

Acting Locally in a Flat World: Global Citizenship and the Democratic Practice of Service-Learning

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Abstract

This article suggests ways to frame the democratic practice of service-learning in the context of a global society, and reports on emerging efforts at three universities to act globally through local community engagement. The article concludes with practical lessons for promoting global citizenship through service-learning in higher education.

Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community. —John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*

The world is being flattened. I didn't start it and you can't stop it, except at a great cost to human development and your own future. —Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat*

Introduction

Building on the ideas of John Dewey, service-learning has always sought to embed educational experiences within local contexts, relationships, and community institutions. But this education is taking place in an increasingly interconnected, global world, which has an impact on every aspect of community life. The “flattened world,” as Thomas Friedman has popularly termed the rise of globalization, has important implications for educators who aim to implement Dewey’s vision of building democratic, neighborly communities.

To continue to be relevant, service-learning needs to respond to the new realities of student and community life in an age of globalization. And if we understand globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens 1990, 64), then an appropriate question for service-learning practitioners to ask is: if democracy “begins at home,” what does this mean in the context of an increasingly global society?

In addressing this question, we argue that service-learning must continue to include the exploration and enactment of democratic practices for acting locally, but also approach these practices

with a framework that accounts for the global. Students who are connected to civic spaces in the local communities of which their campus is a part can come to a deeper understanding of global forces and simultaneously become better global practitioners. In short, service-learning practitioners need to practice a new model of citizenship that considers the connections between global learning and local community engagement.¹

One pathway to this goal is to frame service-learning pedagogy within the broader project of educating “global citizens.” As Benjamin Barber argues, “citizenship is both transnational and local, rather than strictly national” (*Barber 2006, 70*).² The first section of this article examines how an explicitly local and democratic pedagogy not only can, but must, coexist with an increasingly globalized world. In the second section, we report on emerging efforts at three universities to act globally through local community engagement. We conclude by offering lessons from practice for connecting global citizenship with service-learning in higher education.

Changing Context: The Global and the Local

Since the birth of the contemporary service-learning movement in the mid-1980s with the founding of Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) and Campus Compact, we’ve seen the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War; the growing threats of terrorism; the rise of the HIV/AIDS global epidemic; burgeoning access to the Internet and a technological revolution; a movement toward free trade and neoliberal policies and a corresponding and growing global economic collapse; concerns about global warming and other environmental crises; and powerful countermovements against globalization that are not only reshaping the world economy, but also the social, political, and cultural life of all communities. Each of these events, for better or worse, has led to the “flattening” of the world and requires us to rethink what we mean by “education for citizenship” in a democracy. “We still do not know how to create democratic, neighborly communities. Events [around the globe] indicate that this very practical and core theoretical problem is more than an American dilemma,” write Benson, Harkavy, and Puckett (2000, 26).

There is also a new reality in education, including increasing interest in global education. The number of students studying abroad, for instance, has more than doubled over the past ten years (*Institute for International Education 2006*), and enrollment in

foreign language courses grew 13 percent between 2002 and 2006 (Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin 2006). And while this growing interest in international issues has potential for increased international understanding and global cooperation, it is frequently framed in the context of “maintain[ing] American competitiveness in the global marketplace” (US Department of Education 2005) rather than exploring global human rights concerns, critiquing aspects of globalization, or educating for global citizenship. Furthermore, a new report, *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* (American Council on Education 2008), found that while there has been an increase in study abroad opportunities and faculty support for international research, internationalization of the curriculum and attention to the concerns of a global civil society are still not priorities on most campuses.

And while we applaud this increased interest in transnational concerns and issues, we are cognizant that many of our nation’s finest universities continue to live side-by-side with some of the most economically depressed neighboring (not neighborly) communities—indeed, this phenomenon is itself partly a manifestation of globalization. Ira Harkavy (1998), one of the leading advocates of university/community partnerships, writes, “It is now widely recognized that the problem of the city is the strategic problem of our time”—a problem, he contends, which is also “the most pressing problem facing urban colleges and universities.” Simply put, colleges and universities “cannot move (as other more mobile institutions have increasingly done) to escape the poverty, crime, and physical deterioration at their gates.” Given their roles in shaping society, Harkavy concludes that it is untenable for universities to be perceived as “distant island[s] of affluence in a rising sea of poverty and despair.”

Colleges and universities, then, are called on to play a leadership role on the local and the global level. Both Campus Compact (1999) and the Council of Europe (2006) have issued declarations on the civic responsibility of higher education in an increasingly globalized world. But for educators to respond to the call for globally oriented education while simultaneously addressing pressing local problems, there is a need for a deep understanding and critique of the global. In short, service-learning practitioners must practice a new kind of citizenship that connects the local with the global.

This new kind of citizenship is similar to the kind of cosmopolitan education the philosopher Kwame Appiah (1996) saw in his father, a Ghanaian patriot who urged his children to be “citizens of

the world” while always working to improve the conditions of the local places where they lived. Appiah took this to mean that, like his father, he should strive to be a “rooted cosmopolitan”: someone having an appreciation for the importance of learning about the interconnected world while trying to improve conditions locally.

Likewise, in arguing that students can learn about the global by becoming immersed in democratic experiences in local communities through service-learning, we make the following claims:

- Community-based efforts give students the chance to develop global knowledge through the local wisdom obtained through active engagement with local communities;
- Working in civil society offers students the opportunity to experience the global value of interdependence, gain essential skills for public work, and help build a civic global network; and
- Service-learning can help students learn to navigate the potential tensions between global and local cultures.

Global knowledge from local wisdom

One way that service-learning can lend itself to conceptions of global citizenship is in its capacity to deepen “global knowledge” by deepening students’ understandings of global issues through the lessons of local wisdom. There is a rich discussion in recent higher education literature of what our students need to know about world affairs, and what kind of curriculum will achieve these critical global objectives. For example, in a widely acclaimed book reflecting on the landscape of higher education, Derek Bok (2006) proposes a two-course sequence to prepare students for a global society. All colleges and universities, Bok says, should offer “a basic course on America’s role in the world to help equip undergraduates to be reasonably informed citizens and a course on how to understand another culture that prepares them for lives characterized by increasing contact with other societies” (252). He also proposes bolstering study abroad and international student programs on campuses.

The problem with many of these approaches, from our perspective, is that they continue to view citizenship—global or otherwise—as a body of knowledge to be taught to students. While there is much that students can learn about global trends and issues through direct instruction, supervised research, and global simulations, there is a limit to what these pedagogies can teach.

On the other hand, while study abroad is essential, as it offers students direct experience with cultures outside their own, these opportunities in any form remain inaccessible to the vast majority of college students. And while the best of these programs foster deep connections between students and their host communities with critical reflection on the local and global issues facing that community (*Bringle, Hatcher, and Jones, forthcoming; Hovey and Weinberg, forthcoming*), many programs offer only superficial, sporadic engagement with community. Study abroad can often simply move “the bubble” of a college campus to foreign soil.

Service-learning—local or international—offers students the opportunity to break outside this bubble and move beyond disinterested knowledge of global economics and institutions or disembodied theory of international human rights. This is the core element of global wisdom. As the case studies that follow illustrate, students working with new immigrants, for example, are able to deepen their understanding of the global issues of migration and transnational identity through relationships formed in community-based service projects. Likewise, the impact of the changing economy and job loss on manufacturing towns can be understood through collaborative work in American communities, along with relationships with people from countries where cheap labor is being exported. And a focus on specific places over longer periods of time allows students to make commitments to understanding and addressing the complex problems in communities in an interconnected, global world.

Contributing to a global civil society

Another way to frame global citizenship efforts connected to service-learning is through the lens of “civil society.” In recent years political and social theorists have examined the importance of a robust civil society to democracy (*e.g., Barber 2003, 1998; Havel 1992*). For these theorists, democratic citizenship outcomes are not to be sought in the increasingly bureaucratized and privatized arenas of government or the private sector, but rather in the mediating institutions of civil society.

When service-learning is seen as a democratic practice, it offers students the opportunity to work with a diverse group of fellow citizens in these local institutions. By engaging them with a variety of voluntary associations, colleges and universities connect students to a global movement to strengthen civil society and give them experiences with this powerful alternative to both big government and large corporations. They can do this through linking

the work students do in local institutions of civil society to that of global NGOs and to international public problem solving.

Through working in after-school programs, public libraries, health clinics, locally owned businesses, churches, synagogues, mosques, or other grassroots organizations, students experience the civic values of interdependence. At the same time, they build civic confidence and a civic identity as they gain essential skills for public work and democratic social change.

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reciprocity is at the core of these relationships. An essay on the lessons from the Zapatistas in Chiapas that focuses on global solidarity provides guidance for one manifestation of the idea of global civil society. In analyzing the concept of mutuality, Olesen (2004) explains that when people visit Chiapas, they “aren’t going as teachers, but as students.” And yet, the experience most often calls upon people to “want to apply what they’ve learned in Chiapas to

community organizing [in their home communities].” Thus, to be in solidarity with the Zapatistas, Olesen quotes U.S. supporters as saying, “does not mean to simply write letters to your congressperson.” A focus on mutuality also means fighting against racism, sexism, homophobia, and economic inequality everywhere (260). In other words, our struggles are all connected and global solidarity means developing skills to address issues at home, as well as abroad, as part of a larger global movement.

Navigating local and global culture clashes

The rise of the global, of course, raises serious concerns about the loss of the local and new understandings of place. You see the potential for tension between these trends playing out in every aspect of our world, from where we work, to how we spend our time, to the ways in which we solve public problems. Students involved in service work in their local communities are sure to encounter libraries struggling to redefine their missions in an age of Google, local businesses struggling with Wal-Mart and other

big box stores, and contingent communities in transition socially, culturally, and economically because of globalization.

Students are also likely to experience conflicts between the preservation of local culture and values and the implementation of universal principles through international organizations. In recent years we have seen clashes, for example, between traditional local cultures and the promotion of international women's rights, between families attempting to instill traditional child-raising values and international conventions on the rights of the child.

We believe that service-learning offers an avenue not only to understand these competing forces, but also to help revitalize local culture with an understanding and respect for the global. Students can come to appreciate and yet critically examine local practices in light of global principles like those found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And service-learning, done well, can move students beyond the potential acquiescence that often accompanies passively acquired knowledge of global problems, to an informed activism that comes from the development of local relationships informed by global contexts.

In the section that follows, we offer examples of three campuses that are just beginning to creatively connect the local with the global through community-based civic engagement. These are obviously not the only examples of good emerging practice in this area (we are beginning to document others as well), but they give concrete illustrations of what is possible at different institutions.

Emerging Academically Based Campus Models

Macalester College: a new Institute for Global Citizenship

"Global citizenship begins at home" is the mantra of Macalester College's recently launched Institute for Global Citizenship. The institute, which is a flagship initiative of President Brian Rosenberg, attempts to

encourage, promote and support rigorous learning that prepares students for lives as effective and ethical "global citizen-leaders;" innovative scholarship that enriches the public and academic discourse on important issues of global significance; and meaningful service that enhances such learning and/or scholarship while enriching the communities within which Macalester is embedded. (2008)

In order to achieve these ideals, the institute has formed a new administrative unit that brings together the Civic Engagement Center and International Studies and Programming, which encompasses the International Studies Department and the International Center, all of which is overseen by a dean of global citizenship.

While the international studies and civic engagement programs were both nationally recognized, one faculty member involved with the institute explains, “they never talked to each other.” By bringing them together within the institute, Macalester aims to increase its capacity to “educate global citizen-leaders” though the “greater integration of currently disparate educational activities and initiatives related to internationalism, multiculturalism, experiential learning, and urban/civic engagement” (*Center for Global Citizenship Planning Committee* 2005).

An initial proposal for the institute, authored by two faculty members, drew criticism from the college community because it lacked a consultative process and did not address the relationship of multiculturalism—the third “pillar” of Macalester’s mission—to the institute. The college responded by forming a high-level committee to author a new proposal. The new committee included two students, faculty from the American Studies department, and the dean of multicultural life. The resulting proposal anchored the institute on a broader intellectual foundation and in the context of the current work of the college. It called for the establishment of the new deanship (replacing the dean for international studies and programming) as well as two associate deanships.

The proposal outlined several key operational principles for the institute, including the need for ethical conduct, the use of structured reflection, and the engagement of alumni and community members as “co-educators.” In keeping with the operational principle of “student leadership and peer mentoring,” a student planning committee forms part of the governance structure, along with a campuswide steering committee and a diverse international advisory board.

The institute’s Web site defines “global” as “[encompassing] the local/urban, national and inter- or trans-national levels of analysis and action.” This definition deliberately departs from the dichotomy that is usually established between local, in the sense of “here,” and global, in the sense of “there.” Likewise, “citizenship” is defined as “[referring] not to legal or juridical membership in a specific national polity, but more broadly to the phenomenon of active engagement in the public life of the local, national or

transnational communities in which people live” (*Center for Global Citizenship Planning Committee* 2005).

For Macalester, with its high proportion of international students and where more than half of the students study abroad for at least one semester in over 63 countries, education for global citizenship means applying principles of engagement in national political work, transnational justice efforts, and local participatory research initiatives alike. Macalester’s own local community, the urban Twin Cities, continues to play an important role in the institute’s work. For instance, the Civic Engagement Center has recently focused on place-based learning through a new collaboration with the Minnesota Historical Society, which brought several classes to the Lake Street neighborhood in Minneapolis. This street, aptly described as a “global intersection,” provides an excellent environment in which to consider the local impact of national and transnational forces.

In anticipation of the institute’s opening, the college sponsored a high-profile speaker series that included U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, and celebrated author Toni Morrison. Activities since the opening include the establishment of a spring conference focused on global citizenship and designed to highlight student research and effective engagement practice, along with continued sponsorship of the well-established Macalester International Roundtable. Ground breaking for a building for the institute, expected to receive gold LEED [green building certification], took place in spring 2008. Furthermore, long-term plans include a certificate program in global citizenship, incorporating an introductory and capstone course, as well as electives from the various academic divisions.

Miami University: acting locally in southwestern Ohio

As communities across Ohio are struggling to adapt and respond to local manifestations of globalization, Miami University is attempting to use faculty and student resources to understand and address these challenges. This response is most prominently seen in *Acting Locally: Civic Learning and Civic Leadership in Southwestern Ohio*, a multiyear community-based research and learning project that explores the intersections between globalization and local transformation. Initiated by the American Studies program, *Acting Locally* was launched in the fall of 2006 in partnership with the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute, a newly endowed institute promoting community-based learning

experiences that prepare students to become engaged public leaders and informed global citizens.

The Wilks Leadership Institute, jointly housed in academic and student affairs, partners with the Provost's Office to support innovative curriculum-based "think tanks" to embed civic learning into the curriculum in university departments with three years of funding. The first think tank promotes global citizenship through the American Studies program in a multiyear project that connects the local and the global, *Acting Locally*. (The second think tank is funding geography for a public planning curriculum.)

The American Studies program at Miami was already in the process of refocusing its work on understanding and reclaiming public culture under the leadership of Peggy Shaffer, director of American Studies. *Acting Locally* continued this process as a group of faculty began to reconceptualize American Studies and connect it with real-world cultures outside the university. As this public culture work developed, the focus tilted toward the local community and specifically, in southwestern Ohio, how globalization was changing local culture.

Conceived as an effort to help students gain skills in civic leadership, *Acting Locally* immerses students in the diverse communities in the region through an understanding of the forces of globalization. The project partners with three communities in southwest Ohio—the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood in downtown Cincinnati, the city of Hamilton, and rural Butler county—to examine the impact of globalization on a decaying urban center, an expanding postindustrial metropolitan area, and a rural agricultural community.

In an effort to counter the often fragmented learning experience on campus, *Acting Locally* has developed an innovative cohort model for the two-year project, which includes a group of "Wilks Scholars" taking a sequence of courses together. Wilks Scholars commit to being part of two years of classes team-taught by faculty from a diverse set of disciplines—including American studies, geography, history, international studies, political science, and Spanish.

In fall, Wilks Scholars take American Studies 201, *Global to Local: Identity, Community, and Power*, where they begin to define globalization through readings, writings, and several assignments, including the monitoring of the local newspapers and service projects in each of the three communities. In the second-semester course, *Globalization in Southwestern Ohio*, students become more

engaged in the three communities, with weekly service experiences coinciding with deeper reflections on the impact of globalization on these local communities.

The immersion in southwestern Ohio continues with a week-long summer workshop, where students conduct interviews with community leaders, do service, and learn essential community-organizing skills. To complete the sequence, students take a capstone where they work with faculty and community partners to develop research and action projects to be implemented during the second year of Acting Locally. The first group of Wilks Scholars developed an impressive set of projects, including the creation of a Spanish-English language exchange with local Latino immigrants; a food guide to highlight the local food options and the stories and produce of local farmers; and a business association that serves local Latino businesses.

Ultimately, Acting Locally is meant to allow students to see that they can shape both local and global cultures in more democratic ways, as Shaffer (2008) explains: “more than ever, our communities need active participants rather than passive victims or detached critics” (25–26). This shift can be transformational. As one of the Wilks Scholars, student Kevin McLaughlin, reflects on his experience working as a student with immigrants from Butler County, who are often discriminated against:

I think it’s because I’ve been able to get close to some of the real life people who are living there. Being able to build dialogue and build enduring relationships with people has shown me that it’s not as simple as “Oh, these people are here illegally, let’s kick ‘em out.” They’re trying to make money and a lot of times to send that money back to their families—it’s not like they want to live with 20 other people in one small house. From a humanity standpoint I’ve learned a lot—getting closer to people has changed my perspective. (*Unpublished interview, 2007*)

It is also a fundamentally different way of thinking about community partnerships. In describing the collaborations with organizations like Venice-on-Vine, MOON Co-Op, and Taqueria Mercado, Shaffer notes, “As the project evolved, what we have found is that we can support these individuals and organizations by facilitating conversations, making connections, doing some of the background legwork, and providing support for ongoing

projects” (32–33). She continues by describing this process as creating a “third space that exists beyond the university, that incorporates and draws upon the assets of everyday community, providing opportunities for a range of diverse individuals to connect, talk, and imagine solutions” (33).

Providence College: partnering public service with global studies

In 1994, with a five-million-dollar gift from a local philanthropist, Providence College’s Feinstein Institute for Public Service created the first interdisciplinary major and minor in Public and Community Service Studies in the country, which is now a department at Providence College (*Battistoni 1998; Hudson and Trudeau 1995*). The course sequence for majors and minors, which includes the study of concepts such as service, community, diversity, and democracy, along with concrete learning in community history and ethics, community organizing, and organizational analysis, has historically made attempts to include an international perspective. The interest in global citizenship was especially emphasized by students who developed international service trips and then requested special topics courses to analyze and reflect on their international experiences.

Connecting the local with the global became a more central feature of the Feinstein Institute in fall 2005 with the development of a new major in global studies, which “stresses an active learning approach” to develop “a global understanding of social, economic, and political issues.” Student interest in global studies has been significant; it is the fastest-growing major on campus, with more than one hundred majors just a year after graduating the first group of seniors.

Substantial partnerships between the Feinstein Institute and global studies enable public service students to develop a broader global perspective, while global studies students engage in the local community, including jointly hiring the first permanent director in the Global Studies program as a faculty member in the Department of Public and Community Service Studies. Strong relationships with the local community and expertise in campus-community partnerships that the Feinstein Institute has developed over the past decade have been especially valuable for the collaboration.

Students in Introduction to Global Studies, for example, learn about globalization by developing a community research project, working in teams implementing community-based projects on a range of topics including cultural diversity, environment/food

issues, fair trade, immigration, peace and security, and global corporations. In addition, students develop their own “philosophy of global citizenship” as a final course assignment based on their practical and academic experiences in the course. This assignment is again part of the capstone course, which includes student reflection on their entire academic career within the framework of global citizenship.

Many students have done community service work at English for Action and the International Institute, local not-for-profit organizations working to empower new immigrants. This work allows students to deepen their understanding of the issue of immigration in the context of a global labor market by giving them the “local wisdom” that comes from developing relationships with recent immigrants.

Students studying global studies are often mentored by upper-level public service students who serve as “community assistants” at the community service sites (*see Kelly and Lena 2006*). The community assistants act as liaisons with the community sites, facilitating orientation sessions, leading reflections, and playing a leadership role in connecting community service with the academic curriculum.

There are also other collaborations between global studies and public service. For instance, the Introduction to Global Studies course and capstone course are cotaught by a local community partner; this is a pioneering collaborative model of faculty and community partners coteaching together initiated by the Feinstein Institute. Upper-level global studies majors are also being recruited to join public service majors in serving as community assistants, specifically at globally connected community-based organizations. And students from both majors are working with staff and faculty to organize international service-learning experiences with follow-up courses on campus (international experience is a requirement of the global studies major), including a course in the spring of 2010 titled Community Engagement and Human Rights in Latin America, which will include a local service-learning component, along with an alternative spring break service project in Nicaragua.

Students from Global Studies worked with other students on campus to integrate their community projects and classroom learning across campus through an Immigration Week in 2008, which was supported by a Raise Your Voice Presidential Civic Engagement grant from Campus Compact. The week included a series of panel discussions, debates, and rallies to better understand the issue of

immigration and the role of a Catholic university in supporting the vulnerable. Finally, as part of the year-long Global Studies Capstone course, students are required to complete a “community engaged thesis,” which includes conducting a literature review and then partnering with a local or international organization on an engaged research project. Students have worked on food issues through a collaborative research project with a local urban community garden, on genocide issues by interviewing local refugees, and on immigration issues by conducting research with local organizations that partner with a local radio station in Guatemala.

Students’ written reflections on their experiences in the community at places like English for Action have stressed the richness and diversity of the countries from which their immigrant families come, the opportunities and challenges they face in the United States, their struggles with learning a new language, separation from family, and the discrimination they face in their daily lives. As one student reflected, “The involvement with the community is the aspect of the class that I enjoy the most because we actually get to understand and experience first hand how globalization is affecting or not affecting the world” (*Global Studies Program 2008*).

Implications for Practice

The three case studies represent important efforts toward a model of service-learning that can help students connect local wisdom with global knowledge, explore ways of participating in civil society, and navigate the tensions among local concerns and global trends. In this final section, we highlight some of the practices used by the programs in building these learning experiences. They include collaboration across disciplines and divisions; using local engagement to reflect on international experience; making student leadership central to program development and implementation; and involving the whole college community in dialogue about global citizenship.

Collaborate across disciplines and divisions

Just as the efforts to institutionalize service-learning (along with civic engagement, writing, and other efforts in higher education) have taken community-based practices across the disciplines, education for global citizenship needs to be immersed into many disciplines, including those that are not usually represented in this sort of liberal learning (e.g., science, finance). Yet learning about the complex, rapidly changing, and interconnected global world

seems to also require even more collaboration across disciplines and divisions on campus than the efforts of the past.

The case studies demonstrate the importance of faculty working in an interdisciplinary manner, illustrated in the team-teaching done at Miami University and Providence College, including teaching by community practitioners. Moreover, global citizenship offers opportunities to bridge the gap between divisions on campus, seen with Miami University's Wilks Leadership Institute's unique location in student and academic affairs, along with Macalester College's attempt to connect International Studies with the Civic Engagement Center.

Use local engagement to reflect on international experience

Attention to "re-entry" of returning students in the study abroad literature has provided evidence of the desire to interact with people from the host country in both scholarly (*Langley and Breese 2005*) and practice-based (*Berry and Chisholm 1992*) accounts. Among the promising practices being developed at all of the schools we examined are courses for students returning from international service-learning that include engagement in the local community, along with critical reflection on international experiences.

For instance, Providence College offers a course called Justice across Borders, which aims to serve students heading to or returning from international service experiences by focusing on issues of cross-cultural justice and the local/global dimensions of human rights. In addition, all Global Studies students are required to take the year-long capstone course in their senior year after returning from their international experience in their junior year. The seminar serves as an opportunity to reflect on the international experience, and the first assignment is a reflective educational autobiography to begin this process.

Likewise, Miami University Wilks faculty members offer an international course on sustainability and civic engagement in

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Dominica over spring break for students at Miami University, including Wilks Scholars, making connections between local and international sustainable community practices. Aware of the need to support the large study abroad community, the Institute for Global Citizenship at Macalester is developing a Globalization in Comparative Perspective seminar in the spring semester for students returning from international experiences.

Make student leadership central

The cases we examined suggest the need for creating multiple opportunities for students to take a leadership role, especially when we consider the type of skills students will need in a changing, global society. There is also the need to recognize the experiences of student leaders in connecting the curriculum with the community, giving students who have had experience in community-based settings the chance to orient and frame the experiences for new students.

At Providence College, students in the Global Studies program serve on the advisory group, are central to a curriculum review

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process, and present their research at an annual Global Studies Student Research Symposium. In addition, the community assistants serve as mentors and community connectors for younger students. At Miami, borrowing from the Providence College model, former Wilks Scholars also act as community assistants, in this case, teaching a one-credit community immersion course and acting as liaisons between community partners and the new cohort of

Wilks Scholars. Finally, at Macalester, student voice was institutionalized through the creation of a student advisory board, and student work is honored through an annual Global Citizenship Student Award.

Foster institution-wide dialogue about global citizenship

Finally, if service-learning is to be a vehicle in educating for global citizenship, it cannot simply be an isolated experience or part of a single course. There is a need for institution-wide conversations on what we mean by global citizenship, why it is important, and how it should be included in the life of the university. This often includes bringing speakers to campus. But it must be more than that.

Just as the open conversations about civic engagement have enriched our thinking and practices, so too should we look to enrich this burgeoning area through dialogue among the multiple stakeholders. At Miami University, for example, in the past years various themes on issues surrounding global citizenship have been used to sponsor a series of speakers, films, workshops, and deliberations focusing on “human rights and social justice” and “citizens of the world.” Providence College created a new interdisciplinary major in global studies, which is connected to a larger institute for public service, an interdisciplinary faculty team, and a new Center for International Studies. Even more visibly, Macalester’s new president has made global citizenship a central theme in his administration, including the dedication of a new building for the Institute for Global Citizenship.

These initiatives, and others, teach us the importance of involving the whole college community in these conversations. Administrators and faculty can set the agenda, but we also need students, staff, and community partners, with their distinct and considerable expertise, to advance the work of global citizenship in colleges and universities.

Conclusion

The roots of service-learning are grounded in the progressive tradition of education that “protested a restricted view of education,” as settlement house pioneer Jane Addams argued based on her civic efforts at Hull House in Chicago at the beginning of the twentieth century (*Addams 1998/1910*). And over time, service-learning has helped the academy expand both the many places learning occurs and the ways that knowledge is constructed. The beginning of the twenty-first century is no different.

As we have argued throughout, we think 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. Thus, helping students become global citizens might simply require democratic-minded educators to engage with communities in new and different ways: to attempt to “be local” and “think and act globally” regardless of context. This involves asking new questions and developing different types of partnerships. It also opens opportunities for new research on civic engagement that measures the global dimensions of civic learning and practice, as well as spaces for public

dialogue that include global frameworks underlying current issues. Service-learning can be a powerful vehicle for understanding and addressing issues of globalization, but it must be framed in such a way that students see themselves as global actors in their civic work, whether it happens to be taking place locally, nationally, or internationally.

Endnotes

1. The American Council on Education initiated a project called Global Learning for All, which defines global learning as “the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students acquire through a variety of experiences that enable them to understand world cultures and events; analyze global systems; appreciate cultural differences; and apply this knowledge and appreciation to their lives as citizens and workers” (*American Council on Education* 2005).
2. In Northern Ireland, the recently approved curriculum for youth civic education is titled Local and Global Citizenship. The new initiative seeks to combine understanding of local culture, history, and civic institutions with knowledge of global institutions, such as international conventions on human rights.

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