflection is such a critical element in the pedagogy of service-learning, I did provide much more information about written reflections.

I used the Welsh (2003) ABC123 reflection model to teach the students how to think about and write these reflections. This model combines Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff's (1994) *ABCs of Reflection* foundation with Youness and Yates' (1997) *Levels of Transcendence* (123). The ABCs include, 1) A = Affect (attitudes or feelings before, during, and after the service experience); 2) B = Behavior (what occurred, what should have occurred, and what might occur differently in the future); and, 3) C = Content or Cognition (specific connections to the content of the specific course). The Yates and Youness (1997) *Levels of Transcendence* included three levels as well:

1. Level 1 = Ego or Self (represents a student's self-centered experience). Example reflection: "Our team was greeted well, and I was very impressed with their agency and their excitement toward our project in general. They seemed as eager to help us as we were to help them."
2. Level 2 = Emphatic (represents a student's ability to relate to the experiences of others). Example reflection: "I thought that money was the only motivator for employees—I was

wrong. I have just spent months watching unbelievably talented, overworked people work for half of what they could make in a for-profit company. These people are happy and fulfilled. Making a true difference is so satisfying for them. I need to rethink what I want to do with my life.”

3. Level 3 = Global/Systemic (represents a student’s ability to relate experiences to political, social, and cultural factors). Example reflection: “I have spent some time at United Way and am greatly wishing I had time to give more to the community. They do so much for the benefit of humanity—it is borderline impossible to be present there for any amount of time without beginning to have your most sincere desires of charity and selflessness start to rise up inside.”

I explained that I would like to see the students reflect on all these levels from shallow (A and 1) to deep (C and 3). I reviewed this model with the students three different times throughout the service-learning experience.

Overall, this worked very well. The reflections were much deeper, rich, and heartfelt. The students worked to reflect in the different levels described in the model and also discussed in class. Examples of these student reflections have been included in this paper. I was very pleased with the reflection results, and I believe the students clearly benefited more from this reflection method than from the reflective journal assignment I had given the first semester.

### Final Presentations

Finally, I carefully designed the project so that there was time for 20 to 30-minute in-class group presentations and then enough time in the semester for students to present the project to their community partners. After each presentation, the students and I took the time to provide feedback to the groups regarding what they did well and what they could do to improve. Most students found great satisfaction (and some stress) in compiling and creating the final project and presentation. Some even had profound experiences in presenting it to their community partners. One student explained,

*A common thread that I have experienced throughout this service-learning experience, and even more so at the final presentation, was the feeling of significance. Being all dressed up always makes me feel more professional and important, but the way we were treated as we came in and presented our findings and recommendations was very satisfying. Maybe this feeling could be attributed to the fact that I am like a fish out of water when it comes to wearing slacks instead of Carhartts, and the newness of the whole situation had an uplifting affect. But, I would rather attribute it to the fact that I was actually practicing some of the things that I had been studying the last year or so. We were treated like professionals and that gave me the confidence and hope that, given the opportunity, I could perform this and other similar duties for a future employer.*

Another student described his experience in the following quotation:

*It was a learning experience for us. Going into this project I had no experience that I could compare it to. I had never done a professional presentation outside the classroom, and I have never had to put together a presentation that was of any value other than for a grade or personal knowledge. This presentation did all of these things for me. Although I do not have any plans to become a consultant and do this type of work, I will probably end up doing presentations to my employers and this will help me to prepare for them. I really had no idea how things were going to go, but as we did our research and prepared, things came together so that we were able to do a professional (or at least professional to me) presentation. It felt good.*

The final presentations were very important to these students. Most of these students had never presented in real workplace settings. Throughout the semester they had acquired a sincere desire to do well. The final presentations were the culmination of their semester-long efforts, and they wanted their work to make a difference. Successful contributions were important for these students' confidence in their own knowledge and abilities.

### **Challenges and Implications for Educators**

Based on my own experiences and those discussed in current literature, it is important to highlight some of the unique challenges instructors may face in designing, structuring, and implementing service-learning. It often takes more time (especially during the first few semesters) and, because of this, some professors do not want to implement this pedagogy. Although they can be rewarding, networking activities can be time-consuming and challenging. For optimal service-learning experiences, it is important to make strong community contacts with directors of various nonprofit generating agencies and organizations. Working with the staff and directors of related campus centers or student leadership organizations may also be needed. Since these projects may take time away from lecture, it takes additional effort to design classes effectively to ensure core course concepts are still taught and discussed. Educators who struggle with intolerance for ambiguity would also find service-learning especially challenging. Instructors must give up total control when facilitating service-learning effectively. The students must have clear objectives and guidelines, but they must be allowed to analyze and find their own solutions based on what they have learned. Effective service-learning educators must have facilitation, mentoring, and coaching skills and be able to think multidimensionally during class periods and in meetings with teams. Finally, teachers must be open and willing to learn as much as the students. Every semester brings new insights, and a willingness to change and improve based on feedback and insights is critical for ongoing improvements and success.

My work in service-learning theory, research, and practice has lead me to conclude that there are few concepts in human resources (and management for that matter) that could NOT be taught and strengthened through a service-learning project in non-profit generating enterprises. Management educators should not feel constrained by the nature of our discipline. In fact, I believe it is easier in management to design applicable service-learning projects. Profit and non-profit generating enterprises deal with the similar issues in different ways: people, budgets, accounting, motivation, employee ethics, management, processes, systems, networking, staffing, technology, training, legal issues, and so forth.

If designed appropriately, service-learning can be a way to enact critical or alternative management perspectives, bring students face-to-face with various theories or approaches to compensation and implicit theories of human nature and motivation, as well as other objectives an educator may have. How? It is in the design, the experience, and the reflection. Interestingly, my compensation and benefits course students probably learned more about intrinsic motivation and drives than they did about actual compensation and benefits found in a paycheck or benefits statement. They learned about the goodness of the human heart and the yearning of employees to make a true difference in society. Of course they also learned how to create a job analysis and evaluation and how to research and synthesize related and relevant data; yet they were more amazed at discovering the needs of community members and the powerful influence good employees in these organizations can have on so many. They searched for meaning as they pondered the reasons competent and talented employees and leaders work in such underpaid positions. They struggled with the concept of fair pay for people helping those less fortunate. Many students reflected on the irony of analyzing compensation and actually discovering deeper meaning and purpose in the hearts of individual employees. Important teaching moments naturally emerged.

## Conclusion

My second semester students responded very well to the changes and improvements I made to this service-learning project. Approximately 95 percent of the student reflections were positive, and students appeared to deeply perceive the link between the service-learning project, the course content, and the learning and benefits obtained. The few negative comments focused on team challenges. Two teams had students who did not contribute as much as the other group members. For example, these two less-contributing individuals did not attend some of the team meetings and did not let the others know prior to the start of the meetings. And, when these same students did not complete their assignments by team agreed upon deadlines, this also caused some understandable frustration and discouragement. Even in equally contributing member teams, struggles and challenges with team member schedules was also occasionally noted.

The changes made to this project helped create a better, more profound and meaningful experience for these management students. During the second semester, I focused more on ensuring that I had included each of Kolb's four ways that individuals learn (i.e., concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation) so that the overall experience was effectively designed and implemented. One young man caught the vision of the learning piece of service-learning when he concluded,

*I was interested in doing a service-learning project for this class because I had done it once before. I really like the learning that comes through 1) direct application of classroom principles in a business environment; 2) interaction with local organizations and their employees; 3) job related tasks rather than standard college tasks/assignments; 4) professional development of character and confidence as a consultant; and 5) assignments requiring one to produce quality work by using more skills than ordinarily required from a regular class project.*

Another student summarized his feelings when he stated,

*When comparing this project to other projects I've done, I feel that this project was more worthwhile for both me and the organization, and that this project actually had meaning to it. Sometimes I feel like professors just assign projects to students just so they can say that they made the students do projects. My experience with this service-learning project was definitely more applicable and organized than any other project I've done. I feel a sense of ownership for this project, and I feel that I have created a meaningful relationship with the organization and made an important impact.*

Overall, academic service-learning has worked well for me and my students. Through an improved, well-designed project (including the reflections), the students clearly understood the purpose and benefit from participation. In addition service-learners also had feelings of citizenship as one so eloquently exclaimed,

*I have spent time at our agency this week and greatly wish that I had more time to give to an organization such as this one. They do so much for the benefit of humanity—it is borderline impossible to be present there for any amount of time without beginning to have your most sincere desires of charity and selflessness start to rise up inside. I want to do more volunteer work for this organization after I graduate.*

Based on various sources (personal teaching experiences, a literature review, data analysis from this study), it appears that academic service-learning can be an effective pedagogy within the scholarship of teaching, learning, and engagement framework. Although there are always some difficulties and challenges, the benefits for students, faculty members, and the institution have potential to outweigh these struggles. It is clear that a well-designed service-learning project can be exciting, interesting, challenging, applicable, motivating, and rewarding for everyone involved.

## APPENDIX A Service-Learning Section of Syllabus

### Service-Learning Project and Presentation - 175 points

One of the objectives of the course is to give you some hands-on experience with compensation and benefit duties. You will choose a group with whom you will complete your project. You and your group members will choose an organization that has already agreed to have you come and work with them. Professionalism and an attitude of service are expected and will greatly benefit your ability to work with the organization and complete your project.

- *Project Proposal (10 points):* After receiving your assignment, you will have two weeks to meet with an organizational representative (e.g., the director) and write a project proposal. In the proposal you must a) describe the positions you will be evaluating, b) list information sources needed, c) list tasks that you must do to complete the project, d) set deadlines for these tasks, e) and provide any other information that may seem pertinent. This should be given to me for editing before presenting it to the community partner (it is important to do this quickly).
- *Project Report (100 points total – 40% community partner; 10% team members; 50% my evaluation):* Your project will result in a report that will be given to the instructor and then the organization. The report will include all pertinent information you have gathered through the project which will include but not be limited to a) the project proposal, b) detailed job evaluations of three or more positions, c) a list of salary survey websites with descriptions, d) a compensation and benefit comparison with similar non-profit and for-profit positions, e) recommended (with supporting evidence) compensation and benefits package (both full-time and part-time) for analyzed positions, and f) any other supporting information and paperwork produced that may be helpful for the organization. In my packet include any background information that may not be appropriate for the organization. This portfolio should be put into a professional notebook.
- *Reflective Essays (8 points each – 40 points total):* Reflective essays should include information about your service-learning experiences (approximately 2-pages double-spaced). Describe your experiences (good and bad), what you are learning, what you need/want to do with the projects, and how you are connecting the course content with your service-learning experiences. These can include how your philosophy of compensation and benefits is changing. Include information about your motivation, confidence levels, and more. You'll be turning in hard copies of five essays throughout the semester. Title them *Reflective Essay #1, 2, 3, 4, and 5* but keep them all in the same computer file. I will be collecting the electronic files at the end of the semester for research. These will be kept in confidence. We will talk more about methods of reflection during class.
- *Oral Reports in Class (10 points):* All groups will give a presentation (20-30 minutes) to the class at the end of the semester. The class and teacher will act as agency boards of directors to evaluate the quality of the project and presentation.
- *Present Report to Organization (15 points):* After reporting to the class and receiving and utilizing feedback, you will be expected to present your project to your community partners. This is a good time to thank the organization for allowing you to learn through serving and to determine whether their expectations of the project have been met.
- *Grading Criteria:* Group projects will be given a grade based on rigorous professional standards (i.e., acceptability as an HR report conducted within an organization). Your score will be based on many components of this project which include feedback from your community partners. As previously noted, group members will evaluate your participation on the basis of your contribution and ability to follow through in a timely manner.

## APPENDIX B Service-Learning Project Information

Course:	MGMT 4000: Compensation and Benefits Semester: Spring 2004
UVSC Center for Service and Learning Contact:	Center for Service and Learning Utah Valley State College 800 West University Parkway Orem, UT 84058 Phone: (801) 863-8681
Coordinating Faculty Member:	Susan R. Madsen, Associate Professor of Management Utah Valley State College, Business Management Department 800 West University Parkway, Mailcode 119 Orem, UT 84058 Phone: (801) 863-6176 Fax: (801) 863-7218 Email: madsensu@uvsc.edu
Course Description:	This course is designed to provide students with a solid understanding of the art of compensation practice and its role in promoting companies' competitive advantages. We will examine the context of compensation practice, the criteria used to compensate employees, compensation system design issues, employee benefits, and contemporary challenges that compensation professionals will face in the future. The course will require a service-learning project where students will work with an organization on a compensation and benefits project. Other teaching techniques include lecture, class discussions, small group activities or projects, case studies, videos, oral presentations, written assignments, and guest speakers.
Service-Learning Project Description:	One of the objectives of this course is to give students some hands-on experience with compensation and benefits. To do this student groups will work with organizational contacts to analyze (write job descriptions and task inventories) and evaluate (through a market analysis) three positions within your organization. The end result will be a presentation and notebook that will include a proposal (you will see this early in the project), job descriptions, task inventories, online research comparing this position with other similar non- and for-profit positions, and a final report which will include all of the materials and recommendations for improvement (if appropriate). At the end of the project the organization will receive one hard copy of the notebook and electronic copies of the materials if requested (also, if requested, an electronic file of the final presentation). This service-learning project should take the student between 20-30 hours to complete. The student will be at the worksite approximately 6-10 hours of the project. It is important to note that the job descriptions and task inventories can be useful in further compensation decisions, performance appraisal design, future training and development efforts, and for future recruiting and selection efforts.

Process: Students will self-select into groups of three (primarily dependent on like schedules). The director of United Way will give a presentation to this class on February 3<sup>rd</sup> which will include the information about each agency. Groups will then choose a community partner from a list of those who have already been contacted and have agreed to work with the students.

Students will be asked to call you the following week to schedule a time to meet with you at your site. During this initial visit, students will provide you with information about the project and ask you about specific positions you would like them to analyze and evaluate. Students will ask for any information you may have already compiled about the position (e.g., job description, task inventory, related forms that may provide insight into the responsibilities and tasks of the position). At this time, students will request a time that they can come back to begin the analyses. They will need to come back two or three times to collect (observations, interviews, past records) the needed information. They may also need to talk to you by phone or email to clarify information. Please help them feel valued and needed. They are anxious to “practice” being professional and want to give you something beneficial.

The students will be working on these projects for about six to eight weeks. They will need to be at your site for the initial appointment, observation and interviews, and the final presentation. They will do other work on their own time. They will provide you and me with drafts of specific sections (as they complete them) for editing and revisions. The 20 to 40 hours will include: coordination; on-site visits; outside research; group discussions and plans; compilation and writing of the proposal, task inventories, job description, results and recommendations; preparation for the presentation; and the final presentation.

Other Student Requirements: Professionalism and an attitude of service are expected from the students. This will greatly benefit their ability to work with your agency to complete their projects.

To begin, after the student initially meets with you, they will write a two-page project proposal which will describe the organization and the project. It will list information sources needed, tasks they will need to do to complete the project, deadlines for the tasks, and provide any other information that may seem pertinent. Students will also be required to write five reflective essays about their experiences, perceptions, acquired learning, and more. In addition, before presenting their projects to the organizations, students will present their projects to the class.

These projects will make up approximately a third of the student’s grade for the semester. Part of their service-learning grade will be your evaluation of their competence, professionalism, reliability, adaptability, and the overall end product.

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Susan R. Madsen is an associate professor of management from the School of Business at Utah Valley State College. She received the 2003 Civic Engagement Award and the 2005 Engaged Scholar Award from Utah Campus Compact. In addition to academic service-learning, her research interests include leadership, individual and organizational change, and faculty development. She has also been an independent organization development, change, and training and development consultant for profit, non-profit, and public organizations. Email: [madsensu@uvsc.edu](mailto:madsensu@uvsc.edu)