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Vol. 17 No. 2  
2013

*Journal of  
Higher Education  
Outreach  
& Engagement*

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a publication of the Office of the Vice President for Public Service & Outreach  
in collaboration with the Institute of Higher Education  
The University of Georgia

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# *Journal of Higher Education Outreach & Engagement*

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*Journal of Higher Education  
Outreach & Engagement*

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Volume 17, Number 2, 2013



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

I ..... From the Guest Editor's Desk

*Eric Mlyn*

*Duke Engage, Duke University*

*Amanda Moore McBride*

*Washington University in St. Louis*

## INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING

7 ..... Students Serving Abroad: A Framework for Inquiry

*Margaret Sherraden, Amy Bopp*

*University of Missouri-St. Louis*

*Benjamin J. Lough*

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

International service by students is gaining greater attention at colleges and universities around the world. Some research has examined the effects of international service for students, but relatively few studies have examined outcomes for host communities and sponsoring organizations, including colleges and universities. Beginning with an examination of theoretical and empirical research from the fields of international volunteerism, international service-learning, and international study abroad, this article proposes a framework for inquiry on international service programs. It suggests that differences in outcomes for students, host communities, and home colleges and universities are the result of variations in individual and institutional characteristics and service activities. Finally, the article considers implications for future research, including hypotheses and research designs to test differences across programs and educational institutions.

43 ..... The Intended and Unintended Consequences of International Service-Learning

*Robbin D. Crabtree*

*Fairfield University*

Previous research on service-learning in international contexts tends to focus on the benefits and outcomes for students and educational institutions. This essay is intended to provoke further examination of issues related to university-community engagement in global contexts, particularly in terms of the consequences for host communities. In order to explore complex issues surrounding international service-learning, the author offers a composite scenario in a series of snapshots gleaned from projects organized by U.S.-based organizations and universities in partnership with host country organizations and communities. Revealed are a variety of typical outcomes—intended and unintended, positive and negative—for students,

faculty, organizations and their staff, and the communities that host visiting service-learning teams. A framework for analysis is offered along with recommendations for ways to mitigate potential unintended negative consequences of international service-learning.

## 67..... Learning Outcomes Assessment: Extrapolating from Study Abroad to International Service-Learning

*Donald L. Rubin and Paul H. Matthews*

*University of Georgia*

For international service-learning to thrive, it must document student learning outcomes that accrue to participants. The approaches to international service-learning assessment must be compelling to a variety of stakeholders. Recent large-scale projects in study abroad learning outcomes assessment—including the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI)—offer precedent from which international service-learning assessment programs may draw. This article outlines five promising practices to guide international service-learning assessment activities: (1) focus on outcomes about learning; (2) employ multiple sources and methods for data collection; (3) invest in compiling credible comparison groups to build the case for a causal relationship between international service-learning and learning; (4) acquire data from multiple and diverse institutions and programs to better generalize and also to warrant conclusions about best program practices; and (5) acquire data from large samples of program participants to provide insights into under-represented groups and program sites.

## 87.....Alternative Break Programs: From Isolated Enthusiasm to Best Practices:The Haiti Compact

*Jill Piacitelli*

*Break Away*

*Molly Barwick*

*Indiana University*

*Elizabeth Doerr*

*Johns Hopkins University*

*Melody Porter*

*College of William & Mary*

*Shoshanna Sumka*

*American University*

Alternative break programs, which are short-term service-learning trips, immerse students in direct service and education, resulting in the creation of active citizens who think and act critically around the root causes of social issues. Over the last 20 years, domestic alternative breaks have effectively created strong community partnerships and fostered student development. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, universities around the United States were seeking opportunities to offer “hands on” aid, and the need for best practices to avoid potential pitfalls of international volunteerism became plainly apparent.



In response, a small group of alternative breaks professionals from five U.S. universities came together with Break Away (the national alternative breaks nonprofit organization), to form the Haiti Compact. The Compact developed best practices for international alternative breaks, allowing staff and students to overcome potential harm done to communities while contributing to student learning and engagement. This essay shares those practices and their application to work in Haiti.

111..... **Going Global: Re-Framing Service-Learning in an Interconnected World**

*Nuria Alonso García and Nicholas V. Longo  
Providence College*

This essay argues for the importance of re-framing international service-learning as global service-learning. This includes recognizing the entire “ecology of education,” the interconnected web of relationships in which learning can occur at home and abroad. It draws upon the experiences of developing a new program in global studies at Providence College that focuses on civic engagement with global and local communities, along with interviews and a focus group with majors in the program. The essay concludes with a call for using service-learning as a vehicle to educate global citizens not merely as a one-time experience, but rather as part of an integrated curricular process.

137..... **The Peace Corps and Higher Education: Finally the Envisioned Partnership?**

*Kevin F. F. Quigley  
George Mason University*

A number of structural and contextual changes underway suggests that now that the Peace Corps has begun its second half-century, it may be the opportune time for a broader and deeper strategic partnership with higher education along the lines that the Peace Corps founders’ envisioned. That partnership would involve higher education playing an expanded role in recruiting, training, and evaluating Peace Corps volunteers to supplement the more than 100 existing partnerships between the Peace Corps and higher education in graduate study.

**BOOK REVIEW**

153..... **International Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Research. Volume I: IUPUI Series on Service Learning Research.**

*Robert G. Bringle, Julie A. Hatcher, Steven G. Jones (Eds)*

*Review by Juliet Millican  
University of Brighton*



## **From the Desk of the Guest Editors**

**Eric Mlyn and Amanda Moore McBride**

**I**n April 2011, the Center for Social Development and the Gephardt Institute for Public Service at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and DukeEngage of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, convened a symposium at Washington University in St. Louis on international service and higher education in partnership with the Brookings Institution (a nonprofit organization that conducts research on policy issues), the Building Bridges Coalition (a consortium of organizations working to encourage international volunteering), and Service World (an agenda to expand international volunteer opportunities). The symposium reviewed the history and purposes of international service in higher education, focusing on effective service models with attention to scalability, cost-effectiveness, and impact. The symposium coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peace Corps, an independent United States government agency that supports international volunteering by U.S. citizens, which many college and university campuses celebrated in 2011. The challenge before the assembled practitioners and scholars was to respond to the growing thirst of students to move beyond the traditional study abroad paradigm and to work toward institutionalizing international service opportunities that benefit students and the communities that they serve.

We know that the number of students from the United States involved in civic engagement abroad is growing every year. This is part of two broader trends. The first is the increased globalization of U.S. higher education; in fact, it would be fair to say that international service is just one small part of this broader trend in which U.S. universities are opening satellite campuses in Asia and the Middle East, creating partnerships and collaborations with institutions across the globe, and sending more and more students around the world while simultaneously enrolling increasing numbers of international students in U.S. institutions. The second is the increased number of U.S. citizens who are volunteering abroad through governmental, faith-based, or volunteer-sending organization programs. These two trends together serve to propel the field of international service and underscore its importance.

Conference participants, who represented a wide range of U.S. institutions of higher education and volunteer-sending organizations, learned at the symposium that international service in higher

education takes many forms and is found across the wide range of institutions that make up the diverse landscape of U.S. higher education. International service spans curricular and co-curricular opportunities. Public universities, private universities, research universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges are all increasingly offering their students opportunities to participate in international service. Students may serve abroad through internships, individual service trips, or alternative break group projects. Students may also participate in credit-bearing international service-learning programs. International service is not discipline specific; opportunities can be found in technical and non-technical areas and programs, from the humanities to schools of engineering, from the arts to the sciences.

The issues that international service as a field of study confronts in the midst of this dynamic and exciting environment both internal and external to higher education have important implications for practice, policy, and research. And though colleges and universities articulate the practice and policies of, as well as research on, international service differently based in part on their unique roles and histories, all institutional types endeavor to foster cognitive and social development, global citizenship, critical thinking, and ethical grounding in their students through international service experiences.

This thematic issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* highlights six important contributions to the symposium's topic and to the growing body of literature about international service. In a piece that frames this volume and the field, Margaret Sherraden of the University of Missouri–St. Louis, Benjamin J. Lough of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Amy Bopp of the University of Missouri–St. Louis explore research from a variety of fields. They propose a framework for inquiry on international service programs, paying special attention to the program and institutional characteristics that might account for different types and degrees of program outcomes. Robbin Crabtree of Fairfield University offers an honest reflection on both the positive and negative impacts of international service on host countries. She poses questions inspired by scenarios from a variety of past international service-learning projects, focusing on an exploration of the outcomes—intended and unintended, positive and negative—for the communities that host U.S. student teams. Echoing the seminal warnings offered by Ivan Illich in *To Hell with Good Intentions*, Crabtree goes the extra step by offering a model to inform project design, implementation, and evaluation.

Donald Rubin and Paul Matthews of the University of Georgia remind readers that they do not have to reinvent the wheel in order to gather meaningful and useful data on student learning outcomes. Recent large-scale projects—including the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI)—offer precedent upon which international service-learning assessment programs may draw. A team of practitioners and scholars, including Jill Piacitelli of Break Away (a national organization that promotes Alternative Spring Breaks), Molly Barwick of Indiana University, Elizabeth Doerr of the University of Maryland, Melody Porter of the College of William and Mary, and Shoshanna Sumka of American University, offer guidelines for short-term service trips that emerge from the goodwill of students and institutions to respond to crises and natural disasters. From Providence College, Nuria Alonso García and Nicholas V. Longo offer a bold argument to reframe international service-learning as global service-learning, to connect the domestic to the international, and to integrate this pedagogy across the curriculum.

To conclude this issue, Kevin Quigley, president of the National Peace Corps Association and adjunct faculty member at the School of Public and International Affairs at George Mason University, offers provocative thoughts on how to realize something that was a vision over 50 years ago—to enhance the relationship between this iconic federal governmental program and the institutions that are featured in this volume.

We view the symposium and this issue of the *Journal* as small steps toward the goal of building this field of study with rigorous research and assessment. To continue building, a second symposium on this topic will be held at Northwestern University in October 2013. The symposium will address identified gaps in the field, advance models that maximize impacts for international service partners, and identify pedagogies most appropriate for the field of international service. While we watch with great excitement as this field comes of age, we also will seek to work with entities like the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to invest in research that will advance the goals of international service and higher education.

Finally, we should never underestimate the important contribution that international service makes to citizen diplomacy across the globe. As relations between countries become increasingly militarized and the United States extracts itself from two bloody

and costly wars, bringing the wisdom, energy, and goodwill of U.S. college and university students to those around the globe who may assume that all U.S. citizens carry guns is another benefit of the growth of international service as a field of study. We hope that in a small way this thematic issue contributes to the advancement of the field.

With warmest regards,

**Eric Mlyn**

DukeEngage

Duke University

**Amanda Moore McBride**

Washington University in St. Louis

# INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING





## **Students Serving Abroad: A Framework for Inquiry**

Margaret Sherraden, Benjamin J. Lough, and Amy Bopp

### **Abstract**

International service by students is gaining greater attention at colleges and universities around the world. Some research has examined the effects of international service for students, but relatively few studies have examined outcomes for host communities and sponsoring organizations, including colleges and universities. Beginning with an examination of theoretical and empirical research from the fields of international volunteerism, international service-learning, and international study abroad, this article proposes a framework for inquiry on international service programs. It suggests that differences in outcomes for students, host communities, and home colleges and universities are the result of variations in individual and institutional characteristics and service activities. Finally, the article considers implications for future research, including hypotheses and research designs to test differences across programs and educational institutions.

### **Introduction**

**G**rowing numbers of students are engaging in international service. Although precise data on students serving abroad are unavailable, anecdotal evidence, along with an upward trend in study abroad programs more generally, suggests substantial growth. In 2010, for instance, more than 270,000 United States college and university students studied in another country, a four-fold increase since the late 1980s (*Chalou & Gliozzo, 2011; Institute of International Education, 2011*). Despite the increasing research attention on students serving abroad, empirical evidence on numbers, scope, types, and outcomes is only beginning to emerge (*Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011*).

The focus of this essay is on the outcomes of international service by students. We propose a conceptual approach and empirical evidence for understanding factors that shape outcomes for student participants, sponsoring institutions, and host communities. The essay begins with a discussion of the global context and a schematic depiction of programs that send students abroad for service. Next, a conceptual model and research evidence for understanding how individual and institutional factors affect outcomes of service

is presented. Finally, implications are addressed for international service by students along with key research questions and research designs to test differences in outcomes across programs.

## **Rise of Global Education**

In a global world, it is important to know how to live and work with people from widely diverse backgrounds. To help prepare students for work and life in what one scholar has called a “disordered, messy, and confusing” world, colleges and universities have a growing interest in exposing students to different cultures and diverse social, economic, and political systems (Nolan, 2009, p. 269; see also Latta, Faucher, Brown, & Bradshaw, 2011). In 2006, for example, approximately 40% of higher education institutions made specific reference to international or global education in their mission statements—up from 28% in 2001 (Green, Luu, & Burris, 2008).

Scholars and practitioners suggest that it is important for students to develop global or intercultural competence, or the “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). Teaching global competence introduces an applied dimension to learning that aims to develop “tacit knowledge” that cannot be taught directly through traditional academic pursuits. Rather, it is acquired by “everyday experiences” that teach people how to solve practical problems (Wagner & Sternberg, 1985). Depending on the type of experience, level of immersion, and other key factors, students may gain intercultural skills relatively quickly in international service programs.

Despite the potential benefits, the idea of students serving abroad is controversial. On one hand, proponents suggest that service abroad in higher education may contribute to student learning, personal connections to others, intercultural skills, global understanding, civic engagement, and also possibly to tangible contributions to people’s well-being (Braskamp, 2008; Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992; Kiely, 2004; Parker & Dautoff, 2007). Moreover, service abroad by students may help build the international competence and reputations of universities.

On the other hand, skeptics raise questions of efficiency, environmental impact, and use of developing countries as “global playgrounds” for privileged students to engage in exploitative third world or poverty tourism (Gössling, Hall, & Scott, 2009; Simpson, 2004; Smith & Laurie, 2011, p. 555) without having to confront the “harshest inequities of north-south relations” (Grusky, 2000, p. 861). Among the most problematic objections is that international service does

not always challenge students to understand global realities, and may, in fact, offer little benefit—perhaps even harm—to host communities. Twenty years ago in Mexico, Ivan Illich put it bluntly to a group of prospective North American volunteers:

Not only is there a gulf between what you have and what others have which is much greater than the one existing between you and the poor in your own country, but there is also a gulf between what you feel and what the Mexican people feel that is incomparably greater. (1990, p. 318)

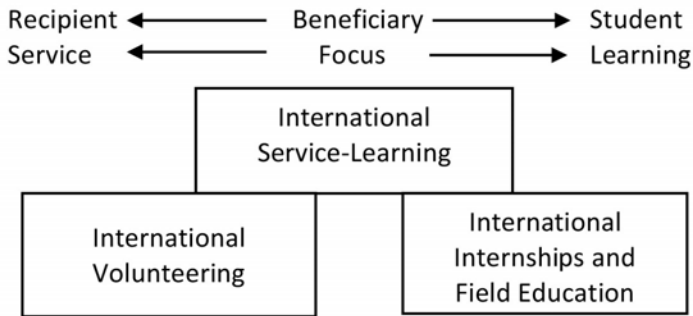
Although the field lacks comprehensive data on students in international service, the literature suggests that international volunteers tend to be young, educated, affluent, and White (*Kiely, 2004; Lough, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004*). Older adults, people with low incomes, ethnic and racial minorities, people with disabilities, and those who cannot take time off work or school are less likely to serve internationally (*McBride & Lough, 2007*). In U.S. study abroad programs, only 4.2% of participants are African American and only 6% are Latino (*Picard, Bernardino, & Ehigiator, 2009*). These disparities in participation require greater scrutiny.

## International Service in Higher Education

International service programs in higher education are often integrated into degree programs. A wide array of models are represented, including international volunteering, service-learning, field education, and internships (*Bringle & Hatcher, 2011*). In this article, the term “universities” is used inclusively to refer to community colleges, four-year colleges, tertiary vocational schools, universities, and other postsecondary educational institutions.

### Types of programs.

International service by students takes several forms (*Stanton, 1987*). Furco (1996) developed a typology illustrating a continuum of service programs by beneficiary (recipient/student) and focus (service/learning). An adapted version of Furco’s model illustrates the continuum of international service programs, which range from international volunteering to international internships and field education (1996). (See Figure 1; see also *Sigmon, 1979*).



**Figure 1. A Continuum of International Service Programs**

*Adapted from "Service-learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education," by A. Furco, 1996, in *Expanding Boundaries: Service and Learning*, ed. B. Taylor, Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service, p. 10.*

International service programs in higher education tend toward the right-hand side of the continuum, emphasizing student learning more than service to recipients. International internships and field education are usually part of a degree program (e.g., health, education, social work); student learning is the primary objective. At the other end of the continuum, volunteer service emphasizes service to recipients more than student learning. This essay refers to these as international volunteer service programs. This representation is not quite adequate because in either extreme the other party derives some benefit. For example, when students participate in international volunteering, they may derive benefits, and in international internships, service recipients may derive benefits. The question is whether the programs are set up with one or the other as a primary objective. In international service-learning programs, located in the middle of the continuum, the focus is reciprocal and aims for "connective" learning and growth by both (Parker & Dautoff, 2007, p. 41).

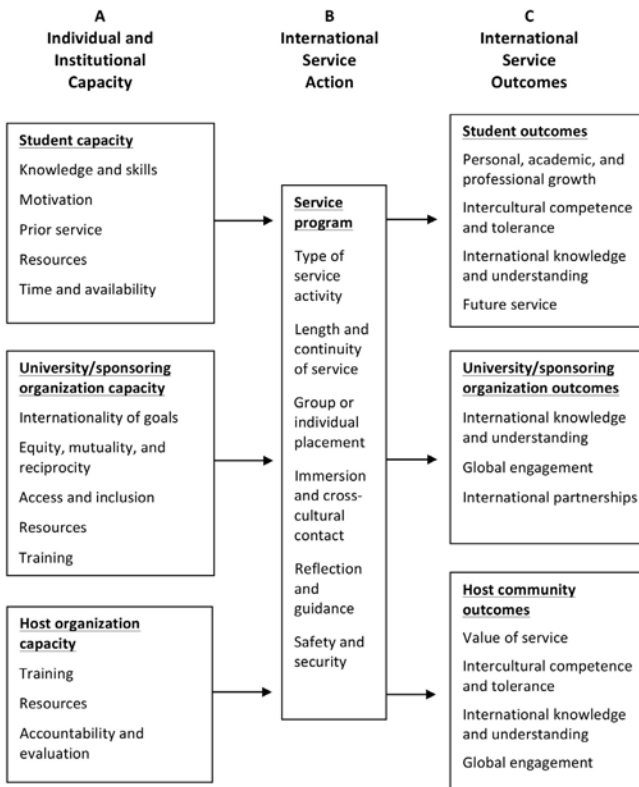
Most research on international service by students focuses on the student learning side of the continuum, including service-based internships and field education. Research on international volunteering by students, such as alternative spring break programs, service while studying abroad, and the service "gap year" (in which participants take a break from school or work to perform service) have received comparatively little attention (Jones, 2004).

The focus of this essay is on international service programs of any duration that fall on the middle to left of the continuum (Figure 1). However, because the empirical evidence is relatively scarce, this essay draws from all three types of student service, including international service-learning, international internships and field placements, and international volunteering. When evidence is

lacking in these categories, the essay also turns to evidence from (non-student) international service and study abroad programs for indications of possible relationships.

## A Conceptual Model of International Service in Higher Education

Based on a review of existing evidence, and borrowing from a model of international volunteer service (*Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, & Sherraden, 2001; Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008*), this essay develops a conceptual model that identifies key categories and relationships between these categories. It covers individual factors and institutional factors that come together in the international service action and its outcomes for students, sponsoring organizations, and host communities. This is not simply an intellectual exercise; it aims to identify directions for future research that will lead to better understanding of how to optimize international service outcomes among students (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Conceptual Model: Impact of Students Serving Abroad**

*Adapted from "Effects of International Volunteering and Service: Individual and Institutional Predictors," by M. S. Sherraden, B. J. Lough, and A. M. McBride, 2008, Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 19(4), p. 397.*

This review has some limitations. Occasionally, as mentioned above, when evidence is lacking from international student service programs specifically, the article cites evidence from studies of international volunteer service programs (which tend to recruit mostly young people), or from research on study abroad when it includes forms of service. Further, this article covers only research published in English.

## **Student Capacity**

A variety of individual factors affect international service outcomes, including knowledge and skills (including foreign language skills), motivation, prior service experience, resources, and time and availability. The preponderance of evidence cited here are findings from international service generally; there is little direct evidence from student programs.

### **Knowledge and skills.**

Students' knowledge and skills affect the outcomes of service, though the significance of these relationships depends on project goals. Some service projects, such as building latrines, have low skill requirements but demand enthusiasm, energy, and goodwill (Thomas, 2001); others require technical knowledge and expertise. In some humanitarian aid projects, for example, unskilled student volunteers may be a liability (Dumélie, Kunze, Pankhurst, Potter, & Van Brunaene, 2006). Foreign language skills, for example, may be crucial in some sites. Students' capacity to learn a foreign language is associated with other intercultural learning outcomes, such as intercultural communication and cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001).

### **Motivation.**

It is likely that individual motivations, attitudes, and expectations affect the likelihood of service and its outcomes (Carson, 1999; Hoff, 2008). For example, students focused on personal benefit may invest less in contributing to host communities than students whose primary motivation is helping others (Green et al., 2008; Rehberg, 2005).

### **Prior service experience.**

Prior service (domestic or international) may increase "learning readiness" and function as a precursor to change (Rehberg, 2005), although programs deliberately may select students with no experience in order to bolster their growth and learning. Knowledge and skills gained from prior international experience, perhaps

especially foreign language skills, may reduce culture shock, stress, and intense emotions (*Gran, 2006; Taylor, 1994*). Prior service may also reduce objections by family and peers, which researchers identify as barriers to service abroad (*Gaskin, 2004; Sharma & Bell, 2002*).

### **Student resources.**

Students often have to contribute financial resources (e.g., expenses, fees) in order to participate in service abroad. Although data is lacking on socioeconomic background of students engaging in international service programs, proximate measures are used from research on study abroad. Among students entering college who indicated they “were unsure about or don’t want to study abroad,” almost one-third said that cost was the primary reason for their uncertainty or lack of interest (*Green et al., 2008*). Cost is likely to play a similar role for service-learning and international service.

### **Time and availability.**

People also have different time constraints. Students who are employed, building careers, or raising families face many barriers to participation in service abroad (*McBride & Lough, 2007*), whereas retirees or unemployed youth may have more flexibility.

## **University and Sponsoring Organization Capacity**

Institutional factors also play an important role in service outcomes (*Meier, 2006*), and may in some cases compensate for individual constraints. Universities and their sponsoring organization partners set the stage for participation in international service programs. The focus here is on mid-range factors rather than macro-level factors, such as the state of the economy, which are less amenable to policy and program change. Evidence comes from diverse studies, including those focused on students.

Research on sponsoring organization partners is included because many colleges and universities collaborate with governmental, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations to offer international service programs for students (*Chisholm, 2003; Haski-Leventhal, Meijs, & Hustinx, 2010; Torres, Skillicorn, & Nelson, 2011*). International sponsoring organizations support short- and long-term international service opportunities that offer academic credit (e.g., International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership, as well as many colleges and universities) and others that do not offer credit (e.g., Amigos de Las Americas, Cross-Cultural Solutions), although students may sometimes arrange for credit through their own university (*Whalen, 2008*). Networks and consortia, such as the

Building Bridges Coalition and NAFSA: Association of International Educators in the United States, link universities with other national and international partners in order to reduce costs, facilitate coordination and cross-cultural learning, and possibly attract financial resources (*Frost & Raby, 2009*).

### **Internationality of goals.**

The priorities of colleges and universities and their organizational partners shape international service programs. Scholars suggest that international service will have the greatest impact when the sponsoring institutions infuse and integrate international service into their mission, with global partnerships as institutional priorities (*Bok, 2006; Brustein, 2009; Deardorff, 2009*). As Powell and Bratović (*2007*) write, “you get the impact you program for” (*p. 42*). International internships, foreign language training, international and immigrant students, faculty with international research and teaching interests, and extracurricular activities of a global nature will help prepare students for service abroad (*Brustein, 2009, p. 250; Frost & Raby, 2009*).

Effectiveness of international service programs also may be higher when campus leadership, as well as faculty members and staff members across all units on campus, is part of the vision, and where these parties “perceive internationalization as *adding value* to what they do” (*Brustein, 2009, p. 250*). Engaged faculty may be a critical component of successful international service programs (*Kiely, 2004; Peterson, 2002*). Unfortunately, the academy often does not provide strong incentives or rewards to faculty members who organize and implement international service placements (*Nolan, 2009*).

### **Equity, reciprocity, and mutuality.**

Although mission and goals are key factors in shaping international service programs, considerable research from international service-learning studies indicates the importance of joint decision making. When host communities and organizations have a genuine voice and role in program evolution, benefits are more likely to accrue to host communities (*Camacho, 2004; McCabe, 2004; Simonelli, Earle, & Story, 2004; Tilley-Lubbs, 2009*). Shared risk and ownership, personal engagement in service, and equitable exchange lead to service programs that address genuine need (*Beilke, 2005; Porter & Monard, 2001*). Although true partnerships take time, negotiation, and nurturing (*Cuban & Anderson, 2007*), true partnerships among sponsoring organizations, students, and hosts may allow for “greater individual understanding of various life experiences



as well as alteration of rigid social systems over time” (Henry & Breyfogle, 2006, p. 34).

Reciprocity may contribute to project success; further, it teaches students how to work “with” rather than work “for” communities (Crabtree, 1998, 2008; Pusch & Merrill, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Reciprocal service provides “a learning experience that addresses power inequities between student and served” (Camacho, 2004, p. 31), which may contribute to student learning. One reason for this may be that direct personal contact within reciprocal relationships tends to reduce prejudice (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

### **Access and inclusion.**

A variety of program factors, such as cost, information, procedures, program eligibility, and lack of social protections, may explain why disadvantaged students are less likely to participate in international service (Gaskin, 2004; Gran, 2006; Jones, 2004), although few international service-learning studies have addressed this topic. The considerable cost of international service acts as a key barrier to serving abroad (Currier, Lucas, & Arnault, 2009). Relatively little financial aid is available, and it rarely covers the full cost (Frost & Raby, 2009). Health coverage may also be an issue for some students (Ludlam & Hirschhoff, 2007). Remuneration or compensation, in the form of stipends, academic credit, recognition, or other incentives, may generate a more diverse participant pool (Moskwiak, 2006). A study of community college students finds many are unaware of existing international service opportunities, suggesting that more information may generate more diverse participation (Frost & Raby, 2009). Moreover, participant diversity may also affect service outcomes: Research suggests that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may benefit more and may offer more to host communities (Schröer, 2003; Sharma & Bell, 2002).

### **Institutional resources.**

The ability to engage students in international service and operate effective programs depends on resource levels, although studies that document this connection are lacking. Generally, financially constrained institutions have fewer resources to invest in international service compared to well-endowed universities with wealthy donors. Resource levels have many implications, including duration of service abroad. Short-term programs constitute the vast majority (90%) of community college international service programs (Frost & Raby, 2009).

## **Training.**

Training may affect outcomes for students, host communities, and sponsoring institutions, according to several international service-learning studies (*Lattanzi & Pechak, 2011; Paige, 1993; Stachowski & Visconti, 1997*). Curricular content may include development theory, country history and context, cultural competency, language training, and discipline-specific training relevant to the country and place where service occurs. The extent and intensity of training ranges from superficial web-based tutorials or airport-based pre-departure preparation to intensive semester-long courses and experiential learning.

Training may take place prior to, during, or after service. Studies across different types of international service programs find that pre-departure training is linked to acquisition of knowledge, intercultural awareness, and language (*Dolby, 2004; Martin, 1989; Simonelli et al., 2004; Thomlison, 1991*). Qualitative research on a study abroad program finds that undergraduate students who engage in “honest self-reflection” about their assumptions and goals prior to departure develop a more “sensitive worldview rather than brazen interest in consumerism and personal success” (*Zemach-Bersin, 2009, p. 318*).

## **Host Organization Capacity**

Much less research across all types of international service focuses on the importance of host organization capacity, and the studies that exist tend to focus on training, resources, and evaluation and accountability. Other factors, such as the organization’s prior experience hosting international volunteers, are likely to make a difference, but the field lacks evidence.

## **Training and orientation.**

The degree to which host communities are prepared for student placements is likely to have a significant effect on the success of the international service program (*Crabtree, 2008*). Nonetheless, programs tend to focus on preparing students for experience abroad rather than preparing communities for an influx of students, whose attitudes and behaviors may differ from those of community residents (*Graham, MazemboMavungu, & Perold, 2011; Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, & Koehn, 2009*). In a study assessing host community preparedness, host community representatives identify several factors that maximize community benefits, including adequate staff support, awareness of volunteer limitations, and a

strong connection between community members and the local organization (Irie, Daniel, Cheplick, & Philips, 2010). Tryon et al. (2008) find that short-term service-learning placements in 68 community organizations had limited success in part because host staff members were not prepared to train and supervise students. The implications are important. Increased understanding of cultural differences on the part of community members as well as students could mitigate potential disagreements among all parties (Lough, McBride, Sherraden, & O'Hara, 2011).

### **Resources.**

Although host communities do not usually bear the full costs of volunteer service, they often assume at least some of the costs associated with project monitoring and supervision, as well as orientation, language training, housing, healthcare, transportation, and other support (*Structure of Operational Support*, 1999; Tryon et al., 2008). Organizations vary in their capacity to respond (Graham et al., 2011), and many rely on local residents and other local private and public organizations to help absorb the costs. In one study of short-term volunteering, host organization staff talked during in-depth interviews about the time it takes to facilitate and integrate the volunteers in the organization (Lough et al., 2011).

### **Accountability and evaluation.**

Positive outcomes are more likely when international service programs are meaningful and responsive to both students and community residents (Dharamsi et al., 2010; Irie et al., 2010; Lough, 2011). Communities typically exercise relatively little control over the service itself. For example, they frequently have no role in allocating resources and selecting students for service; in some cases, they may not be involved in selecting the project (Graham et al., 2011; Lough et al., 2011). Lack of "voice" in service design and evaluation by communities may contribute to service models that are paternalistic or even imperialistic (Grusky, 2000; Roberts, 2004; Wehbi, 2009), and are often associated with programs originating in the global North (Engel, 2006; Illich, 1990; Simpson, 2004). In contrast, with greater accountability, students do not act as managers and experts, but as learners and team members, thereby encouraging mutual learning and reciprocity, which may minimize paternalism and reduce competition (Rockcliffe, 2005).

## International Service Action

Individual and institutional factors come together to help shape international service action—what volunteers do in a service placement. This includes characteristics of the service activity, type of reflection, duration, level of continuity, type of placement (group or individual), and level of immersion and cross-cultural contact.

### Type of service activity.

Although no comprehensive assessments of international service-learning activities have been conducted, studies of international service overall suggest that students are engaged in a broad range of activities. For instance, a United Kingdom study of “gap-year” programs, in which students take a break of months or years from formal education or work (*Jones, 2004*), suggests that the most common types of activities performed by participants are community-based work (37%), teaching (15%), and conservation and environment (15%). Another study of 103 international service programs indicates that the main activities (not mutually exclusive) are educational services (85%), human and social services (80%), community development (75%), and environmental protection (73%; *McBride, Benítez, & Sherraden, 2003*). In a nationally representative survey, U.S. volunteers serving abroad report the following activities: general labor (33%), mentoring youth (29%), providing medical or protective services (23%), or teaching (22%; *Lough, 2010*).

### Duration and continuity.

Programs may be short term (less than an academic term), medium term (an academic term), or long term (an academic year or more), and also vary by number of hours spent in service (*Bringle & Tonkin, 2004*). Some studies find an association between program duration and intercultural skills, intercultural development, and cross-cultural competence (*Hoff, 2008; Reiman, Sprinthall, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1997*) and study abroad programs (*Akande & Slawson, 2000; Dwyer, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2003; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004; Zorn, 1996*). Other studies find positive outcomes even among short programs (*Jones, 2005; Tammy, 2005*). One academic semester may be adequate for achieving measurable progress in intercultural competence, according to one study (*Myers-Lipton, 1996*), and even shorter term programs of a few weeks may have positive effects on personal and professional growth (*Haloburdo & Thompson, 1998; Walsh & DeJoseph, 2003*) and

cultural sensitivity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006). Medina-López-Portillo (2004) finds little difference in intercultural sensitivity of students as the result of a short-term (7-week) or medium-term (16-week) program in Mexico.

The benefits of short-term programs to host organizations and communities are less clear. Long-term international service placements (not specifically students) have more community development potential (White & Cliffe, 2000) because they have greater potential for exchange of technical skills, knowledge, and experience (Devereux, 2006; Dumélie et al., 2006), and volunteers have more time to learn about and become trusted by community members. One study finds that some shortcomings of short-term placements may be overcome by carefully coordinated placements that ensure continuity of service over time (Wood, Banks, Galiardi, Koehn, & Schroeder, 2011).

### **Group or individual placements.**

Individual versus group placements also may lead to different outcomes. Individual placements may encourage more intense student-host interaction, but require more resources. Group placements offer increased economies of scale that may result in more hours of service. However, group placements may inhibit development of relationships with local hosts and reduce cultural immersion, meaningful contact, and opportunity for students to learn language and customs (Citron, 2002; Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008; Sherraden, Stringham, Sow, & McBride, 2006). This may be a significant outcome if cultural immersion leads to greater effectiveness. In other words, students in a group placement may be able to make noteworthy tangible contributions (e.g., build a school or house), but students and local residents may gain less in cross-cultural understanding (Amir & Garti, 1977).

### **Immersion and cross-cultural contact.**

Cross-cultural contact, especially prolonged immersion, including living, working, or studying abroad with local people, is associated with increases in intercultural competence and cross-cultural skills (Battersby, 2002; Engle & Engle, 2003). Immersion experiences in which individuals report experiencing “culture shock” or “cultural disequilibrium” may be especially influential because they signal challenges to previous beliefs and lead to change (Chang, Chen, Huang, & Yuan, 2011; Taylor, 1994; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). The degree of cultural disequilibrium that

students experience depends partly on the intensity of contact with a different culture (Mezirow, 2000).

Service activities can be structured to increase opportunities for cross-cultural contact. Home stays, multi-national groups, and students paired with local workers may increase cross-cultural contact in service abroad. “Embeddedness” (Bringle & Tonkin, 2004) allows for immersion that anthropologists say is necessary for deeper understanding of another culture (Geertz, 1983). This may encourage heightened awareness of cultural norms and community needs among students, improve language development, and provide psychological support to local residents in high-conflict or oppressed areas (Wilkinson, 1998). Immersion may lead to “genuine, fair and respectful reciprocal relations” that form the foundation for local development (Devereux, 2006, p. 18), although in some situations, immersion goals may be moderated by safety considerations.

### **Reflection.**

Reflection is a core feature of service-learning in particular, may occur during and after service (Cushner, 2009; Kiely, 2004; Peterson, 2002), and may be organized by community members, professors, local staff, mentors, and peers (Frost & Raby, 2009, p. 181). Reflection contributes to psychological growth and development of critical thinking skills (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Hoff, 2008; Reiman et al., 1997). Making the connection between individual and contextual factors helps students understand and engage in a transformative learning process (Kiely, 2005); it also helps them gain understanding of themselves and their position in society, and form connections to and relations with the host community (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

Consistent with transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000), strong emotions encourage critical reflection (Taylor, 1994). When international service leads to cultural disequilibrium accompanied by guided reflection, “culture shock” may turn into cultural learning (Bennett, 2008). For example, international volunteers report that they often experience a sense of guilt at their first encounter with extreme poverty, which, when they are able to reflect on it, leads to constructive “life altering” and “transforming experiences” (Abram, Slosar, & Walls, 2005; see also Camacho, 2004) and may increase intercultural understanding and decrease prejudice (Reiman et al., 1997). Moreover, studies assert that reflection assists with cultural adaptation and sensitivity (Bacon, 2002; Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Williams, 2005).

## **Safety and security.**

Safety and security matter to students and their families (Ludlam & Hirschhoff, 2007). Risk management plans by international service programs and host communities can affect service outcomes (Irie et al., 2010). In addition to considering the safety and security of students, Pechak and Thompson (2009) suggest that risk management measures should also be applied to host communities in order to avoid unintended harm to host organization partners and their constituents.

## **Student Outcomes**

Outcomes for students from service abroad include personal and professional growth, cross-cultural and international skills, intercultural sensitivity and tolerance, international understanding and global vision, and increased future service at home and abroad.

### **Personal, academic, and professional growth.**

Many studies document personal growth and transformation (Chang et al., 2011; Kiely, 2004, 2011; Pyle, 1981), as well as knowledge and skills from study and service abroad. Nursing students, for example, who served abroad in acute medical and community care displayed higher cognitive growth than non-participating students in a quasi-experimental study (Zorn, Ponick, & Peck, 1995). In one quasi-experimental study, service-learning students gained autonomy, interdependence, and direction for future life plans compared to students who had signed up for service-learning but dropped out due to other commitments (Pyle, 1981). Students studying abroad also report greater confidence about language skills compared to those remaining on campus (Cubillos, Chieffo, & Fan, 2008). Student teachers on Navajo reservations and in international placements implemented the cultural values they had observed to create lessons that related to their students' ethics, beliefs, and experiences (Stachowski, Richardson, & Henderson, 2003). In contrast, some research suggests that significant time away from the classroom in service may negatively affect student learning (Hironimus-Wendt & Lovell-Troy, 1999), although more research is needed.

Skills gained in international service may improve employability and future job success, according to some studies (Cook & Jackson, 2006; Institute for Volunteering Research, 2004). Career directions also may change as a result of international service. Service-learning alumni reported that they redefined their ideas about helping others as a result of their participation (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). In addition to gaining clinical skills, medical



students serving abroad are more inclined to work in public health or primary and community healthcare for underserved populations (Gupta, Wells, Horwitz, Bia, & Barry, 1999; Haq et al., 2000). Medical students who completed an international elective abroad became more interested in working with underserved multicultural populations in their home communities, and were more likely to care for immigrant patients and those on public assistance (Godkin & Savageau, 2003; Gupta et al., 1999).

### **Intercultural competence and tolerance.**

Students with experience in other countries learn how to live in a variety of local and international contexts (Nussbaum, 1997). Outcomes include changes in attitude, such as more intercultural sensitivity and an increase in students' appreciation for others' points of view (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). Program alumni in another international service-learning program developed empathy for people from other countries (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004).

One of the ways that students may become sensitized to differences is through the experience of being a minority (Camacho, 2004; Chang et al., 2011; Merryfield, 2000). For instance, a study of 80 teacher educators finds that White teachers—who gained “first-hand understandings of what it means to be marginalized, to be a victim of stereotypes and prejudice, and how this might affect people”—were significantly more likely to report impact of living abroad than teachers of color who had experienced marginalization previously at home (Cushner, 2009, p. 165). Nonetheless, studies on international service programs are lacking. White students working with migrant workers in Mexico experienced feelings of otherness and feeling “like a minority,” while Chicano and Hispanic students seemed to relate more to the workers' struggles (Camacho, 2004, p. 38). Students also explored their feelings of privilege and sought to understand the workers' situations through an empathic lens.

Reciprocity and guided reflection may be critical to positive gains in intercultural competence (Lough, 2011); when these factors are absent, the service experience actually may “lock in prejudices and ethnocentric views” (Savicki, 2008, p. 76). This may lead to decreased tolerance, lack of cross-cultural understanding, and an inaccurate grasp of the causes and consequences of global poverty (Grusky, 2000; Simpson, 2004).



## **International knowledge and understanding.**

Firsthand experiences increase students' understanding of conditions in other parts of the world and how countries interrelate, and expand their worldview. For example, in a quasi-experimental study, students in international service-learning displayed greater increases in international understanding than other students, including a group that was engaged in local community service (*Myers-Lipton, 1996*). International service is associated with increased global-mindedness and cultural, social, political, and economic awareness (*McBride, Lough, & Sherraden, 2012*), as well as a greater understanding of complex global relationships (*DeDee & Stewart, 2003*).

Students in study abroad programs show greater awareness of global realities, interconnectedness, and understanding of their privileges (*Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004*). An early pre-post-test study (*Marion, 1974*) finds that students became more realistic yet less positive about the host country as a result of study abroad, although outcomes varied by number of countries visited, time spent in residents' homes, language skills, and views prior to the program.

Change in worldview may present challenges when students return home. Kiely (*2004, p. 16*) suggests that students struggle with balancing their "emerging global consciousness" with mainstream norms and the opinions of loved ones. Although there is little research on re-entry, many researchers and practitioners advocate for more attention to the process.

## **Future service.**

International service tends to motivate students to continue to engage in volunteer service when they return home. For instance, social work students engaged in service-learning demonstrated stronger beliefs in their ability and responsibility to make a difference in the world (*Ericson, 2011*). Qualitative research on short-term service-learning reveals deeper understanding of societal issues and an enhanced desire to work for social change among students (*Monard-Weissman, 2003*). Even short "alternative spring break" experiences lead to an expressed desire to give back after returning home (*Porter & Monard, 2001*).

## **University/Sponsoring Organization Outcomes**

In addition to the benefits to students who serve abroad, international service placements may also affect the sponsoring

institution or university, although, overall, there is little research evidence (*Annette, 2003*).

### **Interest in international issues.**

Universities where large numbers of students serve abroad may increase overall interest in international issues on campus, and possibly have a multiplier effect even among non-participating students. There is some evidence that peers of international service-learners may develop broader vision. In one study, for example, peers of students who served abroad developed greater interest in service-related activities, and more knowledge of social and cultural issues (*Johnson, 2009*).

### **Global engagement.**

Research on international volunteer sponsoring organizations suggests an expanded international profile and capacity to work effectively cross-nationally and globally (*Machin, 2008; Sherraden & Benítez, 2003*). The same might be true for universities, placing them in an improved position for bilateral and multilateral collaboration, and contributing to institutional capacity to build global competence and respond to pressing global issues. However, to date there is little empirical data to support these claims.

### **International partnerships.**

As universities engage with partners in host countries, they gain relationships that, over time, may expand the scope of faculty research activities, provide more diverse academic programs, expand educational options that appeal to students, and stimulate the “cross-fertilization of ideas” and research (*Chisholm, 2003, p. 260; see also Lin, 2010*).

## **Host Community Outcomes**

The starting point for university-based international service programs is student learning, but there is increasing recognition that outcomes for host communities are equally important (*Crabtree, 2008; Tonkin, 2011*). Unfortunately, there is less research on outcomes for host communities than outcomes for students (*Bringle & Tonkin, 2004; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004*).

A handful of studies on international service by students and others suggest possible outcomes for host communities. For several reasons, existing research has not paid enough attention to results for host communities (*Irie et al., 2010*). Evaluating host community

outcomes is complex. Host organizations may avoid researchers' questions or feel compelled to respond favorably for fear of losing assistance associated with students in service. In a study aimed at assessing the effects of alternative spring break programs on host communities, for example, Schroeder and colleagues (2009) discovered that respondents focused on volunteer in-kind and financial contributions, and evaded questions about negative effects.

### **Tangible resources.**

International service by students provides host communities with human capital, and sometimes with monetary and other resources. In one study, host organization staff members claimed that international volunteers help fill gaps in staffing and bring additional financial and in-kind resources (*Keino, Torrie, Hausafus, & Trost, 2010*). In a study of short-term domestic and international service-learning, students provided financial and in-kind resources that would not otherwise be available to the community (*Irie et al., 2010*).

Although they make tangible contributions, international service programs often require resources in time and money from host communities (*Graham et al., 2011; Grusky, 2000; Tryon et al., 2008*). Comparing the cost of sending service-learning students to the estimated value to the community, Aaron Dorfman (2010) asks whether it is worth it. Using "back-of-the-envelope math," Dorfman calculates that students participating in an alternative spring break spend about 25 hours engaged in manual labor, worth approximately \$5 to \$6 per hour: "That's something like \$150 worth of labor (assuming a Jewish college student from the University of Michigan or Yeshiva University can work as productively as an indigenous peasant farmer—a dubious proposition at best)" (2010), compared to average direct costs of around \$1,800.

### **Capacity building.**

Interviews with 30 staff members in organizations that host short-term international volunteers indicate that participants build organizational capacity by supplying "extra hands," providing technical and professional skills, contributing tangible resources, and enhancing intercultural understanding (*Lough et al., 2011*). International volunteers report helping with service delivery, management, planning, and marketing as well as attracting funding, networks of support, and opportunities for collaboration (*Jester & Thyer, 2007; McGehee & Santos, 2005*).

## **Intercultural competence, tolerance, international knowledge, and global engagement.**

Research on international service suggests that host organizations and community members may gain intercultural competence, international knowledge, and global awareness (Powell & Bratović, 2007; Sherraden & Benítez, 2003). Positive interaction among people from different countries and cultures may add to residents' intercultural knowledge and skills, and increase tolerance (Fantini, 2007). Conversely, intercultural tensions could be exacerbated when programs are poorly run and are not monitored, leading to events such as students committing indiscretions or crimes. International service programs may also introduce to the community a positive model of global civic engagement, expand international social networks, and leverage and attract resources and recognition from international donors and others (Comhlámh, 2007; Sherraden et al., 2008). However, they also could add to emigration, with potential negative and positive effects (e.g., remittances, family separation, brain drain). Little research has addressed the association between emigration and international service.

## **Summary and Implications**

International service programs in higher education include volunteer programs, service-learning, and professional internships and field education. Colleges and universities sponsor international service alone or jointly in consortiums, or they may contract other nonprofit and for-profit entities to facilitate international service placements. International service is receiving growing attention for its potential contributions to student learning, internationalization of higher education, and host community well-being (McBride & Mlyn, 2011; Van Danen, 2001).

Overall, however, the state of knowledge about international student service is limited (Bringle, Hatcher, & Williams, 2011; Kiely & Hartman, 2011). Put simply, researchers do not have comprehensive data on numbers of programs and participants, or on types of service, such as performing internships and field placements, service-learning, and service only (e.g., alternative spring break, summer service). Moreover, data are not available that capture finer distinctions, such as global figures on variation in service duration, service that receives academic credit, destinations, project types, and other features of service programs.

Existing research points to a range of factors that shape international service action and service outcomes (see Figure 2),

although this review of the evidence suggests that much remains to be learned. Other factors may be important as well, but are not included because this model includes only those factors cited in the research literature on international service.

Individual and institutional capacity shape service action. Studies of international service indicate that student capacity to participate in service is likely to be important, although more research is needed specifically on students in service. University and sending organization capacity to sponsor, implement, and evaluate programs suggests that reciprocity, development of mutually agreed-upon goals and structure, and training for service help shape the nature of service action. However, studies are lacking on student access and inclusion and resource levels. Existing studies suggest that host communities often are unprepared to make optimal use of students in international service, although more research is needed.

Little is known about the nature of international service action (types and extent) by students across the globe. However, studies of service by students find that duration of service and cultural immersion are likely to make a difference in certain kinds of outcomes, such as language acquisition and cross-cultural learning. Careful and ongoing reflection on the service experience appears to make a difference in ensuring personal growth for students, and may make students more sensitive to the host community, although low-resource institutions, such as community colleges, are often unable to afford the expense (*Frost & Raby, 2009*). Overall, evidence is lacking about effects of group versus individual placements and safety and security on service outcomes.

Regarding service outcomes, evidence is growing. Research from international service, international service-learning, and international internship programs suggests that students gain both personally and professionally. Students develop cross-cultural skills, sensitivity, and tolerance toward others. They gain more international understanding and develop a more inclusive global vision. Many return to their country of origin with a desire to continue in service at home and abroad. There are also some potentially negative outcomes, including threats to personal safety, disillusionment, cultural misunderstandings, and difficulties re-engaging at home at the end of service. However, the studies reviewed suggest a need for more long-term research on long-term effects, such as career impact.

The small amount of evidence regarding the effects of student service on university life, peers, sponsoring organizations, and host communities is only suggestive. Although a student body with experience abroad is likely to contribute to an enriched campus environment and build connections overseas, research evidence is lacking. Regarding host communities, although there is evidence that students bring useful human capital (if only “extra hands”) and contribute to building intercultural relations, international understanding, and global engagement, it is also possible that unprepared students may be a drain on community resources (*Lough et al., 2011*).

At this stage, research studies should undertake four key tasks. One is to create clear definitions of types of international service by students, and use these to develop tracking systems to measure international service activities by students and universities. We need a better idea of the numbers of students and activities undertaken in service abroad. Although existing research points to the elements of international service discussed in this article, we need clearer concepts and key propositions. Classifications of service that distinguish types of service should be clearer. (Even within study abroad programs, there is great variation. For example, some study abroad programs include service, such as internships or volunteer requirements, and cross-cultural interaction, such as students sharing housing with local students, whereas other study abroad programs have no service requirement and U.S. students live in separate quarters.) Studies rarely measure how different service activities, including type of service, duration, and support, affect outcomes. Better evidence is needed to draw firmer conclusions about how to design international service projects in ways that maximize positive benefits for students, universities and sponsoring organizations, and host communities. Although definitions lack precision and more data are needed to capture the exact scope and volume of international service programs in higher education, efforts are under way to track these activities with greater accuracy (*McBride & Mlyn, 2011*).

Second, the field should undertake rigorous qualitative and quantitative studies. Qualitative studies, which identify and explore important variables across dimensions, can refine the conceptual model presented in this article. The field also should move to experimental and quasi-experimental studies that can help determine causation. Most studies cited in this article reflect findings from case studies and small pre-post studies. To permit claims about impacts, measures should be administered longitudinally with rigorous research designs. Experiments can concretely

demonstrate how the service experience affects students and how these effects can be sustained over time. To accomplish this, researchers can utilize a quasi-experimental methodology to match the target of change (student or university) with a similar target that does not engage in service, but is comparable on key measures.

In addition, in order to build a comparative knowledge base, it is important that research utilize standardized, valid, and reliable measurement tools. (Qualitative research can contribute to development of these tools.) When these tools are administered across diverse programs that differ on key variables (e.g., reciprocity, access, duration, immersion, reflection), findings can inform effective practices. Comparative research is needed to link variations in institutional practices to variations in outcomes.

Third, cost-benefit studies should examine the relative costs and benefits, especially for students and host communities. Some studies estimate the cost of sending and maintaining volunteers in placements (*Laleman et al., 2007*), the value of hours spent volunteering (*Hudson Institute, 2007; Lough, McBride, & Sherraden 2007*), and the value of incremental increases in social capital to host communities (*Mayer, 2003*), but researchers have not combined cost-benefit analysis with impact analysis to more closely estimate the total value and utility of international service compared to other development strategies.

## Conclusion

International service by students offers many potential benefits for participants, sponsoring institutions, and host communities. International borders have a different meaning for young people today than they did for prior generations. Facilitating experience abroad for youth from all sectors of society, especially in service that encourages deeper understanding of other cultures, may open doors to creative ways of solving global problems. A new generation of young people, along with their partners in host communities, could emerge better prepared to discover and employ productive approaches to solving pressing problems and contributing to global equality, social well-being, and peace.

However, in order to accomplish these lofty goals, we must have a far more sophisticated understanding of service abroad. With few exceptions, evidence is suggestive rather than definitive. More knowledge is needed about current efforts and the scope of international service by students and the service models employed by colleges and universities. Greater conceptual clarity and better



ways of measuring tangible and intangible benefits that accrue to participants and contributors in service abroad programs are also required. Finally, research is needed to understand how and when different models of service—including international and domestic service—lead to desired outcomes such as global competence, intercultural understanding, and tangible benefits for students, sponsoring institutions, and host communities. With increasing numbers of young people engaged in service abroad and large sums of money invested in these experiences, it is important to comprehend fully the outcomes.

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# **The Intended and Unintended Consequences of International Service-Learning**

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## **Abstract**

Previous research on service-learning in international contexts tends to focus on the benefits and outcomes for students and educational institutions. This essay is intended to provoke further examination of issues related to university-community engagement in global contexts, particularly in terms of the consequences for host communities. In order to explore complex issues surrounding international service-learning, the author offers a composite scenario in a series of snapshots gleaned from projects organized by U.S.-based organizations and universities in partnership with host country organizations and communities. Revealed are a variety of typical outcomes—intended and unintended, positive and negative—for students, faculty, organizations and their staff, and the communities that host visiting service-learning teams. A framework for analysis is offered along with recommendations for ways to mitigate potential unintended negative consequences of international service-learning.

## **Introduction**

There have been significant responses to and outcomes from the calls to internationalize higher education (Angell, 1969; Annette, 2003; Kenny & Gallagher, 2002), to produce civic learning in students (Barber, 1992; Boyer & Hechinger, 1981; Dewey, 1916; Erlich, 2000; Freire, 1998), and to bring the resources of universities to bear on urgent social issues at home and around the world (Ansley & Gaventa, 1997; Boyer, 1990; Brown & Tandon, 1983; Reason, 1991; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003; Whyte, 1991). Most institutions of higher education now have vibrant study abroad programs, extensive community service networks and service-learning courses, and a growing number of faculty members who conduct research in partnership with, or for the benefit of, communities near and far. Arising from these varied streams of educational philosophy and the instructional trends they spawned, recent publications herald a coming of age of international service-learning as a subfield of international education and service-learning. For example, *International Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Research* (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2010) and other recent volumes (Gelmon & Billig, 2007; Porfilio & Hickman,

2011; Tonkin, Deeley, Pusch, Quiroga, Siegel, Whiteley, & Bringle, 2004) chart the history, identify best practices, and formulate the future of this community-engaged model of teaching and learning.

International service-learning programs now can be found across higher education institutions of all sizes, involving several types of partner organizations (e.g., nonprofits and community-based organizations, nongovernmental organizations, government agencies) in communities abroad and in the United States. Arising from these engagements, scholars across disciplines are studying practices related to international service in higher education. The growing body of literature reflects a relatively recent merging and cross-pollination among the perspectives of various fields that study development and cross-cultural contact, as well as student learning and related phenomena.

This essay is intended to encourage further examination of issues related to university-community engagement in global contexts. Snapshots from actual international service-learning experiences evoke discussion of a variety of typical outcomes—intended and unintended, positive and negative—for students, faculty, and staff in community-based organizations, as well as for the communities that host visiting teams from U.S.-based universities. Discussion invites readers to engage the ethical dilemmas this work can sometimes induce regarding mixed and varied consequences, and introduces a framework for anticipating and analyzing project impact. The essay concludes with recommendations for mitigating negative consequences.

A broad range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary literatures informs this essay (for an in-depth review, see *Crabtree, 2008*). With academic training in international and intercultural communication and over 25 years experience in practice, research, and program administration in international service-learning, the author seeks to understand what happens when faculty members and students from North America engage with developing communities in projects organized in collaboration with U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations and community-based organizations in host countries. Related work has explored project and course design issues and how they should be informed by participatory development theories and practices (*Crabtree, 1998, 1999, 2007*), dynamics within communities and broader contexts that create conditions for successful collaboration (*Crabtree, 1998; Crabtree & Ford, 2006; Crabtree & Sapp, 2005*), and how to utilize academic literatures to inform international service-learning practice and research (*Crabtree, 1997, 2008; Sapp & Crabtree, 2002*). Research notes, photographs, journals,

and continued reflections from educational, service, and research immersions in El Salvador (in 1992, 1993, 2010), Nicaragua (in 1997, 1998, 2004), and Kenya (in 1998, 2002, 2004) inspired the collection of illustrations offered here for discussion.

## **A Composite International Service-Learning Scenario**

The following composite scenario, organized in 11 parts, reveals some intended and unintended consequences of international service-learning. Each part is, in a sense, a snapshot of a different moment in an international service-learning experience. The scenario is offered to promote discussion and analysis leading to the recommendations later in the essay.

**Snapshot #1:** A community has learned from one of the many new community-based organizations working in the region that a U.S.-based organization wants to bring a team of university students to its village to build something. Host country staff work with local community leaders to consider a number of project ideas. Some community members advocate for a dignified housing project given the destruction wreaked by the last two hurricanes, but there are concerns that too few families would benefit and it could create jealousies. They decide to build a community center that could benefit all. Students on the university campus in the U.S., meanwhile, are excited to do something meaningful with their spring break; they also hope they will have some fun in this tropical locale. The opportunity to help those less fortunate is part of their university's mission, and this work will look good on their résumés.

**Snapshot #2:** Students find the village smaller and more impoverished than they had imagined. At first, some students regret coming on the trip, particularly those who experience diarrhea and other travel-related health issues. But once work is under way, most students find the construction energizing and they feel good about themselves at the end of each long day and begin to sense growing bonds with each other. They also enjoy playing with the local children, who seem to flock around them, and practicing their Spanish. Some community members also work on the construction site, though there are

not enough tools for everyone to use at the same time. A few students dialogue with some of the local men about politics, history, and improvisational construction techniques to use when proper materials are not available. Local women appear at mealtimes to serve the visitors.

**Snapshot #3:** After a 10-day community center construction project ends, the visiting team prepares to go home, satisfied with making a substantive contribution to this community. Many participants feel empowered by the new skills they learned—few of the students or community members had used power tools before, let alone built large structures with their own hands, or managed a construction site. Children in the community enjoyed helping as well as playing with the visitors after each long day of work. The local youth, in particular, are awed by the material possessions students take for granted; some receive small gifts from the visitors (e.g., a flashlight, bandana, T-shirt, small toy, photograph). The community prepares a final celebration, at which alcohol is served for the first time during the engagement. Speeches, games, and dancing go well into the night. The community center is not quite completed, and local people plan to finish up over the coming few weeks.

**Snapshot #4:** Despite recommendations to the contrary, some students leave their dirty clothing and other belongings behind to make room for souvenirs in their backpacks, confident that their jeans, T-shirts, and boots will find use among community members. Some community members hoard the students' discarded belongings for their families. A few community leaders try to develop a plan for distribution of these things in the community, and a few others are insulted by the gesture of leaving dirty and heavily worn clothes for them. The visitors also left all the tools and building supplies needed to complete the community center project.

**Snapshot #5:** For most of the community, there is a new sense of absence they have never felt before. The visitors had created palpable excitement and an emergence



of community spirit in collaborating on the building project. A small handful of local men work every evening after leaving their fields to complete the project, but it is not the same without the visitors. Most of the community members see North Americans as benefactors, a view accentuated because these have been the first benefits of development projects most of them have experienced directly and personally. Within a few weeks after project completion, some community members begin fighting about project leadership and decision making; as it turns out, there was not a prior consensus about how the community would use the center. The project seems to exacerbate conflict in the community, some of which relates to the upcoming elections and some of which is a manifestation of interpersonal conflict between individuals or age-old family rivalries.

**Snapshot #6:** Most of the visiting students are grateful for the experience, which gave them new insights into a joy that is based on personal connections rather than possessions. Some now romanticize village life. Many students continue to see the “third world” as inherently poor, needy, and undeveloped, even while most have new and, in some cases, increasingly complex and sophisticated understandings of the root causes of poverty and unjust global relations. Some feel a more personal connection to a world in need, and have a deeper consciousness of their own place within global inequities and, perhaps, of their power to produce change. None of the students knows that the community center has produced conflict and has yet to be put into use.

**Snapshot #7:** During the project, some community members developed a heartfelt sense of personal connection to the visitors with whom they worked most closely, hoping to keep in touch and perhaps meet again. A small number of the students maintain contact for a month or a year. Some students send money and gifts to their host families from time to time. One faculty member becomes comadre to a child born to the family of one of the community leaders during the visit. She eventually pays most of the expenses related

to the child's primary education. Though education is free, she learned that students need money for supplies, uniforms, and transportation to and from school.

**Snapshot #8:** Within a year of project completion, the community finally decides to use one half of the community center for a sewing cooperative, and the other half for a daycare center. Local women develop small income streams from these activities. Some people in neighboring communities wonder why no one has come to help their villages; some begin to organize their communities so that they, too, might receive a brigade of volunteers or perhaps even develop projects on their own. Meanwhile, the national government continues to rely on international nongovernmental organizations and visiting solidarity workers instead of being more responsive and accountable to the development needs in the country, particularly needs in the poor rural communities. The community center, built with the visiting students, is heralded by the regional government as an outcome of its own administration and policies.

**Snapshot #9:** Since the project ended, some community members have emerged as leaders for the first time, finding that they have skills and abilities that had not been tapped before. They continue to work and organize on behalf of their community, and several valuable projects result (e.g., a tool co-operative, community garden, successful advocacy for a paved road). Some of the youth renew their commitment to complete secondary school and begin to aspire to higher education. Others, now more acutely aware of the deficits in their own community, long to emigrate to the United States. The staff members of the host country regional community-based organization have developed professional skills through these partnerships, and these skills position them well for new job opportunities in their country. Many bring the ethos of community development to positions in other organizations, for the government, and for a few, to advanced degree programs. As well, many of the host country staff members increasingly adopt North American organizational and communication styles, dressing and acting (and maybe thinking)

more and more like the visitors as they facilitate many collaborative projects over time.

**Snapshot #10:** Of the two faculty advisors on this trip, one develops a research agenda related to international service-learning and ends up publishing several articles on the subject connected to her discipline, earning tenure at her university. The other is finding that the enormous work of organizing and facilitating these types of learning experiences distracts her from her unrelated research agenda. Moreover, her departmental colleagues do not value or do not know how to “count” this engagement in their promotion and tenure processes. She is worried about her tenure prospects.

**Snapshot #11:** When the students return to their lives on campus, most find it difficult to share their experiences and insights with peers and family members who were not on the trip. Some of their friends tire of the stories or dismiss what they hear as liberal rhetoric. The project becomes one of many college experiences for these students, and few find ways to keep the experience alive in their studies or other aspects of their daily lives, though many of the friendships they made with other students on this trip last for many years. Most of the students pursue postgraduate employment with little apparent divergence from their original path of or toward privilege. A small number pursue postgraduate service and solidarity experiences (e.g., Peace Corps, Teach for America), and a few of these students veer toward jobs or graduate degrees in fields related to development or sustainability or global policy issues.

As this composite scenario shows, the outcomes of international education and service experiences can often be mixed, may meet only short-term goals, and sometimes result in the opposite of what participants hope to accomplish. As well, the outcomes and impact of international service-learning can be complicated and wide-ranging for individuals and groups of participants. In the scenario, for example, outcomes include student learning and attitude changes that indeed map well to the goals of international service-learning, such as increasingly sophisticated understandings of poverty and historical global relations for the students,

and community organization and skills that translate to greater self-determination and continued development for community participants. Also resulting, however, is potential reinforcement of attitudes that international service-learning is designed to challenge for students and community members alike, such as the belief that developing countries are inherently poor and Americans are all rich, or a persistent normalization of paternalistic/colonial relations.

Further, for students, in addition to the learning that these kinds of experiences are designed to facilitate, outcomes can include changes to their belief systems, identities, loyalties, outlook, and professional trajectories that they, and their friends and parents, may find troubling. We should recognize that student learning outcomes sought by faculty might at the same time disrupt students' own prior hopes or those that their parents, families, and friends have for them. This outcome may have long-term implications for students beyond the increased knowledge and broader consciousness we hope to produce (Kiely, 2004).

Similarly, for community members, outcomes may include a disruption of community relations, potential conflict, disappointment, or disaffection with home, in addition to some positive outcomes. In some cases, the relationships between communities and visitors can constructively disrupt historical dynamics among those situated differently in global relations. This can come about when, for example, students and community members dialogue about politics and history while working side by side on a project and sharing meals together. As well, there are examples of the manifestation of hoped-for ancillary effects of community development, such as greater leadership and organization within the community applied to new self-determined projects. At the same time, some ways that short-term visits can disrupt community dynamics also are illustrated, in particular the community's sense of loss at the end of the project, and the emergence of conflict related to the project itself, or exacerbated by it.

The composite scenario reveals that the beneficiaries of international service-learning include local project leaders and the faculty who manage the experiences, whether through the development of useful new knowledge, skills, and networks, or through access to other resources such as friendships, data, contacts, and ongoing material support. These individuals may realize unintended consequences as well, including personal and professional risks. For example, the implications of community-based teaching and research may affect faculty members' professional trajectories (Wood, Banks, Galiardi, Koehn, & Schroeder, 2011). For community

leaders, increased post-project social status may also bring alienation or jealousy from neighbors or similar disruptions in social relations in the community.

The outcomes of international service-learning also occur on the organizational level. For example, partnering community-based organizations may gain more political capital than others, as these projects affect factors such as an organization's visibility, legitimation, and access to future resources. There are often broader impacts to consider vis-à-vis the host nation, such as the ways projects can get implicated in national or local politics. International service-learning projects and similar bi-national volunteer development engagements may catalyze—or may substitute for—national development commitments. The presence of service-learning projects in local communities may also bring needed—or unwanted, even dangerous—government attention to those communities and their leaders (see *Crabtree, 1998*, for discussion of the case of a local mayor's arrest after a university team's departure).

The positive outcomes of international service-learning engagements are widely discussed in the published literature. Indeed, some of these outcomes are in line with our intentions, and some may even exceed our expectations by being broader or more transformative than we might have hoped. For example, on a project in El Salvador (reported in *Crabtree, 1998*), ex-combatants who fought on both sides of a protracted armed conflict shared their *testimoniales* with students in evening reflections designed to help students gain deeper understanding of the context where they worked each day to rebuild a school that was bombed. These story-telling opportunities produced a remarkable catharsis for community members, which they found healing and empowering, though the intent was to augment the students' educational experience. Relationships built between a few of those students and community members continue two decades after that project and have shaped the careers of a couple of the students, one of whom now runs the U.S.-based organization that co-sponsored the original project. Similarly, one project in rural Kenya served as a catalyst for future projects in the area, inspiring self-determination among observers from nearby communities. This outcome was beyond the intent of the small-scale project to renovate a community well. Thus, there is value to visitors' mere presence in remote areas, including the power of accompaniment and witness (*Morton, 1995*), and these experiences may produce profound impacts on both sides of the global divide.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that the impact of our work is not all positive, regardless of our intentions.

International service-learning is, after all, not a panacea for community development. Outcomes beyond the immediate goals of and engagement with the project can be related to long-term and intractable community dynamics, which can affect project outcomes in unanticipated ways. The snapshot of the community center sitting empty while the community debated its use provides one illustration. Thus, understanding the broad and multifaceted contexts of this work is critical and should inform program development at our institutions, operational choices of partners and sites, management of the dynamics of an international service-learning project as it unfolds, and the study of outcomes.

### **A Framework for Analysis**

Based on this discussion, a series of questions can be posited to guide international service-learning project design and partnership development, to inform the facilitation of on-the-ground experiences, and to guide analysis of project dynamics and outcomes. The following questions serve that purpose.

- What are the relationships among communities, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other social institutions in the countries where we work and within the larger geopolitical contexts, and in relation to the dynamics and material consequences of historical and contemporary globalization?
- What are the features of the projects and interventions we design and how were they developed? What are the intergroup and interpersonal dynamics that unfold during the project related to both project execution and to intercultural contact more generally?
- What factors influence the intended and unintended, positive and negative consequences of this work for the engaged participants, as well as for those on the periphery of our interventions (e.g., neighboring communities)?
- What is the long-term impact of international service-learning on the communities where we work, the surrounding communities, and the larger development process in the countries where we engage?

- How can this work contribute to broader, deeper, and more lasting consequences for all participants, as well as productive conversations about and meaningful enactments of global relations?

These are some of the many questions that persist, and that service-learning scholars have begun to address in the literature. Answering these kinds of questions involves complex consideration of the contexts where we work, project design and pedagogical choices, project assessment in the near term and in longer range time frames, and the dynamics of interactions before, during, and after international service-learning encounters. Discussion of these and related issues follows, drawing from recent work on participatory community-based research (*Belone et al., 2012; Wallerstein et al., 2008*).

## **Context**

Distal and proximal contextual variables affect international service-learning projects in massive seen and unseen ways. These variables include the socioeconomic and cultural environment of the host country, national and local policies, historical sociopolitical relations between the home and host countries, participants' prior experiences with collaboration and cross-cultural contact, and the multifaceted capacities of the community, the university team, and any partnering organizations. The scenarios provided in this essay and subsequent discussion of them elucidate several contextual variables that may affect project dynamics and outcomes, such as political dynamics among segments of citizens within the host community, and the ways the different participants are situated in historical global relations.

## **Partnership Dynamics**

Analysis of the partnership and its dynamics may include issues such as the structural equity of the partnership, project complexity, and the unfolding competence of the participants as they formally and informally interact with each other. Also important are characteristics of group dynamics, such as leadership, power sharing, and the distribution of tasks. Individual values and beliefs, cultural identities, language, and the interpersonal and communication skills of participants additionally influence the partnership. Prior to the encounter, these dynamics operate during the planning phase in the community and at the university. They also unfold during the project itself in day-to-day interactions, and may continue to be salient in various ways after the project and encounter have come to a close.

## **Project Design and Implementation**

Advanced considerations about or analysis of the project itself could include whether the process for project selection was participatory, use of shared knowledge to inform project design, the degree of reciprocity the project produces, and the quality of execution. As well, unforeseen circumstances that unfold during the project, such as inclement weather, a health crisis, a local holiday, or other unexpected situations, which could be positively or negatively valenced for participants, should be considered in terms of their impact on the project and the collaboration. In the composite scenario, for example, the birth of a baby in the community during the encounter was a bonding experience. The minimal visibility of local women during the project, and then mainly in food preparation and serving the visitors, was another factor worth interrogation as to its impact on the community and on student learning.

## **Outcomes**

Outcomes relevant for analysis may include changes in attitudes, behaviors, policies, structural inequities and disparities, and so forth, whether these are intended or unintended, positive or negative. Multiple methodologies can be used, including surveys, focus groups, student journals and other written artifacts, interviews, and observational methods. Outcomes can be studied immediately following a project, and revisited at various intervals after the project. Outcomes for students and faculty, staff at partnering organizations from both the home and the host country, and individual community members as well as for the collective community should be considered. Ideally, some assessment of the perspectives of host country neighboring communities or governments might also be sought.

Clearly each set of issues in this framework influences each of the others. As well, one project's outcomes will influence the context for future projects, and similarly will influence participants' future service engagements and collaborations.

## **Recommendations**

Identifying the consequences of international service-learning would be insufficient without including recommendations for mitigating unintended negative outcomes. By no means exhaustive, the following list of recommendations is intended to help program directors, faculty members, and administrators make decisions in the selection of partnering organizations, sites, projects, and pedagogies.



## Attend Deeply to Partnerships

Faculty members and other project leaders should carefully consider project partnerships, as well as the ways partnerships are operationalized at various points in the project. This consideration may include the choice to build the capacity of social justice organizations that are already operating, and to work with partners that are well integrated with local community leadership. Partners in developing nations should have meaningful ways to identify and advance their needs and ideas in relation to the project, through which areas of common interest can be identified. Dialogue that seeks understanding between each set of participants about their respective motivations and goals can unfold before, during, and after a project.

The literature on university-community partnerships, derived primarily from domestic service-learning contexts, can be instructive. Kecskes (2006), for example, used a cultural studies framework for thinking about partnerships, drawing upon national models, such as Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, to illustrate how a deep understanding of partnerships influences outcomes. Basinger and Bartholomew (2006) studied partnerships from the perspective of agencies and organizations that host student volunteers and that link to service-learning courses. Their data highlight the interests of agency personnel, such as enhancing the image of the community, helping students learn, and the desire to foster a positive relationship with the university. Worrall (2007) found that most community partnerships are more cooperative than reciprocal, particularly when knowledge, resources, and power are not shared equitably. Dorado and Giles (2004) studied the evolution of partnerships over time, finding that only longer term partnerships develop the features of trust, alignment of interests, and shared commitment that characterize sustainable partnerships. These and other studies (such as *Simonelli, Earle, & Story, 2004*) can inform engagements in international settings. Increasingly, published research illustrates that the nature of our partnerships and the quality of collaboration that develops throughout the project will make the difference between merely creating short-term international education and service opportunities for students, and educating and empowering men and women, at home and abroad, as agents of change.

## Prepare Participants

The issues explored in this essay can be used as part of pre-departure preparation of participants: faculty members, students, organization staff, community and other in-country leaders, local community members, and project beneficiaries. Readings related to the disciplines of the specific university participants are common in pre-departure orientations, as faculty and students of language, sociology, natural science, education, agriculture, and other fields have different reasons for engaging in international immersion and service, and they bring different expertise, background, and academic learning goals. Also typical in pre-trip orientation are encounters with news accounts, films, and other information about the host country. Participants also should read and discuss articles related to international service-learning, including pointed critiques (*Illich, 1990*). Other readings might explore cross-cultural contact and adjustment, participatory development, and community-based learning. It is also possible to access the expertise and contacts of host-country community-based organizations for details on the historical and contemporary context for the engagement. The Center for Global Education, for example, provides speakers in many locales to help orient visitors about globalization, the historical and contemporary political dynamics of the host country, and relevant U.S. foreign policy history.

In addition to readings and development of pre-trip knowledge, one university with a long-running international service-learning program, for example, incorporates team-building exercises, case studies, and other experiential learning over the course of the semester prior to immersion. Readings and exercises might explore group dynamics and models for collaboration and decision-making. A composite scenario like that provided in this essay, or similar case studies, can be used in pre-departure orientation to promote discussion of goals and to raise awareness about possible unintended consequences. Overall, the goal of preparation should be both deep—in terms of relevant academic disciplines and issues such as personal health and safety—as well as broad—considering diverse aspects of the host context and also of collaboration among differently situated partners.

While it is the responsibility of the community-based organizations to ensure that community participants are prepared, learning what kinds of preparation the community members received prior to the engagement is also prudent. This might include understanding how the community is organized to host the visitors, how the project was determined, and how the community will engage

visitors in routine tasks such as meal preparation and clean-up. Information about the specific participants—university, students, faculty members—can be shared in advance with the community and vice versa. Exploration of issues discussed here in relation to context, partnership dynamics, project, and outcomes also might be introduced in pre-trip orientation. Some university programs incorporate site visits and shared orientations for the community and student leaders in advance of the project.

## **Engage in Layered Reflection and Dialogue**

Reflection is increasingly identified as the critical component of effective service-learning (Eyer, 2002). Indeed, many scholars argue that it is only through structured and critical reflection that learning occurs. Kiely (2005), for example, uses Mezirow's theory of transformational learning in order to illustrate the power of reflection in service-learning. Pusch and Merrill (2008) similarly discuss the importance of reflection to achieve goals such as reciprocity in international service-learning.

A program of on-site reflections can guide students through the experience as it is unfolding, and focus their attention on specific aspects of the engagement (e.g., their first impressions, dynamics on the work site, observations of community life, connections to prior readings). In order to engage the question of intended and unintended outcomes, for example, a set of snapshots like those offered in this essay could be shared among participants to stimulate dialogue and reflection about a project and its potential outcomes. Some opportunities for community members to reflect with the students also should be created. Student leaders, faculty members, partnering organization staff, and community leaders might develop these encounters together in order to ensure the activities will be inclusive, accessible, and congruent with the goals of various constituencies. Activities that produce dialogue between visitors and community members can serve to build relationships away from the work site and beyond playing with the children. Activities can be developed that require little speaking when there are too few bilingual participants. On one project in El Salvador, for example, structured home stays, organized soccer games, and cooking lessons brought participants together for social interaction away from the project site.

Faculty members also should engage in ongoing critical reflection about their teaching and research related to international service-learning. The same values and principles that guide international service-learning might inform and transform faculty

teaching and research (*Ansley & Gaventa, 1997*). Research designs can incorporate the perspectives of community members, and outcomes studied should go beyond student learning to consider short- and long-term community impact, as well. Further, and as much as possible, faculty leaders should reflect upon how they might integrate their disciplinary research agendas with their international service-learning experiences. For example, in Nicaragua during a 3-week service-learning project, one faculty member conducted door-to-door surveys in the community related to his research on potable water and economic development in partnership with local water rights advocates. Another worked with local lay community health workers to catalog plants growing in the surrounding area that could be used medicinally.

## **Integrate the International Service-Learning Experience**

Cross-cultural re-entry is a distinctive experience and often involves a culture shock more intense and lasting than that experienced during the initial immersion (*Martin, 1984*). Peter Adler's work in the 1970s and 1980s on cross-cultural adaptation might be applied to international service-learning and other immersion experiences in terms of their short-term and long-term effects on participants (*Adler, 1975, 1985*). He discussed psychological risks such as the feeling of rootlessness and disaffection with one's own culture, and long-term effects on cultural identity and psychological equilibrium. Bringle and Tonkin (*2004*), Kiely (*2004, 2005*), and Merrill and Pusch (*2007*) also discuss many psycho-emotional outcomes for students. These outcomes occur immediately upon returning to the home country, unfold as students re-adjust to campus life, and have effects that linger or morph over time as students encounter situations that may cause them to reflect on their experience in light of a new decision or relationship.

Intentional programs can guide students through re-entry, perhaps through a series of encounters at different time intervals after returning. Reuniting the team to engage in local community service may provide an opportunity for collective reflection, as well as for connecting conceptual issues as they were encountered during the immersion experience with the ways they manifest for local communities. Inviting and preparing faculty members across the curriculum to incorporate students' study abroad and international service-learning experiences in subsequent courses also can create opportunities for students to integrate what they learned. By stretching out the experience long after return, students can

resist compartmentalizing their personal and intellectual insights. An international service-learning immersion can be more than a short-term experience; it can be integrated as a particularly transformational moment within the fuller educational experience, one that continues to resonate with students' academic and co-curricular programs.

Integration of international service-learning includes institutionalization of the structures and resources needed to support it. Developing opportunities for administrators to get involved may cultivate allies for institutionalizing international service-learning programs, for sustaining partnerships over time, and for recognizing faculty members for their community-based teaching and research. Motivating university marketing professionals to move beyond "helping" and "charity" language in campus publications and promotional materials can also be important; staff from these areas of the university should be included in direct experience and related educational and consciousness-raising programs. Creating periodic international service-learning experiences solely for faculty members, staff members, and upper administrators also may build a sense of shared enterprise among university constituencies with sometimes-conflicting goals, provide an opportunity to deepen employees' commitment to the university mission, and galvanize support for international service-learning programs in these challenging economic times for higher education.

## **Conduct Research on Outcomes for all Participants**

Most published research about international service-learning still tends to focus on the concerns and interests of program staff, faculty, students, and administrators at U.S. colleges and universities (this issue is explored, for example, in *Crabtree, 2008; Cruz & Giles, 2000*). Even though there is considerable and growing awareness of the larger ideological and theoretical dimensions of international service-learning, research still tends to feature the fundamentals of program design and the logistics of facilitating the student experience from the faculty perspective, and to focus on student attitudes and learning outcomes. Extant research situates international service-learning within college curricula, links learning outcomes to institutional effectiveness measures, and explores aspects of risk management related to the various forms of international immersion experiences in higher education (*Jones, Kamela, & Peeks, 2011; Saltmarsh, 2010; Strand et al., 2003*). This tendency relates logically to the immediate nature of these concerns

for members of university communities who lead or manage programs. Faculty members and administrative staff for programs are expected to answer to curriculum oversight committees, respond to the needs and facilitate the learning experiences of students, and placate concerned parents. However, this tendency also may be due to the complexities involved with project impact research, with any cross-cultural research, and with sustained and longitudinal research, in particular.

To further complicate matters, faculty members who choose to facilitate international service-learning, while motivated by a variety of attitudinal factors and intellectual expertise, may not have deep academic preparation in comparative development theory and ideology, cross-cultural communication and psychology, transformational learning theories, and other relevant fields. In some cases, when faculty members have training in one or more of these areas and conduct related research, they may lack deep expertise on specific geographic regions, countries, or communities where projects unfold. That is, few experienced teachers interested in community-engaged pedagogy have sufficiently broad or sufficiently sophisticated expertise in key theoretical and methodological frameworks to understand the wide range of factors influencing an international service-learning engagement, particularly from the perspectives of host communities.

Given the number of potentially consequential contextual variables (as introduced earlier), it is not surprising that research on the impact of international service-learning for community members and host countries is lagging, particularly regarding the unintended consequences of this work. Contextual variables have a tremendous influence on what happens during a relatively short visit (*Camacho, 2004; Galiardi & Koehn, 2011*). Fortunately, the expanding body of literature on this topic includes case studies, qualitative and quantitative research, and a growing number of monographs and edited collections providing guidelines and models for effective practice.

Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, and Kerrigan (1996) developed a framework for research and assessment procedures that account for the impact of international service-learning on all participants. Through the use of interviews, observations, surveys, focus groups, and student writing assignments, we can learn about the variety and levels of learning and personal transformation arising from international service-learning experiences. As much as possible, research on outcomes in communities should be designed and implemented collaboratively with local communities. Participatory research models can be particularly useful, as they promote research design

and methodologies consistent with international service-learning best practices (*Belone et al., 2012*). Similarly, research findings can be distributed through a variety of mechanisms. Scholarly publications, higher education newsletters, and similar venues inform future practice and research. Additionally, reports can be created for partner community-based organizations and host community newsletters or radio broadcasts.

The relational aspects of international service-learning and community-based learning experiences also warrant more attention in research (*Driscoll et al., 1996; Porter & Monard, 2001*). This gap includes appreciating the power of witnessing, the catharsis of sharing stories, the ability of our presence to draw attention to forgotten places and situations, the way one project can be a local catalyst beyond our visit and unrelated to our intentions, and the deep significance of accompaniment through living and working side by side (*Cruz, 1990; Prins & Webster, 2010; Quiroga, 2004; Simonelli et al., 2004; Yonkers-Talz, 2003*). After all, the material aspects of our service are, for the most part, only symbols of or vehicles through which we animate a new relationship and practice a potential new consciousness for all participants.

As the composite scenario illustrates, our relationships with institutions, organizations, communities, and people in international service-learning contexts can both disrupt and reproduce inequitable power dynamics and historical global relations. International service-learning research is just beginning to grapple with the complex intended and unintended consequences of our work with and in host communities. Increasingly, we should be able to articulate the likelihood and nature of predicted and beneficial outcomes in relation to possible risks to participants using multiple levels of analysis.

## Conclusions

This essay explored issues related to university-community engagement in global contexts, particularly in terms of the consequences for host communities. The composite scenario offered here, gleaned from several projects organized between U.S.-based non-governmental organizations and host country community-based organizations, reveals a variety of typical outcomes—intended and unintended, positive and negative—for students, faculty members, organizations and their staff, and the communities that host visiting teams from U.S. universities. Subsequent discussion explored the intersections of these consequences, and introduced



a series of recommendations for analyzing and mitigating negative outcomes. This essay is intended to inform and deepen the conversation about international service-learning project design, pedagogical decisions, analysis of actual engagements, assessment of student learning, and evaluation of broad project outcomes for all participants.

Acting justly in an unjust world and honoring the people who share their lives and communities with us requires a commitment to education for solidarity within a truly reflexive practice (Crabtree, 2007; Freire, 1998; Yonkers-Talz, 2003). Utilizing best practices grounded in the best of intentions will not necessarily eliminate unwanted negative outcomes in international service-learning engagements. Honest assessment includes individual and collective exploration of the injustices that are encountered in and revealed by our work together, as well as of the injustices our work may unintentionally produce.

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## **Learning Outcomes Assessment: Extrapolating from Study Abroad to International Service-Learning**

Donald L. Rubin and Paul H. Matthews

### **Abstract**

For international service-learning to thrive, it must document student learning outcomes that accrue to participants. The approaches to international service-learning assessment must be compelling to a variety of stakeholders. Recent large-scale projects in study abroad learning outcomes assessment—including the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI)—offer precedent from which international service-learning assessment programs may draw. This article outlines five promising practices to guide international service-learning assessment activities: (1) focus on outcomes about learning; (2) employ multiple sources and methods for data collection; (3) invest in compiling credible comparison groups to build the case for a causal relationship between international service-learning and learning; (4) acquire data from multiple and diverse institutions and programs to better generalize and also to warrant conclusions about best program practices; and (5) acquire data from large samples of program participants to provide insights into under-represented groups and program sites.

### **Introduction**

What kinds of assessment practices promise to foster both proliferation and excellence in international service-learning? The purpose of this essay is to extrapolate selected promising practices for assessing student learning outcomes from the more fully established domain of study abroad to the still emerging domain of international service-learning. The primary source for these study abroad assessment practices is the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (*GLOSSARI*; *Sutton & Rubin, 2004*), a multi-year, multi-phased project that utilized diverse approaches to assessing learning outcomes over the course of 8 years among students attending more than 30 public institutions and enrolled in scores of study abroad programs.

Operating any international education program—and especially one focused on service to host nation communities—is not for

the faint of heart. The foremost concern is, without question, student safety in environments that are by design unfamiliar and often lacking expected on-campus infrastructure for risk control (*Burak & Hoffa, 2001*). Program directors are, of course, also concerned about the quality of the learning experience for their students, as well as the benefits for the host community. Numerous reports of service-learning programs evaluate personal, social, and citizenship outcomes for students, but relatively few document academic or intellectual learning outcomes (*Conway, Amel, & Gerwien, 2009*). Assessing student learning outcomes in service-learning can be quite labor-intensive (*Rama, Ravenscroft, Wolcott, & Zlotkowski, 2000*); as is commonly practiced for on-campus programs, many international educators fall back on the convenience of student evaluations (*Engle & Engle, 2003*), which are essentially customer satisfaction surveys. Generally, little is learned about program outcomes from student satisfaction surveys alone; even that hallmark of service-learning, reflective writing, when not carefully structured, may be “useful neither in assessing learning, evaluating programs, nor conducting research” (*Whitney & Clayton, 2011, p. 150*).

Relegating assessment in international service-learning to convenient, but largely uninformative information sources, is a pedagogical and strategic misstep, however (*Steinberg, 2007*). As Tonkin (2011) enjoins,

[M]ore needs to be known about whether present [international service-learning] practices are achieving their objectives, or indeed achieving any objectives at all. Not only are . . . practitioners and researchers accountable to funders, institutions, and students, they are also accountable to their hosts and the public good. Thus, research is more than an academic exercise: it is an ethical imperative. (p. 215)

Thus, international service-learning will thrive to the degree that rigorous assessment processes hold it accountable to its various stakeholders—students, parents, and host communities as well as university administrators and academic disciplines. In particular, the following five “promising practices” may help guide this work, grounded in the experience of evaluating study abroad.

- From the perspective of adding value to a United States education, the most appropriate metrics for measuring the impact of international service-learning are student learning outcomes, including “hard” institutional

outcomes like college completion rates (where institutionally appropriate).

- International service-learning learning outcomes initiatives should deploy diverse approaches, including studies of students' success in their academic careers.
- The strongest policy and curricular case for international service-learning will require aggregation of findings across multiple programs and multiple institutions. This strategy requires alignment among those various programs and institutions regarding the questions posed and the metrics taken as evidence.
- To draw credible conclusions about the value added attributable to international education experiences, it is necessary to compile credible comparison groups of students who forgo those experiences, or those who choose to fulfill education abroad in differing formats (e.g., credit versus noncredit programs).
- Accumulating a large sample size provides insights about participation and outcomes for less represented groups and about a variety of program variables.

First, a caveat about the object of international service-learning assessment is in order. Student outcomes are not the only important outcomes from international service-learning, and perhaps not even the most important ones. International education that incorporates experiential components and service-learning should also research the impacts on the hosting communities (*Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Sutton, 2011; Tonkin, 2011; Wells, Warchal, Ruiz, & Chapdelaine, 2011, p. 320*). However, studies focusing on host communities are still generally rare (*Crabtree, 2008; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Wood, Banks, Galiardi, Koehn, & Schroeder, 2011*). While acknowledging the importance of attending to this “equally important standard of community benefits” (*Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p. 17*), this essay deliberately adopts a student learning outcomes perspective, as that position is foundational to the scholarship of teaching and learning (*Banta, 2002; Marsh, 2007*).

## **International Service-Learning**

International service-learning and study abroad are two types of international education that often overlap, but do not coincide (*Bringle & Hatcher, 2011*). Study abroad is associated with



formal credit-bearing classes that presumably impart some body of disciplinary knowledge using the international context as an instructional resource. This sort of study abroad has a long history (see papers collected in *DePaul & Hoffa, 2010*). Alongside these traditional study abroad programs, service-learning and community-based experiential education elements are increasingly incorporated into international programs “as an effective way to complement and expand on existing study abroad course objectives” (*Kiely, 2011, p. 243*). Properly performed, such “experiential activities . . . are not add-ons to meet student demand, but core activities that are at the heart of the study abroad experience” (*Steinberg, 2002, p. 223*). Although there is clearly a wide range of structures and types of international service-learning (e.g., *Jones & Steinberg, 2011; Steinberg, 2002; Tonkin, 2011*), including credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing experiences, this article follows Bringle and Hatcher’s (2011) definition of international service-learning as

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

Many international service-learning experiences may qualify also as study abroad courses with defined disciplinary learning objectives and credit toward graduation. Sometimes the distinction reflects mainly a matter of degree of emphasis. Indeed, international service-learning and study abroad generally share a great many objectives, particularly those that speak to transformational learning among students. Learning that enhances self-knowledge and intercultural development is central to both international service-learning and study abroad (*Hoff, 2008; Pusch & Merrill, 2008*), as are certain learning instructional practices such as experiential activity and reflection (*Montrose, 2002; Pagano & Roselle, 2009*). Indeed, the ascendant rubric “global learning” implies a moral imperative for community engagement (*Hovland, 2006*). Study abroad and service-learning are both identified as “high impact practices” that enhance student engagement and attendant outcomes such as grades, time to graduation, and advanced study (*Gonyea, 2008; Kuh, 2008*).



On the other hand, many traditional study abroad programs appropriately adopt learning objectives more specific to a canon of disciplinary knowledge (Brewer & Cunningham, 2009). Presumably a geology course taught in the Peruvian Andes seeks to impart a corpus of orographic information and field methods that differ (at least in degree) from the objectives of an international service-learning course on indigenous natural resource management taught in the same location. Conversely, such a service-learning course on natural resource management might encompass objectives pertaining to conducting community needs assessments that the traditional geology course might not.

### **Assessing Learning Outcomes in International Service-Learning**

In the introductory chapter of their edited volume on international service-learning, Bringle and Hatcher (2011) note a “state of confounded rationales, program goals, and program types [that] complicates assessing study abroad outcomes to the point that there is limited high-quality evidence on its outcomes . . . gathered across programs” (p. 9). Indeed, many aspects of study abroad and international service-learning have not been rigorously assessed to date. In his comprehensive review of the state of the latter’s research agenda, Tonkin (2011) frames a wide range of pressing issues for research and assessment in international service-learning. These include research into “fundamental issues” such as program design, ethics, and the contexts of international service-learning; student recruitment, motivations, and readiness in these programs; faculty practices, attitudes and beliefs; the practice of international service-learning, such as curriculum development, technology, and preparation issues; questions relating to service abroad, such as impact on the hosting community and agencies; and the characteristics and outcomes of student participation in study abroad/international service-learning. While not the only important avenue of investigation, these student learning outcomes are the focus of this essay.

An examination of extant research on student learning outcomes assessment in study abroad and international service-learning highlights the challenges of effective evaluation and shows a need for additional, high quality research in this area, especially studies that are quantitative and those investigating more than a single program (Bringle, Hatcher, & Williams, 2011). As Tonkin notes of the voluminous research on student assessment, “[v]irtually all

of this literature is ancillary to [international service-learning]” (2011, p. 197).

Sutton, Miller, and Rubin (2007; see also Sutton & Rubin, 2004) draw sharp distinctions between *learning* outcomes assessment and other kinds of outcomes assessment in international education. Most study abroad outcomes research has examined changes in students’ attitudes and personal development, or impact on life choices, as opposed to increased knowledge or skill (i.e., *learning* outcomes *per se*). The same is true of most international service-learning outcomes assessment research, which has mainly (though by no means exclusively) focused on attitudinal and dispositional outcomes such as development of identity as a global citizen and changes in intercultural sensitivity, global competence, and similar dispositional variables (Kiely, 2011; Plater, 2011; Tonkin, 2011; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). To be sure, some international service-learning programs have pursued outcomes in the domains of academic learning (e.g., health professions— Bentley & Ellison, 2007; Martinez-Mier, Soto-Rojas, Stelzner, Lorant, Riner, & Yoder, 2011; entomology— Robinette & Noblet, 2009; teacher education—Knutson Miller, & Gonzalez, 2011), especially language proficiency and knowledge of the host country (see Kiely, 2004; Steinberg, 2002). In surveying research on international service-learning outcomes, Tonkin (2011) particularly notes a dearth of attention to learning outcomes “that extend beyond the course level of analysis” (p. 207), such as knowledge, degree attainment, and pursuit of postgraduate education.

Assessing international education learning outcomes beyond the course level invites a variety of research methodologies. In addition to largely qualitative case studies and examinations of student learning artifacts, one might consider administering measures and surveys (Paige & Stallman, 2007), or collecting institutional data such as graduation rates (O’Rear, Sutton, & Rubin, 2011). Standardized performance assessments for measuring liberal arts outcomes like critical thinking and analytical reasoning have also become available over the past decade (e.g., the Collegiate Learning Assessment; see Arum, Roksa, & Cho, 2011; Bers & Swing, 2010). Yet the preponderance of research on international service-learning has been undertaken through qualitative research traditions only (Kiely & Hartman, 2011), “with most analyses being descriptive case studies of particular courses and programs” (Bringle, Hatcher, & Williams, 2011, p. 276); the latter also “posit that a quantitative approach to research on [international service-learning] will yield fruitful results that can guide program design, improve practice, test theory, contribute to a knowledge base, and provide a basis for funding and support for program expansion” (pp. 275–276).

## Study Abroad Resources for Developing Promising Practices

The world of study abroad is by no means monolithic nor singularly advanced with respect to its assessment practices. To the contrary, many study abroad programs rely on enrollment “body counts” and student evaluations as their primary vehicles for evaluation (*Engle & Engle, 2003*). Nonetheless, in recent years the field has launched several initiatives aimed at elevating the role of assessment in general, and moving toward more learning outcomes assessment in particular (*Sideli, 2001*). The impetus for this trend derives from several sources, including the increasing scrutiny placed on study abroad as part of institutional reaccreditation processes. As regional accrediting bodies began routinely to accept study abroad participation as an indicator of institutional excellence, they simultaneously began encouraging institutions to document in greater detail the value added to general education (and other) objectives. In short, the learning outcomes assessment movement in study abroad was driven from the start by the challenge to provide convincing evidence to a variety of external as well as internal stakeholders. Demonstrating the legitimacy and value added of service-learning programs to internal university stakeholders and to community stakeholders has certainly been one important motivation for emphasizing the centrality of evaluation to the broader service-learning enterprise (*Nisbett, Tannenbaum, & Smither, 2009*), and no doubt this motivation will eventually pervade international service-learning.

### The University System of Georgia’s GLOSSARI project.

In the year 2000, the Office of International Education at the University System of Georgia began investing in the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) project to assay learning outcomes accruing from study abroad at its approximately 35 constituent institutions. This system-wide initiative built on a number of strengths, not the least of which was the prior institution of a database for compiling information about every student participating in study abroad over a decade’s time. Data regarding over 30,000 study abroad trips—which eventually were matched with nearly 20,000 complete academic records—provided unprecedented credibility for GLOSSARI’s conclusions about such matters as the impact of studying abroad on graduation rates. One of the co-authors of this article was the director of research for the GLOSSARI project.

For details of GLOSSARI beyond those presented in Sutton and Rubin (2004), see <http://www.glossari.uga.edu>.

### **Other data sources.**

Shortly after the University System of Georgia initiated GLOSSARI, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of International Research and Studies funded a cluster of large-scale studies of learning outcomes of education abroad. Along with GLOSSARI, those projects included the Georgetown Consortium Project (*Van deBerg, Balcum, Scheid, & Whalen, 2006*) and the Study Abroad for Global Engagement project (*Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josić, & Jon, 2009*).

### **Data Analysis**

In reflecting on the applicability of this essay's conclusions to their own instructional settings, readers will of course need to recognize that even though the GLOSSARI institutions ranged across a broad swath of higher education, they are specific to a single state and do not include private colleges.

In some senses, the state of the field of international service-learning is similar to that of study abroad prior to the implementation of these large-scale research studies, with many unanswered questions floating on a sea of small-scale, qualitative, and program-specific descriptive research studies. To provide compelling evidence to move beyond this current status quo, then, international service-learning might productively learn from, and consider adopting, approaches to evaluation similar to those successfully implemented in this recent study abroad research. Part of the validation for the promising practices described in the following section derives from the experience of transporting and replicating these methods to other institutions. For example, the GLOSSARI methodology was adopted by the California Community College Student Outcomes Abroad Research initiative (see <http://gloaled.us/cccoar/index.asp#top>) as well as by a similar project started at San Diego State University.

All three large-scale projects—Study Abroad for Global Engagement, the Georgetown Consortium, and GLOSSARI—addressed two complementary concerns in study abroad. First was providing program directors with evidence-based reasons for adopting particular practices. For example, it has been largely a matter of faith that host national instructors provide for more profound cultural immersion than do home campus instructors (*Engle & Engle, 2003*), but does instructor nationality make a documentable

difference in learning outcomes? Data for these sorts of questions were lacking. The second concern was providing evidence to skeptical stakeholders of the value that study abroad adds to learning in higher education. This question invites a broad conception of who those stakeholders for international education may be. This group can include legislators and federal education officials who are urged to increase financial aid for study abroad. It includes college administrators and even fellow faculty members who might need to adopt more appropriate calculations for adjusting faculty teaching loads or to adjust course requirements to make it easier for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) majors to go abroad, for instance. Stakeholders also include parents (as well as students) who need to be convinced that studying abroad is as rigorous and rewarding as on-campus study.

Based on extensive work developing, implementing, and assessing GLOSSARI, but also grounded in the outcomes and findings of the other two federally funded large-scale education abroad learning outcomes projects (*Paige et al., 2009; Van deBerg et al., 2006*), this essay proposes that the same sorts of decisions made in these study abroad research projects can be productively applied to international service-learning, even when the exact questions (e.g., features of program design or practice, institutional outcome variables of interest, etc.) may not be identical to those for study abroad. The following five practices seem likely to be fruitful for enhancing the practice and effectiveness of learning outcomes assessment in international service-learning. Although some of these recommendations have previously been suggested (*cf. Tonkin, 2011*), the study abroad evaluation studies help demonstrate ways in which they can be concretely implemented, modeling possibilities for international service-learning.

## Findings

### **Recommendation: Emphasize Outcomes Pertaining to Student Learning**

Attitudinal, dispositional, and developmental outcomes like world-mindedness or cultural relativism are key values for education abroad. For many program directors, witnessing students' empathic responses to another culture is the big payoff. However, the meaning of these constructs is often abstruse, and in practice interpretations are tied closely to the particular instruments used to measure them (*Eyler, 2011*).

As just one case in point, the Intercultural Development Inventory (*Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003*) is quite commonly taken as a general measure of intercultural competence in evaluating international education (e.g., *Georgia Institute of Technology, 2010*). Yet it was developed to index a particular model of development in ethnorelativism. Adopting high levels of ethnorelativism may or may not be desirable for college students; one can more confidently assert that understanding the nature of ethnorelativism is an appropriate college learning outcome (*Sutton et al., 2007*). Thus, the International Learning Outcomes instrument developed by GLOSSARI asks students to self-report on such statements as, “When interacting in a foreign country, I know when it is to my advantage to take risks.” It does not, however, ask students if they do take appropriate risks when interacting.

A special case can be made for including at least some “hard” indicators among the mix of learning outcome measures. Certain disciplines, for instance, may offer relatively standardized ways to demonstrate subject matter mastery, such as the Russian language proficiency battery promulgated by American Association of Teachers of Russian (*Davidson, 2007*). However, since other outcome measures can also do double duty for accreditation and supporting institutional (as opposed to solely program- or course-specific) goals, the most convincing indicators of learning may derive from institutional-level data (*Volkwein, 2011*). Measures such as students’ graduation rates, overall grade point averages, pass rates on professional certification and accreditation processes, and career attainment for alumni, as well as impacts on general-education outcomes such as critical thinking or moral reasoning, make a strong and readily understandable case for the variety of international service-learning stakeholders. Phase 4 of GLOSSARI attracted substantial interest because of its findings of a positive effect of study abroad on college completion rates, for example (*O’Rear et al., 2011*).

### **Recommendation: Employ Multiple Sources and Methods for Data Collection**

By utilizing multiple methods, researchers can triangulate their conclusions and examine a variety of learning outcomes. In international service-learning, both quantitative (*Bringle et al., 2011*) and qualitative (*Kiely & Hartman, 2011*) research traditions, methodologies, and instruments have been recommended, but putting these into place for larger-scale evaluation can be challenging.

GLOSSARI developed and administered one self-report survey and one direct test of learning to several thousand current study abroad participants. It also administered standardized measures of intercultural sensitivity and development and of critical thinking. These included the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory (*Kelley & Meyers, 1999*), the Intercultural Development Inventory (*Hammer et al., 2003*), and the California Critical Thinking Test (*Faccione, 2000*). A handful of classes participated in a mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) study of student learning artifacts such as examinations, essays, and group multimedia projects. Finally, GLOSSARI undertook a large-scale retrospective examination of institutional data (time to graduation, grade point average, change of major).

In a similar vein, the Georgetown Consortium, because of its special interest in learning additional languages, administered hundreds of structured oral proficiency interviews and also administered written tests and measures of intercultural development (*Van deBerg et al., 2006*). The Study Abroad for Global Engagement project focused on long-term impact on study abroad alumni (*Paige et al., 2009*). In addition to sending out several thousand mail surveys, it also conducted scores of intensive interviews. While the specifics of the methodology will be constrained and guided by the institutional or program variables of interest, consciously incorporating multiple methods into international service-learning research will help ensure robust, triangulated conclusions for the kinds of questions identified as salient for the field by researchers such as Tonkin (2011).

### **Recommendation: Accumulate Data from Diverse Institutions and Programs**

In a similar vein, assessing learning outcomes across a broad range of institutions and programs holds promise for producing more robust, generalizable, and replicable findings. As a system-wide initiative, for instance, GLOSSARI collected data from more than 30 colleges and universities. These included large Research I institutions, 4-year liberal-arts colleges, community colleges, and three historically Black institutions. This substantial number of institutions fielded scores of study abroad programs each year representing all regions, disciplines, and durations. For more labor-intensive data collecting procedures (pre- and post-study abroad surveys, for example), a smaller representative set of institutions (and the programs housed therein) participated.



In addition to the improved generalizability of such findings, this diversity also allows fine-grained comparisons among, say, students studying in Asia versus those studying in the South Pacific. Within the small subset of courses that international service-learning represents, a growing number of opportunities remain for developing research projects investigating programs from multiple universities in the same host country (e.g., programs in Costa Rica or South Africa), or even service-learning programs that engage students in similar service experiences in more than one international setting.

### **Recommendation: Compile Credible Comparison Groups**

Much research in international education simply describes student dispositions upon program completion and then attributes those dispositions to studying abroad (or to service-learning). More convincing research designs should at least compare students' performance after studying abroad with their performance just prior to studying abroad. But how does one know that increments in, say, Russian pronunciation accrued by students spending a month in St. Petersburg, Russia, are significantly higher than those achieved by students taking an intensive Russian class in St. Petersburg, Florida? As all students mature and learn across time (hopefully), it is necessary to compare students studying abroad with their peers who did not.

The trick, however, is determining just who counts as a "peer" to usefully compare with a study abroad (or international service-learning) participant. Students who study abroad are a select group on dimensions such as choice of major, socioeconomic status, grade point average, prior cosmopolitanism, and progress toward degree; similar distinctions could presumably be made for those who choose to take part in service activities through their international experiences. Skeptics of study abroad often point to the distinctiveness of its enrollees to refute claims about the value of international education. To ascertain the value-added dimension of studying abroad or of international service-learning, research designs must minimize these "confounding" factors as possible explanations for learning outcomes. Thus, for example, one ought to compare students who studied abroad as juniors with students who were juniors at the same time, but took the path of on-campus classes. Studies that simply compare graduation rates between first-year cohorts who studied abroad and those who did not are unconvincing. How meaningful is it to compare students who have



survived 2 years of college with those just starting out? (Across all U.S. institutions, 33% of college students stop at the end of their first year.)

In conducting GLOSSARI, immense effort was expended in compiling credible comparison groups. These carefully constructed comparison groups sometimes resulted in smaller effects for studying abroad than are shown by other studies, but the causal arguments these comparisons warrant are more compelling. In the international service-learning context, possible comparisons could be made not only between students who participate in a service-learning experience in a domestic or international version of the same course, but also between students in a given course taught abroad with and without service components (*cf. Eyster, 2011*).

### **Recommendation: Accumulate Large Samples**

Although many valuable insights are available only through small-*n*, intensive qualitative analyses, there is power (literally) in large sample sizes. With an initial sample size of more than 30,000 for some analyses, GLOSSARI was able to drill down and draw meaningful conclusions about participation rates (e.g., nearly 10% of the total were graduate students) and types (e.g., apparent heritage motivations among Asian Americans, who were disproportionately represented at Asian sites). Outcomes could be disaggregated for other subgroups (e.g., the improvement in graduation rate was especially pronounced for African Americans). With such a large sample size, a substantial number of GLOSSARI participants were financial aid recipients, and it was even possible to determine the effect of unmet financial need on program participation (e.g., even after statistically eliminating unmet financial need, African Americans were substantially less likely to study abroad than their White counterparts).

Although gathering a large set of data for international service-learning in particular is a challenging task, many of the fundamental research questions posed by Tonkin (2011) and others for the field could more readily and credibly be investigated through large-sample analysis. International service-learning courses are often quite small, but many programs are repeated annually; thus, collecting multiple years of data as well as collaborating across programs and institutions, as mentioned above, can help boost the explanatory power of such analyses.

## Conclusion

In setting out a research agenda for international service-learning, Tonkin (2011) reiterates the importance of investigating outcomes beyond student satisfaction with programs, especially focusing on longer-term variables of institutional interest:

Outcomes assessment is crucially important if study abroad and international experiences are to find a firm foothold in the curriculum and if curricular designers are to make wise decisions that earn the support of the executive leadership of the campus. Research needs to determine how [international service-learning] contributes to a student's readiness and preparedness to learn after returning to the home campus. (p. 208)

Bringle et al. (2011, pp. 285-287) argue that future "good research" on international service-learning should be guided by theory, involve clearly defined constructs, account for differences among groups, use psychometrically defensible measures with multiple indicators, use multiple methods with converging results across different methods, apply designs that result in confidence in the conclusions reached, and have "implications for teaching and learning in general." Achieving these goals for assessing international service-learning will be challenging. Attention to student academic outcomes, to using clearly defined and psychometrically defensible outcome measures, and to building a compelling evidence-based case for international service-learning stakeholders requires systemic approaches to evaluation. To attain that systematicity in building large databases across programs, institutions, and research methods, international service-learning educators will need an organizational hub and a commitment to collaboration among program administrators at various sites. Obtaining that commitment is difficult not only because good learning outcomes research requires an infusion of resources, but also because it requires courage to voluntarily submit one's program to an evaluation regime.

One sign that the time is ripe for this kind of concerted effort to anchor international service-learning in hard evidence of academic learning outcomes lies in the spate of recent influential critiques questioning the value added by higher education (Bok, 2006; Keeling & Hersch, 2011). Many of these critiques center on a perceived loss of focus on the core mission of academic learning. Arum and Roksa (2011), for example, contend that a contemporary college education

in the United States typically fails to impart critical thinking skills such as the capacity to make a compelling argument. In response to such critiques, consortia such as the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability (2012) are promoting systematic learning outcomes assessment much as this essay proposes for international service-learning. The recent precedent of systemic, large-scale outcomes assessment in the domain of conventional study abroad may provide models that the field of international service-learning can draw upon, and then improve.

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## **Alternative Break Programs: From Isolated Enthusiasm to Best Practices**

### **The Haiti Compact**

Jill Piacitelli, Molly Barwick, Elizabeth Doerr, Melody Porter,  
and Shoshanna Sumka

#### **Abstract**

Alternative break programs, which are short-term service-learning trips, immerse students in direct service and education, resulting in the creation of active citizens who think and act critically around the root causes of social issues. Over the last 20 years, domestic alternative breaks have effectively created strong community partnerships and fostered student development. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, universities around the United States were seeking opportunities to offer “hands on” aid, and the need for best practices to avoid potential pitfalls of international volunteerism became plainly apparent. In response, a small group of alternative breaks professionals from five U.S. universities came together with Break Away (the national alternative breaks nonprofit organization), to form the Haiti Compact. The Compact developed best practices for international alternative breaks, allowing staff and students to overcome potential harm done to communities while contributing to student learning and engagement. This essay shares those practices and their application to work in Haiti.

#### **Introduction**

**H**enri Dunant, contemporary of Florence Nightingale, became one of the world’s first international humanitarian aid workers, inspired by witnessing the carnage of a battle in 1859 (*Polman, 2010*). He reactively gathered together a group of volunteers and “doled out soup, wrote farewell letters to families on behalf of dying soldiers, and patted blood-encrusted hands comfortingly” (*Polman, 2010, p. 4*). Dunant and his party meant well, but in the end remained “isolated enthusiasts” making “dispersed efforts.” Experiences in modern-day international volunteerism often reflect both Dunant’s reactionary approach and his subsequent conclusions. A group of well-meaning foreigners are compelled by empathy to assist people facing the aftermath of a tragedy—or merely circumstances less fortunate than their own. Many times, their “help” makes little difference, and the volunteers’ enthusiasm diminishes through exhaustion and feelings of futility.

Such groups of young, idealistic humanitarians are common on college and university campuses across the United States. They are often active in alternative break programs in which students travel locally, nationally, and internationally to conduct direct service while focusing on targeted social justice issues. Alternative break programs have been grappling with ethical issues of student service work, especially in an international context, for several years. These issues are most prevalent in relief work that allows little time to perform appropriate needs assessment based on community input, and volunteer enthusiasm ebbs quickly. These challenges were seen both in a domestic context post-Hurricane Katrina and internationally after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. In these situations, university groups typically understand the challenges facing a community in need of disaster relief through the media rather than as seen by the community itself, and galvanized, well-intentioned university students offer “help” to “fix” these communities for just a short period of time based on this skewed perspective. Additionally, because of accessibility, university groups typically rely on large, international “community partners”—generally non-local third-party volunteer service organizations (such as Cross Cultural Solutions, Global Volunteers, United Planet, Projects Abroad)—to determine how to address these local issues. Staff from these organizations often speak English, their mission draws attention through a flashy website, and they define community need in terms that students can easily understand and fill. Such organizations make hands-on assistance to these communities possible for young, idealistic college students.

Relying on non-local partners, in which the community voice ultimately comes from headquarters in the United States, or on a quick and fragmented or reactive assessment of need, presents a real dilemma for ethical international engagement by universities. Who should we listen to, and how can we proceed with sensitivity to real community need given our limitations of time and distance? Additionally, the short-term nature of the projects where volunteers swoop in to “help” and then just as quickly return to the comfort of their home community raises questions about the positive impact of such experiences. How do universities ensure that students’ well-intended efforts translate into sustainable and effective service, rather than a superficial fix? Do short-term volunteer immersions make a positive impact, or do they cause harm? Are universities’ efforts isolated or too dispersed? Do student volunteers lack the necessary knowledge and experience to deliver adequate service work? Does service become a burden on some of the most ravaged communities? Beyond the physical exhaustion

inherent in some volunteer work, how do universities fight the even more harmful exhaustion of volunteers' attention span?

This essay will explore these questions for university service programs. The authors are campus professionals who work with alternative break programs. Through the lens of alternative breaks, this essay will provide practical suggestions for best practices in international service projects, and as a case study, will describe and reflect on experiences working together with Haitian organizations. Moreover, it will flesh out and show the key elements and values in a unique type of collaboration, the compact model—a best practice for university-based international service.

## Alternative Breaks Defined

Student-led service initiatives, now known as alternative breaks, began in the late 1980s and early 1990s as part of an overall surge of interest in institutionalizing community service on college campuses (*McHugh, 2004*). On an alternative break, a group of college students (usually 10–12 per trip) engage in volunteer service in a community away from home, typically for a week to three weeks, during time off from school (students' fall, winter, spring, weekend, or summer school breaks). Alternative breaks fit within the category of short-term immersion experiences, which also includes study abroad (*Jones, Rowan-Kenyon, Ireland, Niehaus, & Cilente Skendall, 2012*). The term “alternative” originated with college students who wanted to differentiate these experiences from “traditional” spring break travel. Although not much has been written about alternative breaks specifically, the pedagogical model is consistent with critical service-learning, which promotes education through a social justice lens (*Bowen, 2011; Doerr, 2011; Mitchell, 2008*).

The aim of alternative breaks is to contribute volunteer hours to communities in need through an asset-based approach, and to positively influence the life of the alternative breaker. Through these activities, alternative breakers gain the knowledge and experience to become “active citizens,” a term used throughout alternative break programs to describe those who take educated steps toward valuing and prioritizing their own communities through their life choices. On campuses across the country, alternative break participants return and immediately go into action: they create campus organizations related to the social issue, raise funds for the nonprofit organization with which they worked, and commit to internships within the nonprofit sector. For many participants, this deepened commitment to volunteering in their local community leads to a shift in their academic path.

## **National snapshot of alternative breaks.**

Alternative break trips focus on a particular social issue, such as (but not limited to) poverty, education reform, refugee resettlement, or the environment. As of 2012, the average campus alternative break program organizes 12 trips in which close to 150 students spend their breaks performing more than 5,200 hours of community service (*Break Away, 2012*). The exponential reach of this is significant. Most alternative break trips are led by students who, for several months prior to the trip, have engaged in a training course that focuses on leadership and social justice education. Topics include reflection facilitation, conflict management, non-formal curriculum development, communication, and asset-based approaches to volunteerism. Break Away, the national alternative breaks organization, estimates that in 2012, more than 68,000 students went on alternative spring breaks alone (not including other break periods), contributing more than 622,000 service hours. With this number of people involved, the impact of young people working toward positive change in their communities is significant.

Alternative breaks are defined by their use of the “Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break” established by Break Away: education, orientation, training, strong direct service, reflection, reorientation, social justice and diversity, and being drug- and alcohol-free (*Break Away, n.d.*).

## **Alternative breaks as critical pedagogy.**

Through education, community partner orientation, and skill-specific training, students learn about relevant social issues in the weeks leading up to the break, as well as the context in which they will be serving and the hard and soft skills required for their work. To this end, the student leaders plan issue-based educational sessions that focus on a variety of topics, including the sociocultural history of the region or country, background of the organization(s) with which students will work, and language skills. Additionally, students engage in pre-trip reflection activities in which they critically examine their prior knowledge of the issue as well as their potential biases about international development or the people with whom they will work. This pre-trip orientation process is necessary to urge students to begin thinking critically about their positionality in relation to the issue and the community with which they are working.

During the trip, alternative break groups complete projects in partnership with nonprofit organizations in their host communities, which may range from construction to awareness-raising to

assisting in a soup kitchen, for example. Concurrently, students engage in critical reflection—a dialogical process that “stimulates the learner to integrate observations and implications with existing knowledge and to formulate concepts and questions to deepen the learner’s understanding of the world and the root causes of the need for service” (*Jacoby, 1996, p. 10*). The reflection process is central to the critical service-learning pedagogy expected of quality alternative break programs. Critical reflection is contextualized within the service project and site. Through the continuous cycle of experiential learning and the dialogical process of reflection, students are challenged to think and react critically to problems faced by members of the communities with which they are involved. This process is rooted in Dewey’s theory of experiential learning (*Giles & Eyles, 1994*).

Being immersed in diverse environments enables participants to experience, discuss, and understand social issues in a significant way. Through reflection, students make connections between their pre-trip education and their experiences on the trips themselves. Critical reflection enables students to examine how their own identity relates to larger issues of structural inequality, power, privilege, and oppression. The intensity of the immersion experience increases the likelihood that participants will transfer their on-site experience back to their own communities, academic work, and career plans after the alternative break ends. Break Away calls this process reorientation; others might call it post-trip activism or continued engagement. The focus on post-trip engagement has the potential to expand the impact of breaks from the projects and the trips to a lifelong transformation for those involved.

The components of diversity and social justice enrich student experience and contribute to greater impact in communities. Students learn about and work on a social justice issue with a focus on root causes and with attentiveness to the value and necessity of diversity and inclusion in campus programs and community partnerships. Alternative breaks are also drug- and alcohol-free experiences, with a heavy emphasis on facilitated group and individual reflection. While the funding sources, leadership structure, size, and issue foci of alternative breaks are different at each university, the founding elements described above are consistent among nearly all universities with alternative break programs. The national organization Break Away works to train colleges and universities on these principles and offers resources to strengthen alternative break programs across the United States. In 1991, Michael Magevney and Laura Mann, two recent graduates who had been very involved in building a successful alternative break program

at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, gained the support of then-Chancellor Joe B. Wyatt and founded Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection as a national nonprofit organization. Their purpose was to gather the resources and best practices for alternative spring break programs being established on multiple campuses while helping others start similar programs.

Break Away began as a modest resource center for alternative breaks and has grown to be a national organization dedicated to developing lifelong active citizenship through quality alternative break programs. Currently, Break Away works with more than 150 member chapter schools, annually sponsors three large national trainings (the Alternative Breaks Citizenship Schools) and more than 20 regional weekend trainings for more than 125 campuses, and enriches break programs throughout the year with on-site and resource support. The organization also works with peer nonprofits, community partners, and higher education coalitions to promote and further best practices in student leadership, service, community impact, and social justice.

### **Alternative breaks and international service.**

International volunteerism in general has come under fire recently for its potential to do more harm to a community than good. International community partners may host students with low levels of language skill and cultural knowledge, which leads to increased use of the communities' resources and time to support student workers. For example, Birrell (2010) details the negative effects to local communities from volunteer efforts to aid children in South African and Cambodian orphanages. In his description of a Human Sciences Research Council report, Birrell writes,

Wealthy tourists prevent local workers from getting much-needed jobs, especially when they pay to volunteer; hard-pressed institutions waste time looking after them and money upgrading facilities; and abused or abandoned children form emotional attachments to the visitors, who increase their trauma by disappearing back home. (*para. 8*)

In addition to the harm done to the community, there is also the potential for students (or volunteers) to develop paternalistic and ethnocentric attitudes through service relationships. Simpson (2004) critiques the problematic nature of participants' preconceptions about poverty being confirmed rather than questioned through international service programs. Rosenberger (2000) states

that her concern for international service-learning came about because it “easily carries connotations of ‘doing good,’ of the ‘haves’ giving to the ‘have-nots,’ of ‘we’ serving ‘them’—perspectives that reproduce power” (p. 24). Dunant’s party of empathetic idealists looks very similar to such alternative break group participants. This essay intends to highlight the processes and pedagogy that can be put in place to redistribute the power relationships and create a critical awareness of the social issues. Action with only idealism and empathy certainly has the potential to do harm, but putting in place a reciprocal and collaborative structure among stakeholders has the potential to support transformative experiences for both the students and the community.

## Haiti as a Case Study

Because of the sudden outpouring of support to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, the authors of this essay felt compelled to seek out a means to respond responsibly. This section will describe the context and the process by which multiple universities formed a unique compact and, by doing so, created best practices of international service work from United States colleges and universities.

### The Context in Haiti

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, brought years of wrestling with the ethical issues of international service work to the forefront for Break Away and university alternative break programs throughout the United States. The outpouring of support for Haiti from people and organizations across the globe was impressive, and U.S. colleges and universities were no exception. Faculty and students organized fundraisers, supply drives, and educational and cultural events in support of the country just 700 miles from the U.S. coast. However, many students wanted to do more, and in the months following the earthquake, students traveled to Haiti to offer “hands-on” aid.

However, the risk to do harm in post-disaster situations, such as in Haiti, is great because of the loss of important resources and the particularly unstable political and environmental situation in-country. While some of this work was worthwhile, and surely most, if not all, was well-intentioned, this help was greeted with criticism from some in the international community. The United States State Department wrote in a January 20, 2011 travel warning:

Despite good intentions—[service workers’] travel to Haiti will increase the burden on a system already struggling to support those in need. Cash donations are the



most effective way to help the relief effort in Haiti, support the country's local economy, and ensure the assistance is both culturally and environmentally appropriate.

### **The Haiti Compact.**

As volunteers and aid poured into Haiti following the earthquake, questions of how to respond ethically and productively became acute for university service programs. In January 2010, Alternative Break staff at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) contacted Break Away's office to discuss how to best handle the influx of LMU students desiring service travel to Haiti. Break Away received similar calls in the following weeks, from other programs and the media, and worked quickly to convene a small group of alternative break staff from schools across the United States: the group now known as the Haiti Compact.

Under the leadership of Break Away, American University (Washington, DC), the College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, Virginia), Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles), Indiana University (Bloomington, Indiana), and the University of Maryland-College Park formed the Haiti Compact in April 2010 to commit to working together long-term with Haitians. At the time of formation, the group agreed to a first step: traveling (with students, where possible) to Haiti in June 2010 for an exploratory trip. If deemed advisable, judicious, realistic, and ethical, the group also agreed to commit to sending alternative breaks to Haiti each year for at least 4 years while developing and promoting best practices in international service.

During the 9-day exploratory trip, Haiti Compact members—a group of 16 student leaders and staff advisors of campus alternative break programs—met with more than 20 community organizations to learn about Haitians' perspectives on post-earthquake Haiti, address safety concerns, and build productive partnerships with Haitian-led organizations. (It should be noted that during the exploratory trip, 6 months after the earthquake, efforts by non-governmental organizations were transitioning from immediate relief work to long-term development and re-development. By the first anniversary of the earthquake, when students from the Haiti Compact arrived in-country, they were engaged solely in development work.)

Since the formation of the Haiti Compact, four of the five schools have sent successful alternative break trips (a total of nine trips to date). The other founding school and new compact



member (University of Connecticut) are still developing potential trips for future years. Break Away has been leading outreach efforts among Break Away chapter schools and others already involved in Haiti to engage more campuses to join the Haiti Compact. As the compact grows and each founding member school's 4-year commitment comes to an end, new compact member schools will remain involved for increased and sustained impact.

## **Rationale for the Haiti Compact Program**

The initial purpose of the Haiti Compact was to answer the following questions: What, if any, is the role of higher education in the relief and rebuilding efforts in Haiti? If there is a role, can potential partners in Haiti be pinpointed to help campuses in the United States engage in sustainable, responsible service work that is both meaningful to students and respectful of the Haitian people?

After the exploratory trip, however, the questions became more complex and broad. In response, the Haiti Compact has gone on to develop a more broad and complex model for international service that guards against the concerns of scattershot, uninformed, and episodic service, while building upon community assets and redistributing power in potentially harmful relationships.

From the outset, the collaborative compact model was central to success in sending productive alternative breaks to Haiti, and in developing and implementing best practices to engage ethically in international service.

## **The Compact Model**

Since the founding of the Haiti Compact in April 2010, the members have mutually developed the compact model. Composed of five key elements, compacts allow groups who would otherwise be working in isolation to connect and increase impact through shared practices.

### **A. Compelling and timely idea for action.**

Compacts succeed only when focused on issues of acute importance. In the case of the Haiti Compact, the distress and urgency faced by Haitians experiencing the earthquake and its aftermath—and the eager willingness of students to “do something”—coalesced into a compelling and timely call for focused action.

### **B. Identify and build a defined core.**

It is necessary to have a focused, committed group at the core of a compact, willing to pitch in for a certain length of time, with

detailed roles for members. As convener of the Haiti Compact, Break Away called together a specified number of service professionals (the five staff at founding member schools) for a clearly articulated commitment (exploratory trip, followed by 4 years of alternative break involvement in Haiti). Compact members quickly realized that regular communication would be necessary for progress on their shared goals, and agreed to participate in a weekly conference call. More than 2 years later, those calls have continued, and have proven to be vital in the growth and success of the compact. Further, when individuals (staff members or student leaders) transition out of their positions (as has happened for two of the founding staff members), ongoing communication and well-defined roles allow new staff in those positions to seamlessly join the work of the compact.

### **C. Hold a galvanizing event.**

The Haiti Compact has been a success in large part because of the shared trust and relationships among members. Any compact must have a way for members to develop their working and personal relationships, to provide a foundation of trust and accountability for the tasks ahead—essentially, to ensure that members are “all in.” In the case of the Haiti Compact, the galvanizing event was the exploratory trip. Alternative breakers know that such travel allows for fast intimacy, but this trip also provided space for and clarified the urgent need for high-level conversations and development of best practices.

### **D. Continue developing goals and deepen original commitment.**

Through ongoing communication and the learning that takes place through a galvanizing event, compacts are able to determine further goals and plans for action. In the case of the Haiti Compact, members wrote a report suggesting best practices for schools considering service in Haiti, collaborated on conference presentations and publications, and advanced work in advocacy for Haiti. The stability of the compact model has allowed patience for ongoing goal setting and adjustment as resources and relationships have deepened, additional knowledge and skills have developed, and potential collective action has opened up in ways that could not have been perceived at the start of work together.

### **E. Plan an exit and turnover of leadership.**

Although participating in a compact effectually multiplies available energy compared to performing service work in

relative isolation, it is not always feasible for members to commit indefinitely to such intensive work. Haiti Compact members have committed to 4 years of participation, and are expanding beyond founding schools so that other participants may further the collective work.

## **Benefits of the Compact Model in the Haiti Compact**

By working together as a compact around a critical issue, with each member playing defined roles, sharing the experience of a galvanizing event, staying in regular communication, further developing mutual goals, and knowing when it is time to pass the torch, the Haiti Compact has experienced several benefits. Members are able to build capacity for and with each other and Haitian partners, collaboratively develop crucial resources, hold each other accountable to key principles of social justice, and develop productive community partnerships.

### **Building capacity.**

With the resources of six strong organizations and the people power they represent, the compact was able to build shared capacity. When traveling to Haiti for the exploratory trip, compact members met with a more diverse group of organizations than a single member could have reached alone. Doing so helped members to see the variety of structures, missions, and approaches of nonprofits in Haiti, and to determine which kinds of organizations are best suited for alternative breaks.

Each member school sending trips to Haiti has established relationships with one or two nongovernmental organizations; as the compact expands, multiple campuses will work with each organization. Compact members will build capacity for partners in Haiti by streamlining communication and make a more focused impact through coordinating successive service, so that one group can pick up where a previous group left off.

The compact model has also proven helpful in developing the professional staff members of the Haiti Compact. Weekly conference calls allow members to move forward with compact goals, and allow a forum for members to grapple with broader issues of international service and social justice, holding each other to a high standard. Each member program has grown in depth and sophistication because of the challenging conversations that compact members have held in a context of trust and support.

## **Developing resources.**

The compact has collaborated to develop resources for education, advocacy, safety, and risk management protocols. At the University of Maryland and the College of William and Mary, risk management systems were created for alternative breaks to Haiti, but have been beneficial for all international alternative breaks (and will be a helpful resource for other campuses that develop such breaks).

Compact members worked together to write a 60-page report describing lessons learned on the exploratory trip, recommendations for other alternative break programs, and potential host site summaries. In addition, the report offered tips for assessing capacity to organize an alternative break in Haiti, gaining university approval, and sharing resources for planning the experience. The report-writing process also helped members work through the questions related to ethics and international service presented earlier in this essay. Collecting information on the exploratory trip and distilling it to a single resource to be shared broadly across the United States has allowed other campuses to easily learn from the compact's experience.

## **Principles of social justice.**

The trip also called compact members to take a critical view of international service with United States students, and of the ethical implications involved when students from largely privileged backgrounds travel to lower-income communities and countries to conduct service. The meetings and conversations during the exploratory trip solidified their resolve to collaborate on international service and to encourage others to do so in a responsible, thoughtful, and deliberate way. Even one year after the earthquake, Haiti quickly became subject to isolated, sporadic, and waning enthusiasm from United States student groups. The compact, however, had developed shared enthusiasm for a more ongoing and sustainable partnership model.

Compact members developed shared common values and commitments that hold each member program and individual staff member accountable to principles of social justice. The following values are useful in work with Haiti, but are applicable to all considering the dynamics of power and complexities of international service.

- Education: learning about the historical, political, and economic background of Haiti and United States involvement, to provide context for the current situation

- Social justice: concentrating on a social justice issue and participating in direct service related to that issue with a focus on root causes rather than unsustainable service delivery
- Sustainability and reciprocity: avoiding the displacement of local labor and developing capacity-building projects in concert with host sites while empowering Haitians in their own development
- Advocacy and action: continuing to advance advocacy and action as students return to their home communities

In developing partnerships with organizations in Haiti, compact members have agreed to make realistic commitments on which members can follow through. The compact also developed intentional principles for members of the Haiti Compact, as it is a unique collaborative effort among several universities and a national nonprofit. For example, members employ horizontal decision-making to ensure clarity of shared purpose, through weekly conference calls, regular check-ins, and sharing of resources. When one university confronts a challenge, the rest of the compact is eager to step in and help brainstorm ways to overcome the problem. Group problem-solving has proved to be a valuable component in ensuring that not only are the trips safe for students, but that members follow through with compact values in partnership development.

### **Developing tools to create productive partnerships.**

During the exploratory trip, while seeking various partner possibilities, the compact developed an International Host Site Rubric. The rubric codifies and envisions how common values, such as education, social justice versus charity approach, commitment to community voice, safety and security, and community development and sustainability look in action. While in-country, the rubric guided conversations with potential host sites, determining whether basic needs were supported (capacity to accommodate United States volunteers, projects that could be completed by relatively unskilled college students) and whether potential hosts also shared compact values.

Committing to shared values expressed in the rubric sharpened the focus of the compact's work in developing productive partnerships. Haiti, a country that Paul Farmer (2010) has referred to as the "republic of NGOs," has hundreds of nonprofits with

which students could work. The International Host Site Rubric allows alternative break leaders to determine which agencies and organizations best suit each university's ability to contribute in responsible ways and calls programs to closely examine practices in all aspects of alternative breaks. The rubric reflects several values outlined above, particularly avoiding displacement of local labor, partnering with grassroots Haitian organizations, and prioritizing long-term partnerships. These common standards have enabled compact members to develop partnerships that allow for a greater impact in collaboration with Haitian communities. Also, in seeking out university partnerships, the compact agrees that coordinating with the Haitian government, when possible, is vital.

### **The International Host Site Rubric.**

The International Host Site Rubric was critical to progress for the Haiti Compact, but can be used to distinguish between weak and strong community partnerships in alternative break programs, both internationally and domestically.

The rubric highlights multiple categories to consider when building relationships with community organizations. The categories can be divided into two main areas. One area deals with the more philosophical, ethical, value-driven, and educational components, such as community-identified needs, social issues addressed, other existing partnerships, the balance between strong direct service projects and educational components, community development and sustainability, not displacing local labor, post-break student reorientation, and potential for continued engagement with the community and with social issues. The second area deals with more practical and logistical concerns, such as housing, security, transportation, meals, capacity to work with a volunteer team, language barriers, and having a primary contact person willing and able to work with university coordinators and student leaders.

The characteristics in each category occur in a continuum of partnership potential ranging from weakest to strongest (left to right). The rubric suggests that the strongest community partners will incorporate all aspects on the far right of the scale. When determining partnerships, it is important to aim for the far right column, and if aspects fall in the middle section, to realize that the partnership will be more complex and require more support and time invested in developing a working relationship. The rubric advises strongly against sending college-age volunteers to work with any community organization that falls on the far left of the scale.

**Table 1. Rubric for Assessing International Community Partnership Development Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection/The Haiti Compact June 2010**

	Weakest	—————>	Strongest
<b>Housing</b>	Doesn't provide and has no suggestions.	Doesn't provide, but has connections, or does provide, but at a high cost.	Provides on-site. Low or no cost.
<b>Security</b>	Actively downplays need for security, despite other trustworthy warnings.	Will need to find/provide own or site is able to hire.	On-site, included in cost.
<b>On-Site Access</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transportation</b></li> <li>• <b>Cooks</b></li> <li>• <b>Translators</b></li> </ul>	No capacity for this.	Has connections or is willing to help make them.	Has or can arrange for a "full package" according to need at an appropriate group cost and fair wage.
<b>Personality of Host Site Connection</b>	Had an extremely difficult time, for whatever reason, communicating in person and online.	A bit guarded in person and erratic communication beforehand. May warm up to be friendly and reliable in communication. Has worked in role for over a year.	Understands the alternative break concept, is excited to host group, and has been helpful, responsive, and even innovative in working with the group. Can articulate goals of organization and projects succinctly. Has been with organization for multiple years.
<b>Capability to work with a 10-12 member volunteer team</b>	Does not have capability or interest.	Hasn't worked with volunteer groups in the past but is willing, or has worked with volunteer groups before, but may lack capacity for 10–12 participants.	Has a volunteer coordinator/direct supervisor, who has demonstrated understanding of the workload that can be carried by a large group and has indicated this through projects developed.
<b>Language</b>	Translator absolutely needed. No e-mail, no phone.	Limited ability to communicate due to language barrier and limited use of technology. Ability to communicate thanks to their and our use of several languages.	Contact is fluent in English and in other languages of the region. Ability to communicate through e-mail and phone. Friends with us on Facebook.
<b>Potential for long-term partnership</b>	Unstable—don't call us, we'll call you, if we're around next year at this time.	Interested—doesn't know feasibility. We would have to work hard on our end to build capacity and long-term relationship.	Pursuing next steps with alternative break group. Has an established rapport with community. Has other well established, clear, and identified partnerships with groups that may look like our own.

**Table 1. Continued: Rubric for Assessing International Community Partnership Development Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection/ The Haiti Compact June 2010**

	<b>Weakest</b>	—————→	<b>Strongest</b>
<b>Need</b>	High level of bureaucracy. Our group is at the end of the trickle down.	Will work with us, but we're not doing them any favors—or has need and will use alternative break group to both serve immediate needs and capacity build.	High need; grassroots-level work. Volunteer groups are part of capacity building in a sustainable way as well as meeting some pressing and immediate needs for labor and resources.
<b>Issue Specificity</b>	Very broad or scatter-shot. We had to work hard to understand issue(s) of concern.	Many issues; range of less developed and well developed projects or depth. No sense of education around the project.	Clearly defined vision and mission and population served. Conversations with host site generate deeper interest in educational component and possibilities for later advocacy. Projects are related directly to social issue of organization.
<b>Current Partnerships</b>	None.	Unilateral "partnership" or brokers strong partnerships with other organizations.	They are their community. Very symbiotic relationships meshed into the organization. Their work is not just their issue, but community organizing and supporting other organizations.
<b>Education/Direct Service</b>	Weak in both.	Strong in one, no ties or limited ability to help in the other.	30% education, 70% direct service. Direct service based on needs assessment conducted by community.
<b>Community Development Sustainability</b>	We are doing work that could/should be done by locals and have very little interaction with members of the community.	We are working with a few members of the community, but mostly carrying out the ideas of an outside organization as outsiders. We may be having some welcome conversations about creating community-building projects.	Our group of volunteers is not displacing local employment, but is creating funds and supporting efforts at self-sufficiency and dignity. The community sees and understands our role and looks forward to our working side by side with them. We can "pass the torch" of our work to other groups and involve them in a long-term effort.

Application of the International Host Site Rubric will differ for each university's unique alternative break program, depending on what they are looking for in a partnership. The rubric can serve as a guide to create a questionnaire when talking to a new community organization, or to analyze an existing partnership. It can also be



used as a training tool to help students understand the complex nature of university-community partnerships.

## **Best Practices Emerging from the Haiti Compact**

Through the compact model, a number of best practices have proven transferable to other international contexts as they have arisen. This section outlines the products that have come out of the partnership.

### **Partnerships rubric.**

The International Host Site Rubric has proven to be a critical tool for developing quality alternative break programs in Haiti. The examples provided here can serve as a model for best practices in assessing whether to work with a specific nonprofit organization.

In summer 2011, a student group at the College of William and Mary expressed interest in developing a second alternative break trip to Haiti. The students had a long-term partnership with a specific international nongovernmental organization, having worked with them in a country other than Haiti. This organization's primary focus is connecting students to opportunities for service in developing countries. As plans for the trip progressed, the students began to reconsider the partnership because of concerns that they were displacing local labor and, without local Haitian leadership, were not providing a sustainable service. The students ended their relationship with that organization, based on conversations using the rubric and shared values from their advisor.

American University has had extensive experience working directly with community partner organizations internationally and decided as a university to focus their work in Haiti on women's economic empowerment. Housing and transportation were obtained through a student whose family resided in Haiti during their March 2011 trip. Therefore, those categories on the rubric were not weighted as heavily as seeking an organization that was Haitian-run and focused on women's issues. American University decided to partner with Fonkoze, a microfinance institution whose mission is "building the economic foundations for democracy in Haiti by providing the rural poor with the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty" (<http://www.fonkoze.org>). After establishing that partnership, they were able to work directly with individuals and personal connections to ensure that all needs were met for the students on the trip.

In contrast, the University of Maryland, after consulting the rubric, decided the best possible option for their unique program needs was to work with an international organization that offered services for visiting groups, in addition to their primary focus of serving their community through issue-based direct services. Because there is an ongoing State Department travel warning in Haiti, the Alternative Breaks program at the University of Maryland had to go through a unique proposal process with the university's risk management committee. It took over a year and half to get the trip approved, and the decision to work with an established host organization, the Mennonite Central Committee, was important for obtaining the approval. Fitting within the far right continuum in all categories on the rubric, the Mennonite Central Committee provided all the material needs to keep the group safe and healthy (e.g., housing, food, local transportation). Further, the host organization took utmost care to ensure that the volunteers' activities would do no harm to the communities. Their requirement that service groups take part in a week of education about Haiti before conducting any projects reflects this concern.

### **Work plans.**

Another best practice for strong community relationships that the Haiti Compact observes is creating work plans in partnership with host organizations, as developed by Northwestern University in its Global Engagement Summer Institute. Students and hosts establish goals and objectives they will achieve together during their alternative break, determine what resources are needed to achieve those goals, and decide on final measures of success. Use of this tool facilitates conversation between students and hosts, and helps hold both sides accountable to the principles of mutuality and capacity-building.

An example of utilizing the work plan to facilitate targeted discussion about project-based service is the College of William and Mary's work with Sonje Ayiti for their January 2012 trip to Haiti. The following highlights reflect the nature of the work plan that student trip leaders developed with Sonje Ayiti contacts.

- The host partner's goal: "Build capacity for [a women's economic cooperative] to operate a profitable business selling value-added food products."
- Activities to achieve that goal: "Meet with members to develop documents and practices of operational activities. Together, write a business plan and marketing plan."

- Required resources: “Internet access while overseas to exchange documents, printed materials for meetings, audiovisual equipment if possible.”
- Outcomes: “One completed business plan and one completed marketing plan.”

For the University of Maryland and its community partner organization, much of the work on-site consisted of education around disaster relief. Thus, many of the goals were not just project- or direct-service-related, but focused on teaching students about the challenges of disaster relief in Haiti in light of the sociopolitical history of the country. Because the organization values education and advocacy for visiting volunteers, the host country staff can provide a comprehensive look at development in Haiti from the perspective of numerous social issues. The work plan helped the trip leaders define what resources they needed in order to help their participants reflect on relevant social issues while in Haiti. When they returned from the trip, the work plan was utilized to track the advocacy activities the group engaged in post-trip. Because post-trip advocacy is so important, this aspect of the work plan helps the trip leaders design educational programming.

As the Haiti Compact develops and grows over the coming years, work plans will be useful in tracking the member schools’ collective impact. The most important aspect to the work plans, however, is already being achieved by establishing a formalized process that allows student leaders to engage in meaningful discussions with community partner agencies to establish trust and work together to achieve community-identified goals.

### **The compact model.**

In addition to tools used by the Haiti Compact in developing strong and productive partnerships (the host site rubric and work plans), the model of a compact itself has emerged as a best practice for international service work. As previously indicated, compacts allow individual alternative break programs to be more effective through the power of committed, well-defined collaboration. Without having worked as a compact to develop shared resources (including risk management procedures), three of the five member schools likely would not have been permitted by university administration to plan trips with their students.

## **Future Research**

Although compact members have seen multiple positive outcomes from working together, more research is needed to determine the Haiti Compact's long-term impact. Two questions are particularly relevant: (1) What is the collective input of students in working with Haitian organizations and advocating on related issues? (2) What is the effect of short-term student involvement, in the context of long-term partnerships, in communities in Haiti?

## **Sustained Enthusiasm After a Disaster**

Seven years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast of the United States, college volunteers continue to work on rebuilding through alternative breaks and other service trips. Students and professionals involved in university-based service work were motivated to quickly and enthusiastically participate in relief, and, subsequently, in development work. In their eagerness, however, they missed the opportunity to garner a sense of the overall long-term involvement of students in rebuilding efforts. The Haiti Compact has the opportunity to capture involvement in Haiti's redevelopment by member schools and other university-based service groups with whom the compact has connected.

## **Understanding the Effects of Student Involvement in Communities**

A second and more complex concern is the need for service-learning professionals to understand the effect of student involvement in communities. How does student volunteerism, learning, and advocacy create positive change in communities, in organizations with whom students partner, and on the broader social issues addressed by alternative breaks? Through Break Away, the Haiti Compact has wrestled with these questions along with other campus service advisors. Break Away now has a relationship with graduate students at New York University's Wagner School of Public Policy who have begun work in exploring and developing tools that alternative break participants can use to consistently capture the collective impact of alternative breaks on communities and social issues in Haiti and across the United States.

Assessing community impact also offers an opportunity to differentiate between collective and isolated efforts in service work. How do the impacts of Haiti Compact schools differ from those of schools carrying out their own, unilateral partnerships with organizations in Haiti? As the Haiti Compact expands and more than one campus works with each community partner, do the effects of

students' service multiply exponentially because of the practice of sequential service (one group picking up where the previous group left off, with coordination assistance by the schools themselves)?

Additionally, noting that Haiti Compact schools prioritize working with Haitian-led and grassroots organizations, there is an opportunity for research on the various impacts possible when working with community-based partners in contrast to larger, international nongovernmental organizations. Is the impact different when the projects students engage in are determined by local leadership and students develop relationships primarily with local community members, rather than internationally-based go-betweens?

## Conclusion

The utter shock of the 2010 disaster in Haiti placed that ever-important question squarely and persistently in front of all the world: "What do we do?" Ruth Messinger of the American Jewish World Service has eloquently identified the propensity to "retreat to the convenience of being overwhelmed" (*Haven*, 2009). Alternative break and higher education service practitioners found immediate strength in working together to not retreat, but rather face and work through the challenges and the demanding investment of time and resources. The Haiti Compact organized around the idea that institutions of higher learning are in an ideal position to collaborate in ways that can address the potential pitfalls and damage caused by irresponsible service.

## Compact Collaboration as Best Practice

Individual alternative break programs are effectively applying best practices for service-learning experiences, domestically and internationally. By collaborating in compacts, university programs can intensify their effectiveness on the participating individuals, the host community, and the social issues. Establishing a five-school compact to carry out direct service in Haiti has allowed for creation of practices, relationships, and work plans that are particularly attentive and sensitive to power and privilege, oppression, and exploitation in service work internationally.

Working in a compact format has enabled participants to build meaningful relationships and identify multiple levels of local partnerships, leading to streamlined direct service and education plans in Haiti and advocacy in the United States. Having created risk management resources, work plans, and an evaluative rubric, as well as having acquired personal experience, the compact can now

informatively encourage more campuses in planning the daunting logistical and politically loaded work in Haiti.

In Year 2 of the compact's work in Haiti, communication among compact members continues to be essential. Moving forward, the compact uses weekly discussions to effectively address challenges and ultimately draw in more members with goals of planning sequential direct service with collaborative shared assessment. Notably, the Haiti Compact has been key in creating a high level of accountability in carrying on with this difficult work and in persisting in the principles of social justice—with the intention to call on others within higher learning to do the same.

## Confronting Challenges

Again, the challenges of international service work absolutely do not outweigh the need to engage with injustices in the world and to do so responsibly. The Haiti Compact calls upon other institutions of higher education to join this work for an even greater collaboration in assessing collective impact, sharing knowledge and relationships, creating and abiding by responsible and best practices, and building capacity within volunteer programs and in host communities. The compact model can be effectively applied to other service projects and programs. Community need and catalytic educational opportunity continue to meet at the crossroads in many international settings. If we are to utilize the passion, skills, and power of young people and volunteerism, we must engage wisely and together.

## Acknowledgment

The Haiti Compact thanks Lisa Hendricks and Courtney Holder (University of Maryland), Jessica Viramontes (Loyola Marymount University), and Gina DeVivo-Brassaw (University of Connecticut) for their help in editing and proofing this material.

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## **Going Global: Re-Framing Service-Learning in an Interconnected World**

Nuria Alonso García and Nicholas V. Longo

### **Abstract**

This essay argues for the importance of re-framing international service-learning as global service-learning. This includes recognizing the entire “ecology of education,” the interconnected web of relationships in which learning can occur at home and abroad. It draws upon the experiences of developing a new program in global studies at Providence College that focuses on civic engagement with global and local communities, along with interviews and a focus group with majors in the program. The essay concludes with a call for using service-learning as a vehicle to educate global citizens not merely as a one-time experience, but rather as part of an integrated curricular process.

Our systems of education have long given us far too little information about lives outside our borders, stunting our moral imaginations. (Nussbaum, 2002)

### **Literature Review: Internationalizing the Campus**

The impact of globalization processes in societies worldwide has fostered a commitment among higher education institutions in the United States to internationalize their campuses. Faculty members and administrators, often in response to student demand, are recognizing the importance of bringing global perspectives into the undergraduate experience (Fischer, 2007; Stearns, 2009). In 2001, the Association of American Colleges and Universities launched the Shared Futures project to engage colleges and universities in conversations about envisioning and enacting global learning models (Hovland, McTighe Musil, Skilton-Sylvester, & Jamison, 2009). Similarly, the American Council on Education initiated Global Learning for All to provide good practices for setting internationalizing goals on campuses with large numbers of minority, adult, and part-time students (Olson, Evans, & Shoenberg, 2007). Concurrently, study abroad programs and international branch campuses throughout the world have experienced significant growth (Lewin, 2009; Stearns, 2009), supporting the efforts to bring global learning to courses across the curriculum among 2-year and 4-year institutions (Fischer, 2007, 2008). Yet, as Derek Bok (2006) contends, “It is a safe bet that a majority of undergraduates complete their four years with very little preparation either as

citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them” (p. 233).

Thus, the focus on international service-learning comes at an important time for the future of higher education. Although the number of undergraduates participating in international education experiences is still small, it is expanding rapidly. A survey conducted by the American Council on Education (*Siaya, Porcelli, & Green, 2002*) found that at a time when 90% of the American public agreed that knowledge about international issues is important to careers of younger generations, slightly more than 270,000 U.S. college students studied abroad for credit in 2009–2010—just more than 1% of all students enrolled in U.S. higher education. Nevertheless, participation in study abroad has more than tripled over the past two decades, according to Open Doors, the Institute of International Education’s annual survey (2011) of student mobility, funded by the U.S. Department of State. Much of the increase over the past 10 years has come from short-term programs (8 weeks or less), which now represent 56% of total study abroad participation; semester-long programs have remained relatively flat at just under 40%, while participation in long-term programs of a year has fallen to less than 4% (*Institute of International Education, 2011*).

It is within this context that a pedagogy that connects study abroad, international education, and service-learning appears promising. International service-learning has been defined by Bringle and Hatcher (2011) as

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

International service-learning is a growing field, as this thematic issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* illustrates, and it has the potential to meld the efforts to internationalize with the evolving movement to revitalize the civic mission of higher education. About three quarters of colleges and universities in the United States have an infrastructure in

place with centers of service-learning and civic engagement along with majors, minors, and career tracks for directors of community engagement. This apparatus can promote and support international service-learning and, more broadly, can internationalize campuses (Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011). However, a wide disconnect remains between civic engagement and internationalization. According to Hovey and Weinberg (2009), “the civic engagement literature is still almost entirely focused on the domestic U.S. communities of students or the university neighborhood” (p. 39). A leading rubric by which campuses can judge their own progress toward the institutionalization of service-learning (Furco, 2002) makes no mention of international service-learning or internationalizing efforts.

An increasing number of campuses, however, are bridging this divide in interesting ways, including (1) academic units, such as the Institute for Global Citizenship at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, which houses offices of civic engagement and international studies; (2) global programs such as the University of Massachusetts Medical School’s Pathway on Multiculturalism, which focuses on linkages between domestic immigrant communities and international experiences to prepare future doctors; (3) curricular programs such as Acting Locally at Miami University, which helps students understand the impact of globalization on Southwest Ohio through community engagement; and (4) academic majors such as global studies at Providence College (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2010; Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011). These initiatives help to integrate international and civic efforts by deliberately connecting the local with the international through service-learning, while framing the efforts as global.

## Shifting to a Global Ecology of Education

As the interest and research generated by international service-learning will most certainly continue to grow in the coming years, this is an important time to examine—and challenge—the conceptual frameworks currently being offered for this area of study. It is recognized that some of the most powerful learning takes place while students are engaged in service internationally, but an exclusive focus on what learners experience “over there” is too limited in scope. The partnerships are international, but the service fosters learning that can be understood as global, if one is asking critical global questions in conversation with globally focused partners. Global inquiry should be linked to local engagement practices, as many of the goals for international service-learning can actually be met through community engagement at local levels. This essay

argues for the importance of “going global” in all aspects of the service and education, and for shifting to the concept of global service-learning, meaning that engaged learning and research would occur whether the service is taking place in neighborhoods right next to campus or across the world.

A focus on the global rather than on the international dimension of service is more holistic and less linear—moving from location to ways of thinking, from nation-states to networks of relationships, and from divisions (international versus local) to interconnections.

**Table 1. International vs. Global**

<b>International</b>	<b>Global</b>
Nation-state	Networks of relationships
Location-based	Ways of thinking
Divisions	Interconnections
Linear	Holistic

Peter Stearns (2009) presents the arguments for using the language of “global” in *Educating Global Citizens in Colleges and Universities*. He advocates for the global focus of education, noting that one of the primary criticisms of “global” is that it is the language used in K-12 efforts, while “international” is more common in higher education. He states that “international”—which he calls “slightly dated”—still tends to privilege the nation-state and has been the focus of area studies programs that do not direct much attention to larger transnational systems. Global education, on the other hand,

Must involve not only a sensitive study of different cultural traditions and institutional frameworks, with the analytical skills attached, but also an appreciation of the kinds of forces that bear on societies around the world—including the United States, and how these forces have emerged. (Stearns, 2009, p. 15)

Global training, he argues, requires attention to things like migration patterns, to cultural dissemination, to the role of transnational institutions—both formal agencies and nongovernmental organizations—and the technologies that tie the world together (Stearns, 2009, p. 15; see also Pomerantz, 2008).

The concept that perhaps best captures our understanding of this shift toward global service-learning is thinking about learning as part of an “ecology of education” (Cremin, 1976), which recognizes that education takes place in multiple, interconnected settings. A principle of ecology is that each living organism has an ongoing and continual relationship with every other element that makes up its environment (Ecology, 2012). Thus, in our educational ecosystem there is interdependence and interconnection between the different elements of the whole system. Applying the principles of ecology to education begins with the recognition that not only do many institutions support educative growth, but also that the different places, people, events, and institutions offering learning opportunities are related to one another in a potential learning web (Longo, 2007). Applying the concept of ecology of education to international service-learning requires learners and educators to “think globally,” regardless of whether the service is taking place in local or international settings, and to recognize the interconnectedness of these communities.

Hovey and Weinberg (2009) note that this way of thinking—using the ecology of education—“can be used as a guiding concept” for “educational activities beyond the borders of our local communities and nation” (p. 39). Citing a series of programs, including the School for International Training, a leading study abroad program that connects the international with the civic, they conclude that “much of the gain as global citizens may actually take place through the reentry process” (p. 43). They continue that this is where “students come back with the commitments and capacities to engage in public work across national and cultural differences in order to create a better world” (p. 46). Conceptualizing international service work as global makes the interconnected aspects of the ecology of education—from preparation for international service to re-entry—more apparent.

## **Overcoming the Views That Students are Unprepared and Actually Do Harm**

The issues of preparation, international service, and re-entry, especially when taken in isolation, are among those most commonly criticized within the field of international service-learning and global education. For instance, in a reflection on her experiences as a study abroad participant, a student questions whether study abroad—and by extension, international service-learning—can educate students for global citizenship. She writes that American college students’ international experiences “may inadvertently be a

recipe for the perpetuation of global ignorance, misunderstanding, and prejudice.” She concludes, “There is a vast discrepancy between the rhetoric of international education and the reality of what many students like myself experience while abroad” (*Zemach-Bersin, 2008*).

Ivan Illich’s (1993) provocative speech, “To Hell With Good Intentions,” calls into question the very idea of international service-learning. Illich makes known his opposition to North American “do-gooders” in Latin America and challenges the value of the work conducted by international volunteers for the communities they hope to serve. He concludes that *international visitors* are welcome as travelers or students, but not as volunteers. Illich (1993) writes: “Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help” (p. 460). He challenges international organizations to think not only about the training of their volunteers, but also about “spending money to educate poor Mexicans in order to prevent them from the culture shock” of meeting with Western students (p. 459).

Additionally, as with all international experiences, issues of re-entry can be a challenge for students returning from international service (*Kiely, 2004, 2011*). Kiely’s longitudinal research on students involved in an international service-learning course in Nicaragua documents the transformational aspects of community-based learning in international settings. These aspects include a “chameleon complex” upon re-entry: That is, students often have difficulty translating their transformations into action in the different settings to which they return. As a result, Kiely (2004) suggests a series of strategies for faculty “to help students turn their emerging global consciousness . . . into meaningful action” (p. 17). These include asking students to develop a contract specifying actions they hope to take when they come back home.

Although not a panacea, a focus on global service-learning provides a more solid conceptual foundation for overcoming these criticisms, as a global framing more readily supports establishing connections among learning on campus, service in the local community, and international service. These relationships also allow multiple points for reflection during pre- and post-service experiences on the limitations and potential harm done through international engagement. For instance, in this model of global service-learning, students spend time preparing for international service—often through service in local communities and through academic coursework that includes analyzing the essays mentioned above, among other relevant literature—and they critically reflect and build upon the international service experience when

they return. Of course, a simple shift to the more expansive language of “global” does not ensure that these issues are addressed in a thoughtful manner; yet, as argued above, the language of “global” seems a more appropriate conceptual lens to frame these efforts.

In short, the critiques of Zemach-Bersin (2008), Illich (1993), and Kiely (2004, 2011) present important—even existential—questions for international service-learning, but these are equally relevant issues for service-learning performed in local communities close to campus. Expanding the “ecology of education” and seeing all of our efforts as global can lead to actions that more forcefully address these issues: recognizing the interconnections among local and international service, preparation, and re-entry, and the global issues that emerge in our increasingly interconnected world.

## **Cosmopolitan Education in Local, Neighborly Communities**

The foundation for service-learning draws upon the writing of John Dewey (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Giles & Eyster, 1994; Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997). Dewey is an equally important starting point in shifting toward global service-learning. At first glance, there seems to be a disconnect between John Dewey’s premise that educating for democracy must begin “at home” in a “neighborly community” and the declaration among proponents of global education for cosmopolitan education that provides information about “lives outside our borders” (Nussbaum, 2002; Stearns, 2009).

“The world around us is inescapably international,” Martha Nussbaum (1997) writes, arguing for the need to educate students to be “citizens of the world.” She continues, “issues from business to agriculture, from human rights to the relief of famine, call our imaginations to venture beyond narrow group loyalties and to consider the reality of distant lives” (p. 10). However, might educating “citizens of the world,” as Nussbaum suggests, mean simply preparing a group of detached, un-rooted globalists (Tarrow, 2006), unable to recognize the importance of local cultures and identities, with little experience solving tangible, real-world problems? As Esteva and Prakash (1998) argue, “To make ‘a difference,’ actions should not be grandiosely global, but humbly local” (p. 21). Nevertheless, is simply building local, democratic communities, at least partially, a failure to give students an introduction to the interdependent, *globalized* world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

These potential tensions, between the local and the international, can be an opportunity for educators using the pedagogy



of service-learning. By framing service-learning efforts globally—that is, as opportunities to learn about the interconnectedness of the world—local, community-based service-learning provides an ideal opportunity for cosmopolitan education. Likewise, service-learning in an international context is one of the most significant ways that students can learn about the importance of revitalizing “neighborly communities.”

These lessons become apparent in communities around the globe. The shrinking distinction between the local and international, for instance, can be seen in the work of a highly regarded campus-community partnership called the Jane Addams School for Democracy (*Kari & Skelton, 2007; Longo, 2007*). By working in reciprocal partnerships with immigrant communities such as that of the West Side of St. Paul, Minnesota—which has been dubbed “the Ellis Island of the Midwest”—college students at the Jane Addams School learn about the languages, cultures, and stories of other peoples, often taking them many miles away from their current neighborhoods.

At Jane Addams School, college students work with Hmong refugees on a series of community-identified projects ranging from preparation for the U.S. citizenship exam to school reform. Reciprocity in these collaborative projects requires students to gain a deep level of understanding of the unique history and culture of the Hmong people, learning about the United States’ secret war in Laos during the Vietnam War, and the horrific—and inspiring—journeys that brought these “freedom people” to the United States. Moreover, the everyday challenges facing the immigrant and refugee communities in this neighborhood—things like poverty, discrimination, a lack of jobs, limited access to healthy food, and inadequate public education—are global problems that cannot be addressed solely at the local level.

Likewise, the importance of local knowledge can be seen with service in international communities. In a project conducted by linguist Alonso García, students at Providence College worked with indigenous populations in Michoacán, Mexico, on the loss of language and identity. Students involved in this kind of project can witness the gradual disintegration of core community values, as tensions between modernity and tradition are starting to erupt among its members. Globalization has attracted followers from the younger generations, who now perceive traditional community customs as *démodé* and futile. The ideological disparity between older and younger generations is growing larger under



the unremitting power of globalization, inevitably resulting in the endangerment of native heritages.

International service helps students see that local, indigenous languages are particularly vulnerable since they are not considered prestigious or valuable enough for engaging in the global dialogue. In a global society, language embodies the intellectual wealth of the people who speak it, and it is used to construct meaning in ways that are natural and relevant to the needs dictated by the local society. In this sense, language and cultural identity are inseparable, and the loss of language represents the irretrievable loss of localized knowledge and intellectual diversity (*Hale, 1992, p. 36*). Students doing service in communities such as Michoacán learn about intergenerational struggles within indigenous communities to preserve their heritage as a result of the spread of a global culture well-known to American students, a culture that is threatening cultural and linguistic identities around the world.

In short, these stories illustrate that working with local communities in the United States (like the Hmong in St. Paul) can give students a cosmopolitan education, whereas working with indigenous communities (like those in Michoacán, Mexico) can teach students about local, neighborly communities.

## Summary

Involving students in global service-learning projects in communities as diverse as St. Paul, Minnesota, Michoacán, Mexico, or any other community around the world can help to address the challenge of international education identified at the beginning of this essay. Any international education, however, should recognize the interconnections among local and international communities, utilizing the “ecology of education” within a global framework. Realizing the potential for such education is possible only through deep preparation for international service, reciprocal partnerships with communities, and opportunities for post-service reflection and action. When done well, global service-learning can be a tool for higher education programs to educate the next generation of engaged citizens, as is being attempted with the Global Studies Program at Providence College described in the next section.

## The Global Studies Program at Providence College

The Global Studies Program is constantly using the city of Providence as a classroom. There have been so many opportunities

to see the community that surrounds the college as a microcosm of the world, and to make connections between global issues—like immigration, for example—and real people they affect (*Landry, Class of 2010, personal communication*).

## **Context and Rationale for the Program**

Providence College institutionalized the lessons of the interdependence of our global communities with the development of a new program in global studies. Faculty members are now working side-by-side with students and community partners to create an academic major that bridges the local and the international through a sequential, developmental, integrated program that constantly asks students to bring a great sensitivity to the importance of local cultures and identities. Students in the program are being supported in developing the capacity to act as global problem-solvers and engaged citizens. The signature aspect of this approach is preparation for, and reflection upon, global service-learning.

Along with many other strategies for global education being pursued in higher education, undergraduate majors in global studies have been developing over the past decade at a diverse set of campuses, including University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, George Mason University, Hamline University, and University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (*Fischer, 2007, 2008; Redden 2008; Stearns, 2009*). University of California at Santa Barbara may have the oldest such program in the United States, with more than 700 majors (*Juergensmeyer, 2007; Stearns, 2009; Wank, 2008*).

## **Description of the Program**

Beginning in 2005, Providence College initiated a new major focused on educating the next generation for the global world. The committee of faculty who created the major developed two tracks of study—one in the humanities and a second in the area of business—with a requirement that all majors study abroad, become fluent in a foreign language, and write a thesis in a year-long capstone course. Like many interdisciplinary academic programs, the major relied heavily on students' selecting from a range of internationally focused courses in a cross-section of disciplines.

The Global Studies Program has focused on learning about global issues through real-world experience in global communities. As a result, the pedagogy of service-learning in local and international settings has been integral to the program from

the beginning. This commitment has benefited from the strong ties in the local community and an interest in building international partnerships of the Feinsein Institute for Public Service at Providence College, the first academic public and community service study program in the United States, which is where the Global Studies Program is currently housed.

Along with real-world experience, faculty members in the program believe that student engagement is an essential aspect of global service-learning. Thus, courses include participatory, democratic education that respects the experiences and insights of all members of the learning community (Freire, 1970; Horton, 1998). This approach is seen in important and symbolic ways, like classrooms arranged in a circle, students addressing faculty by their first names, students negotiating assessment criteria and procedures, and genuine student representation in program advising matters, ePortfolio assessment, and curricular decisions.

Finally, the content of the major has emphasized the themes of systems thinking, cross-cultural competency, and, most important, the theory and practice of global citizenship. As examples of how these are integrated throughout the curriculum, the final paper written for GST 101 Introduction to Global Studies is “a philosophy of global citizenship,” an assignment that is revisited and revised in future courses, including the GST 480-481 Global Studies Capstone. It is also an essential component of the ePortfolio each student maintains.



Figure 1: Global Studies Curriculum

These aspects of the program resonated with students from the beginning, so that it grew quickly to close to 100 majors by 2008 (making it the 12<sup>th</sup>-largest major on campus). However, students also began to see flaws in the initial program design, and to ask for a more coherent experience. Students wanted more opportunities to learn with their peers, moving beyond the scattering of experiences that happen in many interdisciplinary programs. After community-wide conversations, the curriculum was revised beginning with the class of 2013, toward what Richard Battistoni has described as a “sustained, developmental, cohort” model (*Mitchell, Visconti, Keene, & Battistoni, 2011*) with the introduction of a new curriculum for the Global Studies Program (described below). The results of this new program have been recently recognized by the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA), which gave the Global Studies Program its 2012 Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award for Campus Internationalization.

## **Years 1 and 2 of the 4-Year Program**

In the introductory course of the major, GST 101 Introduction to Global Studies, students learn about globalization and begin to develop their own philosophy of global citizenship. For the past few years, they have formed a “learning community,” in which first-semester global studies majors simultaneously enroll in PSC 101 Introduction to Politics. Thus, freshmen majors have an in-depth first-year experience in two linked courses while also participating in service-learning projects that examine globalization and politics through the lens of local community engagement. Many students have volunteered at the International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI), for instance, a local not-for-profit organization that provides educational and other support services for refugees. The work at IIRI allows students to deepen their understanding of human rights and migration issues by giving them the “local wisdom” that comes from developing relationships with recently arrived immigrants and new citizens. Likewise, students mentor high school students at the Providence Academy of International Studies, an internationally focused inner-city high school where high school seniors complete advocacy projects on international issues, and at a diverse range of other local agencies focusing on global issues, such as Casey Farm, which practices community-supported agriculture; English for Action, which provides English instruction to Latin American immigrants; Inspiring Minds, which offers support to English language learners in Providence public schools; and the Catholic Diocese of Providence, where Providence College students and faculty developed and led citizenship classes.

These community relations are nurtured through a partnership with the Feinstein Institute for Public Service, which also supports upper-level global studies and public and community service majors acting as “community liaisons” with these community sites. Thus, upper-level global studies majors act as volunteer coordinators, lead reflection sessions, and handle logistics for the service-learning courses.

In the second course, GST 201 Case Studies in Globalization, students hone in on a specific theme related to global studies and learn research methods and skills. They develop a community research project, working in teams to implement community-based projects on topics such as cultural diversity, sustainability, migration, peace and justice, and a host of other potentially global themes. Because these research projects often build upon the service projects in GST 101, students are sometimes able to make a year-long commitment to one particular local community partner. The most recent sections of GST 201 have been taught as service-learning courses around the themes of education. Students analyze different global models and perspectives on schooling, learning, and education, and establish connections with the English as a Second Language classroom experiences.

Following the two foundational courses, students develop a learning plan, which includes selecting a four-course thematic concentration, two upper-level global studies courses, and political science and economics courses, as well as studying a foreign language—all of which are meant to better prepare them to study abroad in their junior year. The learning plan is revisited and revised each semester and used as a tool for faculty advising and course selection.

### **Years 3 and 4 of the 4-Year Program**

During the junior year, each major studies abroad at a program that includes an international immersion in service. In collaboration with the Center for International Studies, students select from a list of approved education abroad programs in more than 40 countries that include either a service-learning, internship, or a community-based research project (see <http://www.providence.edu/global-studies/Pages/international-experience.aspx>). While abroad, students are expected to blog and maintain their ePortfolio as a way to reflect on their international experiences and maintain contact with their campus faculty advisor.

The international service requirement then directly links to the fourth-year Global Studies Capstone course, an interdisciplinary, two-semester course focused on synthesizing and deepening what students have learned about global studies over the past 3 years. The capstone course addresses issues of re-entry for students by providing opportunities for reflection on study abroad and specialized culminating assignments. For instance, students write a global studies educational autobiography at the beginning of the semester and conclude by re-writing the philosophy of global citizenship paper that they initially wrote in GST 101 during their freshman year.

As a culminating experience in the capstone course, students conduct an in-depth study of a global issue that has come to have special significance for them and develop their Globally-Engaged Thesis. As part of this process, students prepare a literature review, draw upon their global service experiences, and make connections with a local and/or global partner, activist, or non-governmental organization to deepen their understanding of the chosen topic. This results in a community-based, globally engaged, action-oriented project (see student profiles below). Based on the recommendations of a group of capstone students in the class of 2012, this assignment is now being performed collaboratively, with groups of students working together to research and address a topic of their collective choosing.

As part of the integration process, as mentioned above, students are required to take a four-course thematic sequence focused on either a region of study (e.g., Africa, the Middle East) or a social activism theme (e.g., human rights, social justice), and to take two upper-level global studies–designated courses. Over the past year, several innovative upper-level special topics have been developed, including GST 410 Crossing Borders, a course for students returning from studying abroad to reflect deeply on their international experiences, and GST 370 Global Activism, a course that has catalyzed campus-wide activism projects around topics such as fair trade coffee. Global studies majors are also required to take a course studying the church and the major world religions, along with a course on ethics, moral leadership, and the common good.

An annual Global Studies Student Symposium sponsored by the program provides a final unique opportunity for global studies students—and students from other majors—to showcase their research and study abroad experiences to the college community. Past presentations have included topics such as the causes and consequences of trash in Managua, the lives of child domestic workers

in India, local solutions to the global food crisis, and perspectives on immigration advocacy in Providence.

In sum, the conceptual pillars of the Providence College Global Studies Program (see Figure 2) illustrate how all aspects of the major are interconnected, mirroring the global “ecology of education” described earlier.



**Figure 2. Conceptual Pillars of the Providence College Global Studies Program**

## Lessons Learned

Interested in conducting an initial program assessment that would recognize all stakeholders involved—students, faculty members, and community partners—the Global Studies Program started by gathering feedback from Global Studies majors during their sophomore and senior years through a series of interviews and a focus group organized in spring 2011 (the anonymous student quotes in this section of the essay are all drawn from these interviews and the focus group). This process of listening to the voices of students was crucial since it embodies the student-centered democratic approach to education inherent to the major. Students were asked to comment on their personal and academic experiences as global studies majors, the global studies teaching and learning approach, the importance of understanding local and global connections, the value of service-learning and community engagement initiatives in the major, the relevance of international service-learning to their global education, and their understanding of global citizenship (see Appendix 2: Interview Questions).

The findings from the interviews and focus group illustrate aspects of the global studies major at Providence College that will



be analyzed to improve the program and to develop new research questions, but the initial lessons from this program hold implications for the broader field of global service-learning. Specifically, the interviews illuminated the importance of language learning and cultural competency, a global framework, and service-learning in local and international contexts. These factors, as aspects of an integrated program, help alleviate concerns about students' serving abroad, such as those Tayla Zemach-Bersin (2008) expressed about whether college students can really be "global citizens."

### **Cross-cultural competency and language learning.**

Students recognized the value of a developmental curriculum that emphasizes cross-cultural competency, preparing them to interact with individuals of a variety of backgrounds, and helping them develop a set of skills to appreciate cultural trends and to function in societal settings different from their own. As he was preparing for international immersion in Jordan, one student reflected, "I feel pretty confident in my ability to be culturally aware: [to] respect other people's cultures, respect the differences we have and appreciate their different way of life."

Likewise, students agree that being able to communicate in the target language while immersed abroad is crucial to their social integration, and their effective contribution to and engagement in the local dialogue. A global studies major, who became fluent in Spanish before studying in Peru and Ecuador, observed, "Foreign languages mean that you will be able to communicate with others and learn someone else's story, which you would have never learned before."

Preparing students to interact sensibly and respectfully when immersed in sociocultural and linguistic environments that differ from their own demonstrates the commitment of the Global Studies Program to an international experience that is meaningful and constructive. One student sums this up: "We are talking about reaching all the way down [to] issues that affect all of us because we're all interconnected."

### **Global framework.**

Students also reflected on their perceptions regarding the framing of their efforts as global, as opposed to international. These students recognize "international" as focused in particular countries and lacking the cohesion that "global" exhibits.



Global service-learning, they note, implies applying a systems thinking model to the examination of local issues that are not necessarily exclusive of a particular area, but that affect communities around the world.

Global service-learning also operates on the principles of interconnectivity and reciprocal partnership. Thus, students identify a broader conception of “humanity” as the global unit of analysis, while “countries” are seen as the international unit of analysis. Along these lines, students stated that global is more “bottom-up,” while international is more “top-down.” These students agree that their responsibility as global citizens starts by interpreting concepts discussed in class within the framework of their often localized service-learning experiences, and then re-examining global affairs with the understanding of community matters—and vice versa. For instance, one of the majors was able to do this through her comparative research and action around youth violence in Nicaragua, Argentina, and the United States. She states:

[I was] able to see how two different countries—one that is the second poorest in the Western hemisphere [Nicaragua] and then Argentina which is a lot more developed—have kind of the same issues when it comes down to it. . . . Doing the research in two countries and [then] being able to apply it here has been really great for me and I’m just thankful for the whole process.

This integrating process allows students, like the one quoted above, who connected her efforts with a local organization focused on non-violence, to become more attuned to the impact of global trends in local communities. She concludes: “The program allows students to integrate themselves into local issues that are applicable at the global level.”

### **Local and international service-learning.**

The interviews conducted in this study reinforced the importance of service-learning in local and international communities as a vehicle for a global education. Students realize the profound impact service-learning initiatives have on their intellectual and personal growth, and how the service work they are carrying out in the community enriches their learning and prepares them to serve abroad. Service-learning is perceived as an integral component of the major, which allows students in global studies to gain firsthand experience in aspects of globalization discussed in class and reflect

on and constantly redefine their role as global citizens. One student notes: "Service makes the problems of the world real. Experiences bring this learning to a 'real' level. You need to listen. Going and experiencing makes it more valuable."

Finally, given the focus on local and international civic action, it is not surprising that global studies majors also expressed an urgency to take action and be agents of social change for whatever communities they may find themselves in, an aspiration that was also directly connected to future career paths. A global studies student who went on to become a Fulbright Scholar states:

We want to do something for the world that is moral but then go about it in the proper way so we have the right ethics behind [the action]; instead of just going off and helping someone that doesn't want to, that doesn't need to be helped. I think that Global Studies gives you the moral framework to do that, and it does so in a special way for everyone in the major.

## Conclusions

The idea of a college major that provides a "moral framework" for civic action echoes the Nussbaum quotation that serves as this essay's epigraph, with its implicit call for our systems of education to unleash our "moral imaginations" through global education. This essay describes the nascent efforts of one program attempting to do this at Providence College. The nature of the program inspires and supports students going beyond perceiving international service-learning as a short-term, isolated experience; rather, global service-learning can be seen as a layered action and reflection process of (1) pre-departure preparation, (2) international immersion, and (3) integration. Those who had already studied abroad described their international experiences as "transformational" and "life changing;" however, they also noted the value of embedding this international experience within the context of a broader academic program focused on understanding and acting in a global society.

Through the Global Studies Program, as the initial interviews and focus group with majors participating in this study confirm, it seems apparent that service-learning pedagogy is enhanced when it is framed within the context of global citizenship. Likewise, the sometimes nebulous project of "educating global citizens" can benefit from service-learning pedagogy in exploring the concrete

implications of theoretical concepts in local as well as transnational contexts. This is especially true when these efforts are framed within a “global” context as a part of a sustained, development, cohort curriculum that includes an emphasis on cross-cultural competency and language learning. Thus, service-learning can be a powerful vehicle for understanding and addressing issues of globalization, but it must go beyond one course or experience and be framed in such a way that students see themselves as global actors in an interconnected world.

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## About the Authors

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**Nicholas V. Longo** is director of Global Studies and associate professor of Public and Community Service Studies at Providence College. From 2006-2008, he served as the director of the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute, an endowed civic leadership center at Miami University in Ohio. He also served as a program officer at the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in the area of civic education, and from 2002-2004 he directed Campus Compact's national youth civic engagement initiative, Raise Your Voice. Longo earned his masters in Public Affairs from the Humphrey Institute and his Ph.D. in education from the University of Minnesota.

## Appendix I. Spotlight on Global Studies Majors

*Alexandra BetGeorge*, 2011 global studies graduate with a minor in political science. Her interdisciplinary interests could not be confined within a traditional field of study, which led her to global studies. Alexandra spent her junior semester abroad in Tunisia, where she studied how multiple legal systems overlap to affect individuals' lives. Her global studies thesis then focused on the role of social media in the revolution in Tunisia. She believes that global studies fosters the development of a unique learning community where different perspectives and research trends emerge to coalesce in an intellectual landscape diverse in nature and devoted to social justice: "Looking around the discussion circle in your Global Studies Senior Capstone class, you see diverse intersections of academic disciplines and practical experiences in every fellow student, and the aggregate knowledge right there in that room is the result of this major." Alexandra describes her global studies peers as a community interested in thinking outside the Providence College walls and becoming involved in practices fostering global awareness and civic engagement. According to her, the program inspires majors to undertake challenges and take part in something for the world that is moral and infuses in them the confidence and determination to do so. Alexandra is the recipient of a Fulbright Teaching Assistantship, and she is currently teaching English in Bulgaria.

*Neil Hytinen*, global studies class of 2013 with a double major in political science. His experiences in high school nurtured his predisposition to understand globalization and its implications worldwide. Neil affirms that the highlight of the Global Studies Program is its participatory learning nature, and he finds the partnerships between faculty and students truly rewarding. His previous experiences with service-learning were somewhat limited, and he comments on the positive impact that global studies community engagement projects had in his academic and personal growth: "It was a big change actually doing community service through Global Studies; I think I grew a lot from it and I really

got a lot of confidence, teaching at the Dioceses, it really gave me a lot of confidence talking to people in the community.” Neil developed an interest in the Middle East before starting college, and he studied abroad in Jordan in fall 2011. He had never left the United States prior to studying abroad, and he expressed anxiety about the international immersion experience. He was also confident that the Global Studies Program prepared him well to deal with the unfamiliar. Neil elected to pursue the study of the Arabic language at Brown University in preparation for his experience in Jordan, realizing this would make his transition less challenging and contribute to his cross-cultural understanding. Neil hopes to pursue a career path involving global politics, serving internationally as a member of a nonprofit organization or being part of the Department of State and working on foreign policy.

**Sonia Penso**, 2011 global studies graduate with a double major in Spanish and a minor in Latin American studies. The interdisciplinary, social justice aspect of the major resonated well with her interest in applied politics and global issues. Sonia emphasizes the supportive environment that the Global Studies Program provides to majors: “It [the program] really has allowed me to find myself and be the person I want to be.” She grew bilingual and was the first generation in her family to attend college. She recognizes that coming from a non-American heritage helped her understand different perspectives and relate to individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Sonia studied abroad during her junior year in Argentina and Nicaragua, where she conducted a comparative study of the perceptions and misperceptions of gang-related youth. Sonia felt that her experiences working within the Providence community prepared her well to conduct research abroad: “In both countries I worked with mostly at-risk youth and, so having some of that background already and knowing how to work with a community partner, . . . definitely helped.” Her final globally-engaged thesis included data from her study abroad research in Nicaragua and Argentina, along with participatory observation



research with the Institute for the Study and Practice of Non-Violence in Providence. Sonia is currently working as a case manager with formerly gang-involved and recently incarcerated men and women at Homeboy Industries, an internationally recognized gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in Los Angeles.

**Anne Ruelle**, global studies class of 2013 with a double major in Spanish and a minor in Latin American studies. Her interest in global matters originated from the international program in which she was enrolled in high school. As a result of this program, she developed a deep appreciation for other cultures and a desire to further her language studies. The transition to the Global Studies Program at Providence College was impeccable, and Anne soon became extremely active in the community. She has collaborated with Amnesty International, spreading global awareness on campus, and engaged in service-learning projects at the International Institute of Rhode Island assisting the social integration of refugee families into North American society and most recently working on family reunification. She is the epitome of global awareness and community engagement at the local and international levels: "I am a Global Studies major living and breathing Global Studies." In summer 2011, Anne studied abroad in Ghana on a community-intensive summer internship, and she spent fall 2011 in Peru and spring 2012 in Ecuador. The international experiences had an extensive service-learning component and allowed her to deepen her understanding of human rights violations worldwide, and to conceive avenues of change. Anne will serve in the Peace Corps in El Salvador beginning in the summer of 2013.



## Appendix 2. Interview Questions

1. What is it like to be a Global Studies major?
2. What attracted you to the Global Studies major?
3. What international experiences did you bring to the major?
4. Did you have previous experience with the style of education in Global Studies classes? How would you describe the experience of being in one of these classes? What impact did it have on you?
5. How does studying foreign languages shape your understanding of the world?
6. What do you think is the value of service-learning in a Global Studies major?
7. How prepared do you feel you are/were for international service-learning? How do/will you integrate your international service-learning into your education upon return to Providence?
8. What does it mean to you to be a global citizen? How do you see global events shaping your course of study?
9. How would you describe the dialogue between local community engagement and global citizenship?
10. How does majoring in Global Studies impact your future life and career?



## ***The Peace Corps and Higher Education: Finally the Envisioned Partnership?***

Kevin F. F. Quigley

### **Abstract**

A number of structural and contextual changes underway suggests that now that the Peace Corps has begun its second half-century, it may be the opportune time for a broader and deeper strategic partnership with higher education along the lines that the Peace Corps founders' envisioned. That partnership would involve higher education playing an expanded role in recruiting, training, and evaluating Peace Corps volunteers to supplement the more than 100 existing partnerships between the Peace Corps and higher education in graduate study.

### **Introduction**

**W**ith the Peace Corps' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2011 and its global celebration concluded, now is the time to develop a strategic initiative that will help advance the agency's timeless mission of a more prosperous world at peace, and help achieve that mission by finally embracing the strategic partnership between higher education and the Peace Corps that its founders envisioned. In 2013, with the Peace Corps now (at) near its highest level in 40 years—8,000 volunteers serving in 74 countries—the time may be ideal for this enhanced partnership (*Peace Corps, 2012*).

In its earliest formulation, the Peace Corps was not designed to be a government-administered program. Rather, higher education institutions were envisioned as the essential delivery mechanism for Peace Corps training and programs. The February 1961 memo to newly elected President John F. Kennedy proposing the initial blueprint for the Peace Corps stated that “whenever feasible, the overseas projects themselves should be administered through contracts with colleges, universities and other educational institutions” (*Shriver, 1961, p. 14*).

In designing the Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver and the other architects wanted to rely heavily on universities because of their expertise and potential. Shriver saw higher education as one of the few sectors that could educate Peace Corps volunteers in languages and understanding other cultures and could offer the technical training needed to advance the Peace Corps' overall mission by addressing its three goals: (1) providing technical assistance, (2)

enhancing understanding of the United States, and (3) promoting greater understanding of other countries and cultures (<http://www.peacecorps.gov>).

Shriver also believed that higher education would benefit from this engagement with the Peace Corps. By providing this training before their service, as well as offering graduate study and potential faculty positions for volunteers after the completion of their service, the Peace Corps could help “globalize” American education. Shriver saw not only that the universities could contribute great intellectual and training resources, but that engagement with the Peace Corps could assist in transforming American colleges and universities into “world universities” (Shriver, 1964, pp. 14–15).

Despite higher education’s abundant intellectual resources and the perceived potential, as Shriver sought to turn the bold but untested concept of the Peace Corps into practice, he chose not to rely exclusively on universities, or on nongovernmental organizations or faith-based organizations. Shriver said, “[A]s with a parachute jumper, the chute had to open the first time.” Thus he opted for a government-administered program to better control factors ensuring that the chute would open (Shriver, 1964, p. 13). By relying on a government-administered program, the Peace Corps did not have to engage significantly and consistently with external partners, whether universities or nongovernmental organizations.

Although higher education did not administer the Peace Corps program in its early days, it played a significant training role. For much of its first decade, during the 1960s, volunteer training took place on college campuses. These included Ivy League schools, land-grant universities, and public universities as well as specialized training institutions like the School for International Training, now part of World Learning. This model of relying on higher education to provide volunteer training shifted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, mainly for economic reasons. The Peace Corps found it advantageous to provide the training in situ, in the country where volunteers were going to serve. Not only was it less expensive, training in-country accelerated acquisition of language and cross-cultural acumen, skills critical to volunteer success.

Besides the training function, in the Peace Corps’ first decade there also was some experimentation with “outsourcing” a country program to higher education. Under the leadership of then Notre Dame president Father Ted Hesburg, and under the auspices of the Indiana Consortium of Higher Education, the Peace Corps outsourced the training, placement, and support of volunteers

in Chile. In addition to being extremely successful for both the volunteers (*Scanlon, 1997*) and the Peace Corps itself, this instance of delegating a country program to higher education also greatly strengthened Notre Dame's expertise on Latin America.

Conditions are increasingly favorable for an expanded partnership between higher education and the Peace Corps, although with some modifications to the initially envisioned partnership. Dramatic changes in technology and travel link the world in ways unimaginable when the Peace Corps was created a half century ago in 1961. Our world today is far more urban, global, and connected—but it is still plagued by persistent problems of poverty, insecurity, and injustice that the Peace Corps was designed to help combat. As a consequence, countries are increasingly asking the Peace Corps for more highly skilled volunteers. The demand for specialized training in numerous areas, such as public health, food security, and teaching English as a foreign language, offers many opportunities for universities.

In addition, today's circumstances create many more opportunities for higher education to expand its international service programs, whether self-administered or in conjunction with other leading programs, such as the Peace Corps. An added impetus is the growing appreciation for international and domestic service programs as a cost-efficient and programmatically effective way to address pressing global challenges, especially in these difficult economic times (*United Nations Volunteers, 2011*).

## History of the Peace Corps

At its origins, there were ineluctable links between the Peace Corps and higher education. The architects of the Peace Corps, including President John F. Kennedy's brother-in-law Sargent Shriver and former senator and later president of Bryn Mawr College Harris Wofford, envisioned a mutually beneficial and ongoing partnership between higher education and the Peace Corps. Shriver and Wofford both suggested that the Peace Corps would not have been possible without universities (*Shriver, 1964; Wofford, 1980, pp. 259–260*).

In fact, the very origin of the Peace Corps can be directly attributed to higher education. At 2 a.m. on October 14, 1960, after the final television presidential debate with Vice President Richard Nixon, then-Senator John Kennedy offered impromptu remarks to a crowd of 5,000–10,000 gathered in front of the University of Michigan's Student Union. Kennedy basically posed a set of questions, challenging the students to apply what they were learning

to improve the lives of those in need in poorer parts of the world. That call to service presaged President Kennedy's clarion call in his inaugural address.

So, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country, and my fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but together what we can do for the freedom of man. (*Kennedy, 1961*)

This second, less well-known, part of Kennedy's most remembered line from his inaugural speech received its clearest expression in the founding of the Peace Corps.

Given this history, Sargent Shriver said that the Peace Corps "might still be just an idea but for the affirmative response of those Michigan students and faculty" (*Shriver, 1964, p. 13*). The students, led by Alan and Judith Guskin, responded promptly and emphatically to candidate John Kennedy's call to service through a petition, containing nearly 1,000 signatures, indicating a willingness to serve. That petition helped ignite a movement and inspired a generation to serve internationally.

Contrary to common understanding, this idea for international service was not new when Kennedy spoke in 1960. Approximately 57 colleges and universities were administering international programs in 37 countries. Well-known examples of international service programs were also offered by faith-based organizations, including Jesuit Volunteer Service, Brethren World Service, Jewish World Service, and the American Friends Service Committee. Many of these programs, most notably the Experiment in International Living, which is linked with the School for International Training in Vermont, have close ties with higher education. In addition, the U.S. Congress in 1958–1959 saw a variety of legislative proposals to create an international youth volunteer service corps, authored by Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota and Congressman Harry Reuss of Wisconsin, among others. Kennedy's words on the University of Michigan campus elevated the prominence of service in the national imagination, inspiring students to serve internationally (*Wofford, 1980, p. 245*).

In addition to being the ideal venue for recruiting volunteers, in the Peace Corps' early days universities were essential partners for volunteer training. For example, in the spring of 1961, the first group of Peace Corps volunteers was sent to Rutgers University to be trained in the Spanish language and Colombian culture before

leaving for their assignment in Colombia. As mentioned previously, the Peace Corps “outsourced” a country program, Chile, to a consortium of Indiana universities led by Notre Dame. This consortium was responsible for training and supporting the volunteers recruited by the Peace Corps. In effect, Notre Dame administered the Peace Corps’ program in Chile, and this unique collaboration between the Peace Corps and a university was successful in a variety of ways. The volunteers were well trained, received good job placements, and were effectively supported by university staff and faculty. This arrangement also had a positive impact on the members of the consortium. In particular, it enabled Notre Dame to significantly broaden and deepen its engagement in Latin America and was part of the impetus behind the growth of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, one of the preeminent centers on Latin America in the United States. Unfortunately, this model has never been replicated (Scanlon, 1997).

Peace Corps founders Shriver and Wofford envisioned a positive impact on higher education resulting from engagement with the Peace Corps. For example, in the report to President Kennedy proposing the Peace Corps, Shriver wrote, “It is time for American universities to become truly world universities . . . [and] by involving universities on a large scale, thus expanding their teaching and research to the world, the Peace Corps would help with this transformation” (Shriver, 1964, p. 14). Greater engagement with higher education could have yielded more Peace Corps contributions to American higher education like that at Notre Dame.

Besides recruiting and training volunteers, the link between the Peace Corps and higher education continued after the volunteers’ service. From the beginning, a significant percentage of returned Peace Corps volunteers came home to enter graduate school. Tens of thousands of volunteers returned to the United States to pursue professional degrees in public policy, international health, nursing, social work, and international affairs, among other disciplines (Bridgeland, Wofford, Quigley, & Milano, 2011). These returned Peace Corps volunteers also helped establish African studies departments and strengthened linguistics and anthropology departments and schools of public health and international affairs, among other programs. In this way, they helped realize Shriver’s aspirations for the Peace Corps to play an important role in assisting the globalization of American higher education.

Today, universities across the country support nearly 100 Peace Corps Masters and Peace Corps Fellows programs. These programs combine volunteer service with accelerated graduate study and

sometimes tuition benefits. They range across fields as diverse as public health, international affairs, urban planning, social work, and public policy, to name just a few, and include tuition benefits ranging from free tuition to modest tuition credit. Approximately 40% of returned Peace Corps volunteers undertake graduate work. These volunteers are highly prized in graduate classrooms because of their field experience, their foreign language skills, and their ability to work in teams and in different contexts to overcome significant obstacles (*Bridgeland et al., 2011; Peace Corps, 2012*).

### **Structural Changes Affecting an Enhanced Partnership**

A number of ongoing structural changes related to international volunteering make an enhanced partnership between the Peace Corps and higher education much more attractive. These trends include (1) the internationalization of volunteering, (2) the proliferation of programs providing international service experiences, and (3) the rich variation in these programs.

### **Internationalization of Volunteering**

Since the Peace Corps was established a half century ago, volunteering has been internationalized. Volunteering has become much more prevalent, and in many cases there is a blurring of domestic and international volunteer service, with participants often opting to do both. Government-sponsored international volunteer programs exist in some 20 countries, including Japan, Korea, Germany, and Canada. Because volunteering has also become increasingly bilateral and multilateral, it is not just a one-way program sending volunteers to the “developing world.” Examples of these two-way and multilateral programs include Atlas Corps (or “the reverse Peace Corps”), which brings fellows from other countries to volunteer in the United States, and regional international volunteer programs created by the EU (European Union) and ASEAN (*Association of Southeast Asian Nations; Rieffel, 2005*).

In 2011, which the United Nations proclaimed the International Year of Volunteers + 10, there was a growing global perception that volunteering could be a powerful tool in the endless fight to address complex issues of human development, especially those related to education and health (*United Nations Volunteers, 2011*). The United Nations publication *State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2011* recognizes international volunteering as a strategy to help develop skills and attitudes that foster citizenship, a critical aspect of the



mission of many higher education institutions in this dynamic and globalizing world.

International service programs designed to build global citizenship skills include the recently established Global Citizen Year program. This program provides highly structured and closely supervised international volunteer experiences that promote global citizenship during a “gap year” between high school and college. During this experience, young people develop language skills, acquire field experience, and broaden their worldview, all of which are essential building blocks for global citizenship.

## **Proliferation of Providers**

Perhaps the most startling change since the Peace Corps was established is the number of institutions that are now providing high quality international volunteer experiences. In the early 1960s, Americans had relatively few opportunities to travel or serve internationally. These opportunities were generally confined to military service, a limited number of study abroad programs, and a very few international service opportunities, most of which were administered by faith-based organizations. Today, however, a multitude of providers offer a myriad of international service programs.

Reflecting the dramatic increase in the number of institutions providing international volunteer programs, the Building Bridges Coalition (<http://www.buildingbridgescoalition.org>)—dedicated to expanding the quality, quantity, and impact of international volunteering—has more than 300 members. The Building Bridges Coalition includes more than 100 universities with international service programs, suggesting that there is considerable potential for a significant enhancement of the partnership between the Peace Corps and higher education. These higher education programs sponsor international service experiences during spring break, winter break, and summers; some combine international service with study abroad experiences. These experiences, which are often the participants’ initial international experiences, inevitably whet students’ appetites for more international experiences, as well as helping them settle on courses of study and make career choices.

Another remarkable development has been the increase in international service programs provided by corporations. IBM, for example, has an exemplary international service corps program that is designed to align with the corporation’s strategic market opportunities. Demand for this program is making it a valuable supplement to IBM’s traditional leadership programs. IBM leaders have said that they especially value how these programs help their

employees develop and master the intercultural, interdisciplinary team-building skills that are essential to the future success of global companies (Litow, 2011).

Faith-based organizations have also significantly expanded their international service programs in the past 50 years. In addition to programs of the historical peace churches like the Quakers, Catholics and Jews have long-standing service programs. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of faith-based international service programs, many administered by evangelical churches. (See the membership list of the Building Bridges Coalition, <http://www.buildingbridgescoalition.org>).

### **Rich Variation in Programs**

Since the Peace Corps was created a half-century ago, there has been a dramatic increase in the variety of international service programs. These programs might involve studying turtles in Costa Rica, building houses in the Philippines, working in an HIV/AIDS clinic in Kenya, or teaching English in Vietnam. In addition to the wide variety of focus and locale, international service programs also offer their participants a choice of duration, a direct response to the demand from individuals who want to serve, but may have limited time available to do so. Participation can range in length from a week, to a month, or to a semester; there are even year-long programs, like World Teach and Princeton in Asia. The Peace Corps' 27-month program, which includes 3 months of training and 2 years of service, is considered the gold standard.

There is growing evidence for strong on- and off-ramps between the shorter term programs and longer programs like World Teach and the Peace Corps. Based on the experience of 210,000 Peace Corps volunteers these past 50 years, it is generally thought that the best volunteers tend to be individuals with prior volunteer service and international experience, ideally an international service experience (see Bridgeland et al., 2011). In this regard, higher education's international service programs are superb preparation for Peace Corps volunteer service.

While higher education's international service programs are shorter than the Peace Corps', they are effective in exposing students to cultures and environments different from their own. This exposure can shift students' worldviews. These service programs also help inculcate empathy and flexibility, which are essential to volunteer success and serve as critical building blocks for global citizenship. In many instances, these international service experiences help students refine their thinking about their majors and

ultimately their careers. For example, in a survey conducted for the National Peace Corps and Civic Enterprises by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 96% of the 11,138 respondents indicated that their international volunteer experience influenced their choice of careers (*Bridgeland et al., 2011*).

## **Contextual Factors That May Influence Collaboration Between the Peace Corps and Higher Education**

In addition to changes in programming, contextual factors may influence the partnership between higher education and the Peace Corps. Some factors are conducive to this enhanced partnership; others may inhibit it. These factors include the technology revolution, growing concerns with security, questions about financing, and changing demographics.

### **The Technology Revolution**

The rapid pace and broad scope of the information and communication technology revolution is sweeping the world. When the first Peace Corps volunteers arrived at their posts in the early 1960s, infrequent and unreliable mail was the only means of communication. Today, volunteers have regular access to the internet, they maintain blogs, and in some cases they have daily cell phone conversations with their parents. This revolution in communication technology is weaving the world together in remarkable ways. It is also influencing the nature of international volunteering. The changes in information and communication technology make the problems of other parts of the world more apparent, and often motivate individuals to do something to make a positive difference. The ready and easy access to these technologies provides invaluable resources that can strengthen an international volunteer experience. Access to such technologies, however, also may inhibit integration into the host community, limit language learning, and interfere with other elements of the experience since volunteers may stay too closely engaged with their family and friends at home, thus missing out on essential educative aspects of their volunteer experience.

### **Growing Concerns with Security**

After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, U.S. citizens everywhere, especially those who travel or live internationally, have become increasingly attentive to security-related issues. This is caused by concerns related not only to terrorism, but also to

violence that may be drug-related or may occur due to a government's inability to provide safety and security in some contexts. Security has always been a consideration for those who travel. However, evidence indicates that security concerns are growing more salient. For example, in the 1960s, just 2% of the serving volunteers identified security as a concern. In the 2000s, that number has risen to 7% (*Bridgeland et al., 2011*). These growing security concerns add to the challenges higher education faces in supporting international programs.

## **Questions about Financing**

A major influence on the Peace Corps is the growing financial crisis in the federal budget. As a taxpayer-financed discretionary international program, the Peace Corps is likely to come under mounting pressure to reduce its budget and/or find alternative financing. This pressure will increase as the aging U.S. population places an added burden on government entitlement programs, reducing available funds for discretionary programs like the Peace Corps.

On the positive side, this trend has the potential to motivate Peace Corps leaders to seriously explore how they might strengthen partnerships with higher education (and other sectors) in mutually beneficial ways. These partnerships could involve some joint financing of programs, or outsourcing of some Peace Corps recruiting and training activities to colleges and universities. This is just one possible approach that would better align the Peace Corps' relationship with higher education.

## **Changing Demographics**

A fourth contextual factor that will influence the demand for international service programs is the aging U.S. population. Many baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) are retiring, but will seek to stay active through service and other activities. This will likely increase the demand for high quality, best practices international (and domestic) service activities and programs. It is inconceivable that the Peace Corps could meet this demand. In fact, today the Peace Corps cannot meet the existing demand for volunteer opportunities, with roughly three qualified applicants for every available volunteer position. This suggests that the higher education sector could broaden its international service offerings for alumni and others, customizing them to meet the demand and interests of a graying population. Colleges and universities could

do this through expanding their own programs, expanding consortia approaches, or partnering with nonprofit organizations or for-profit providers as well as with the Peace Corps.

### **Potential Benefits of an Enhanced Partnership Between the Peace Corps and Higher Education**

An enhanced partnership between the Peace Corps and higher education has many potential benefits. Promising areas include recruiting, training, research, and a more global curriculum.

For universities, a more robust partnership between the Peace Corps and higher education would provide a clear “glide path” for alumni through the Peace Corps to graduate school and/or a career. If the Peace Corps shifted some of its training activities, perhaps around specialized topics, that could provide some additional income for professors and resources for the university. By linking students and faculty more directly, the Peace Corps could provide new and expanded opportunities for faculty research. This effort could also assist universities in keeping their curricula current and more globally relevant.

Despite the potential difficulties, many opportunities exist for an enhanced partnership with higher education that would provide programmatic and strategic advantages for the Peace Corps. For example, higher education’s expertise on a variety of topics could strengthen the Peace Corps’ training, programming, and monitoring and evaluation. A broader partnership would also help the Peace Corps “bring the world home,” one of its three congressionally mandated goals. Widening the Peace Corps’ range of higher education partnerships could engender strong institutional ties in virtually every congressional district, laying the groundwork for long-term congressional support.

In a commencement speech at New York University in 1964, Shriver called for American higher education to be much more directly engaged in addressing the problems of the city, the country, and the world. He said,

I call upon NYU and all the great universities to practice the politics of service here at home in your own neighborhoods—not by courses in responsibility or in American social problems, not by lecture, not by commencement talks, but by political action in the true sense of politics (the Greek sense), in the service of your city. (*Shriver, 1964, p. 118*)

## **Elements of an Enhanced Partnership**

A number of elements essential to implementing the enhanced partnership are already in place. They involve three key areas: recruiting, training, and evaluating.

### **Recruiting**

Most Peace Corps recruitment currently takes place on campus since approximately 90% of the current volunteers enter service right out of college (*Peace Corps, 2012, <http://www.peacecorps.gov>*). The Peace Corps does this through recruiters who target college campuses, as well as graduate students who are part-time representatives on college campuses. The Peace Corps publicizes the colleges and universities that send the most graduates into the Peace Corps. The agency could encourage colleges and universities to play a more active role in recruiting by providing modest financial resources to the higher education institutions that do the most to attract the next cohort of Peace Corps volunteers.

### **Training**

Although sound reasoning supported the shift from campus to in-country training, this change deprived colleges and universities of an important role that provided ongoing connections to the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps could further engage with colleges and universities by contracting for them to provide some components of the language and cross-cultural training here in the United States. In addition, as the world is increasingly asking for more highly trained Peace Corps volunteers, the Peace Corps could similarly contract portions of professional training, especially around teaching of English as a foreign language, food security, and public health. This would offer the added benefit of making the Peace Corps more rooted in the United States, with higher education as an ally and part of its domestic constituency. The increasing online and internet capability within higher education also offers enormous opportunities for an expanded role in training and supporting volunteers, and perhaps even providing some of the content for the nearly 30% of the 9,000 current volunteers who are engaged in education.

### **Evaluating**

This area may hold the greatest potential for an expanded engagement of higher education with the Peace Corps. For most of its history, the growing demand from countries wanting

volunteers and citizens wanting to serve kept the Peace Corps focused on recruiting, training, and placing its volunteers, so there has been little systematic evaluation of the organization's impact. Most reactions to Peace Corps work have been anecdotal and qualitative. The evaluations that have occurred generally have focused on the impact on volunteers, rather than on perceptions about the Peace Corps, or on the communities that volunteers have assisted. Higher education has considerable expertise that is readily applicable to enhancing the Peace Corps' evaluation capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

The Peace Corps has been remarkably successful in its first 50 years. As a government-administered program, it had the safe parachute landing that its founders wanted. The initial skepticism that generated the term "Kiddie Corps" has evaporated, and the Peace Corps has overcome considerable challenges and, against the odds, has endured.

Along with the Fulbright Program, the Peace Corps is perhaps the most respected international program sponsored by the U.S. government. Given current global trends and the likely growing financial challenges, the Peace Corps' success will be hard to duplicate in its next half century, especially if it remains a solely government-administered program. To continue to succeed, it must innovate. Fortunately, the blueprint for potentially fruitful innovation was developed by Shriver, Wofford, and others long ago. This would involve operating the Peace Corps through multiple channels: government administered, university led, and nongovernmental organization managed. Among these, a broadened and deepened partnership with higher education holds great promise for increasing the prospects for the Peace Corps' future success.

Strengthening this partnership will benefit both parties. Higher education will partner with the leading international service program provider and increase its capacity to further expand international service programs. These programs are vital for developing the global citizens, future leaders, and service-oriented individuals that our communities, countries, and world need so desperately. Benefits accruing to the Peace Corps would include enhancement of its training, programming, and evaluation capabilities as well as added financial support.

Higher education can help make the Peace Corps' next 50 years even brighter than its first 50 years. As Sargent Shriver continually exhorted us, and Harris Wofford often reminds us, let us make our plans executable so that our dreams and actions can be large and we can significantly expand international service as a step toward worldwide peace. This is the goal that the Peace Corps was established to seek. An enhanced partnership with higher education could offer significant progress toward realizing the aspirations on which the Peace Corps was founded.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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*Theodore R. Alter, Associate Editor  
The Pennsylvania State University*



Bringle, R. G., Hatcher, J. A., & Jones, S. G. (Eds.). *International Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Research. Volume I: IUPUI Series on Service Learning Research*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

### Review by Juliet Millican

Despite the plethora of books on research in service-learning, international study programs, and international development, this is the first that brings together strong conceptual frameworks around international service-learning as a distinct discipline. This relatively new field of study draws from service-learning and community engagement programs in the United States and the many “year out” and “study abroad” dimensions of these programs. With community engagement increasingly appearing in the missions of universities across the world, international service-learning is beginning to gain credibility.

Although international service-learning is largely a North American phenomenon, there are a few examples in Europe and Canada, and service-learning and community engagement programs exist in many other parts of the world as well. As a result, this book, edited by key scholars involved in service-learning research, is timely and could offer support to academics and administrators considering the adoption of international experience programs. It covers such areas as course design and intentions, quality assurance and monitoring, and ways to provide hard evidence of program outcomes and intentions.

The book has much of the seriousness and scholarliness that often characterizes the Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis publications, indicating it will be weighty and informative and draw on quantitative data. The images on the front cover depict the range of projects covered within its chapters, chiefly in non-industrialized societies that are typically the target of international volunteering. The experience offered by the global South is often stark and provides rapid learning around culture and difference that will appeal to undergraduates with a sense of adventure. When such experiences are coupled with notions of “service” and “learning,” however, there is always the possibility that the world is represented as a laboratory for students to learn, with insufficient consideration for those in the “lab.” In a book written by and designed for those working in academia and with a focus on learning, such a view is not altogether avoided.

The book's main concerns are with the outcomes for students, their personal and cultural learning, and the values they might develop as global citizens (p. 22). It provides tools for measuring the impact of international service-learning on students and ways to improve academic attainment (p. 59), and suggests that service-learning is essential for the preparation of engaged citizens (p. 57). Local communities are seen as "co-creators of curricula" (rather than just as project beneficiaries; p. 21), and there is some mention of reciprocity and mutual benefit but acknowledgment that "American models of ISL stress impact on students rather than the community—sometimes to an unsettling degree" (p. 193). The book emphasizes that the true benefits of service-learning lie in the learning rather than the service. It moves from context and conceptual frameworks through course design and the associated challenges of research and conducting research into international service-learning. The book ends with a section on lessons from other forms of service-learning and a South African perspective on North American interventions, but overall it contains academic debates held within a higher education context, and the text does not attempt to build closer connections with those who may act as community partners.

The conceptual frameworks outlined in the initial chapters provide the reader with a way of thinking about service-learning and its relevance to other forms of pedagogy. The claims made for its potential are far reaching in terms of how a global experience can also prepare students for active local citizenship. The authors acknowledge from the outset that exchanges need to be mutually beneficial, reciprocal, non-exploitative, and democratic and draw upon Dewey, among others, in discussing values and approaches. However, the focus remains on international service-learning as a pedagogical intervention and the benefits for the student rather than the positive or negative impacts on host communities. The frameworks set up in the early chapters position international service-learning as a way of responding to internationalization and of preparing graduates as U.S. citizens in a globalized world, who are able to act "in the world and for the world" (p. 42) as well as individually and competitively in the marketplace. Different types of international service-learning are discussed, and these include working with immigrant communities at home and supporting students from other cultures as they come to the United States. Nonetheless, the chapters in the "Frameworks" section explicitly present international service-learning as a tool for North American educators and describe its benefits for a student's personal growth, skills development, and cognitive and civic understanding.

The “Design” section of the book does include some awareness of the challenges international service-learning presents: the difficulties of shaking off the “development paradigm,” the importance of co-collaborative design of projects, and the role of critical pedagogy. This section is welcome. It illustrates the deep value of learning through experience shared with people in different contexts, of learning with them rather than just learning about them. It emphasizes the need to recognize our own multiple individual identities and to become self-critical. Consequently, it alludes to the need to deconstruct issues of power, patronage, and service. A chapter on “Reframing Service Learning” introduces concepts from The Highlander folk school, Horton and Freire, notions of mutuality, and the value of listening. It emphasizes the importance of preparation for students at home, cross-cultural competency, and meetings with local immigrant communities as a vehicle to explore cultural bias and difference. It also acknowledges the need to look into community impact and the difficulty of doing this.

Many of the chapters in this section stress the importance of reflection and critical reflection and provide pointers for developing these practices with students. There are practical guidelines for designing reflection exercises drawn from other service-learning and study abroad programs. Images and tables provide models to help students critically view their academic enhancement as well as their civic learning. But while all the chapters in this section provide the reader with useful things to think about, they lack any systematic overview of the key questions a program must address, including sufficient reference to questions of power, equality, and deference. Including Stoecker’s “models of service learning” (2003) and an understanding of community partners’ perspectives (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009) would have been useful here in addressing the difficulties and dilemmas created by partnerships and the importance of giving due consideration to their impact on local communities.

The book’s third section, on research, returns to some of the questions of definition and distinction raised in the first section. Connections with related disciplines are reaffirmed and their pedagogical assumptions re-examined. But again, the focus is on the implications for the student and the academy with only a passing reference to local communities and the difficulty of measuring any kind of impact on a locality. Research examples concern what can be learned about the pedagogy and its effects on students, and while the book is rigorous in its presentation of qualitative and quantitative approaches, it makes no real attempt to link the field with

either participatory or community-based research approaches, or to include working alongside community groups to determine criteria for a program's success.

The chapter on research ethics in international service-learning discusses how university ethics tend to be based on Western values, sensitivities toward the individual rather than the group, and the possibility of approaching these matters differently. It discusses the risks as well as the benefits of any international service-learning project, the importance of ensuring a positive impact on community participants, and the need to protect vulnerable parties from unforeseen outcomes. It draws on a range of international research agreements and alludes to the relevance of community-based research criteria, concluding with some useful guidelines that can be adapted for ethical review boards.

Overall the book makes a serious attempt to ensure that those running international service-learning programs understand the risks as well as the benefits of these programs for students and indigenous communities. The range of chapters and voices that come through provides the reader with plenty to think about when considering whether to embark on either an international service-learning program or a related research project, and how to approach it. These are the things the book sets out to do, and it does them well.

The primary readers of this book will likely be U.S. administrators or academics working for well-resourced universities. The text is U.S.-centric, reflecting a North American perspective throughout, and, as a result, it may be less valuable to readers and institutions in other parts of the world. Only the final chapter is written from a non-U.S. perspective, specifically that of South Africa, and, while taking a critical view of international service-learning as a concept, it does, significantly, discuss outcomes for communities, the value of Mode 2 knowledge (open, transdisciplinary, problem-solving knowledge), the danger of a university's serving its own purposes, and academic elitism. It takes an evidence-based approach to questions of partnership, participation, and reciprocity, and offers concrete suggestions for a post-implementation review of projects with local partners. It is a crucial and welcome addition to the rest of the book, and a testament to the strong contributions that host organizations can make to the field.

## About the Reviewer

**Juliet Millican** is deputy director (academic) of the Community University Partnership Programme at the University of Brighton. She has been involved in the development of student community engagement programs at Brighton since 2003 and has a background in community education and development. She has also worked internationally as an advisor on education and development programs since 1992. Her key research interests are in the transformative potential of community-based learning and the role of higher education in post-conflict recovery; her doctoral research focused on a divided community in the Balkans. She is the author of a number of books on adult literacy and community learning and a range of more recent academic journal articles on community-university engagement.

## Acknowledgment

The *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement's* associate editor for book reviews, Ted Alter (who is professor of Agricultural, Regional, and Environmental Economics at The Pennsylvania State University) thanks Stylus Publishing, for providing complimentary copies of the book for this review.

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## **Mission**

The mission of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* is to serve as the premier peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal to advance theory and practice related to all forms of outreach and engagement between higher education institutions and communities.

This includes highlighting innovative endeavors; critically examining emerging issues, trends, challenges, and opportunities; and reporting on studies of impact in the areas of public service, outreach, engagement, extension, engaged research, community-based research, community-based participatory research, action research, public scholarship, service-learning, and community service.

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- **Projects with Promise** are descriptions of nascent university-community engagement projects with early indications of impact; plan for long-term evaluation; plan for how the project will be sustained; and best practices for the reader to emulate.
- **Practice Stories from the Field** are narrative inquiry studies that illuminate issues related to university-community engagement.
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- rigor and appropriateness of the scholarship; and
- readability and flow of the information and ideas presented.

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- include a brief abstract (not to exceed 150 words);
- be typed, double-spaced throughout, and include block quotes (when necessary) and appropriate references;
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- be formatted and saved in Microsoft Word 2003, or higher; and

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