Engaging Millennial Students through Community-Engaged Experiential Learning

By Jonathan H. Westover, Ph.D. and Janel Mitchell M.Ed., September 17, 2016
Abstract

While much has been said (often negatively) about the Millennial student and worker, research has shown that as a group they are high-achieving, have a strong desire for ongoing personal and professional development, and tend to be seriously invested in making a marked sustainable impact on society and in the communities in which they live and work.

One avenue to better engage Millennial students is through the use of community-engaged experiential learning (or service-learning) pedagogy in the classroom and projects in the community.

While service-learning is not a new phenomenon, this “civically-engaged” experiential learning pedagogy has increased in popularity and usage in educational settings in recent years. Additionally, community-engaged experiential learning can be utilized to provide meaningful community-service opportunities that simultaneously teach civic responsibility and encourage life-long civic engagement, while also providing opportunities for significant real-life, hands-on learning of important skills and vital social understanding for Millennial students.
This presentation will address:

• What is and how do I know if service-learning is right for my curriculum?
• What are the common service-learning models and how can they be adapted to be effectively utilized in my specific course?
• What are the educational, professional development, and other student outcomes of using service-learning activities in my course?
• How can my service-learning efforts be effectively assessed?
• What are some examples of effective service-learning efforts across different academic disciplines?
Agenda

• Overview of Millennial Learners
• Overview of Millennial Workers
• Value of Experiential Learning
• Service-Learning to Engage / Prepare Millennial Students and Workers
• Service-Learning Faculty Development and Project Funding Opportunities at UVU
• Q&A
Millennials Born Between 1983-Late 1990’s
What are Millennials?
Millennial Learner Characteristics

• Special
• Sheltered
• Team Oriented
• Confident
• Pressured
• Achieving
• Conventional

Millennial Learner

SPECIAL
• Rewards for participation

Implications for Education:
• Reward individual / group work
• Provide feedback
• Teach to self-reward
Millennial Learner

SHELTERED

• Structured
• Enforcement of rules and regulations

Implications for Education:

• Learning centered syllabus
• Clear instructions
• Provide course calendar with due dates
• Provide lesson learning outcomes
Millennial Learner

TEAM ORIENTED
• Works well in groups
• Socially active

Implications for Education:
• Collaborative Learning
• Cooperative Learning
• Interactive Learning
• Social Learning (in and outside of class)
Millennial Learner

CONFIDENT
• High level of optimism
• Technologically savvy
• Creates own knowledge

Implications for Education:
• Clear definitions and paths to class success
• Use a variety of technologies
• Provide feedback
Millennial Learner

PRESSURED

• Performs when being judged
• Immediate/continual feedback on progress

Implications for Education:

• Link content to “real life” applications
• Provide timely feedback in various forms
• Use simulations and case work
Millennial Learner

ACHIEVING

• Challenges grades and testing methods

Implications for Education:
• Provide well-defined grade appeal policy
• Use a variety of valid evaluation methods
Millennial Learner

CONVENTIONAL

• Respect for cultural differences

Implications for Education:

• Problem solve by integrating sociological situations from a variety of cultures
Millennial Workers

Millennials in the Workforce - 2014
- Millennials: 34%
- Older Generations: 66%

Millennials in the Workforce - 2020
- Millennials: 54%
- Older Generations: 46%

(Brack & Kelly, 2012)
http://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/executive-development/custom-programs/~/media/DF1C11C056874DDA8097271A1ED48662.ashx
Millennial Workers

• 21% switched jobs in the past year (more than 3x higher than non-millennials)
• 60% open to different job opportunities
• 50% would consider taking a job with a different company for a raise of 20% or less
• Millennial turnover costs the U.S. economy $30.5 billion annually

Gallup, 2016
Value of Experiential Learning

• “One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try.” Aristotle

• “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” Confucius

• “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” Aristotle
What is Service Learning?

- Recipient
- Beneficiary
- Provider
- Service
- Focus
- Learning

Service-Learning

- Community Service
- Field Education
- Volunteerism
- Internship

UVU Service-Learning Definition

Service-Learning at Utah Valley University is an engaged teaching and learning strategy in which students participate in structured service activities that:

• Meet identified community needs
• Enhance discipline-based knowledge and skills
• Strengthen the community
• Encourage in-depth understanding of course content and a broader appreciation of the discipline
• Immerse students in the subject matter and its application
• Enhance students’ sense of civic responsibility and community engagement.
Service-Learning Pedagogy

“A form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development; service learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity changes both the recipient and the provider of the service” (Jacoby, 1996, 5).
Service-Learning Pedagogy

“The collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Carnegie Foundation, 2009).
Service-Learning’s Impact

• Faculty Report:
  • Satisfaction with quality of student learning
  • Commitment to research
  • Barriers to Service Learning:
    • Lack of resources, reward, and service-learning partnerships

• Institutions and Communities Report:
  • Affects student retention
  • Enhances university / community relations
  • Satisfaction with student participation
  • Provides useful service
Service-Learning’s Impact on Students

• Placement affects personal and interpersonal development
• Diversity affects identity development and cultural understanding
• Creates a sense of social responsibility and citizenship
• Duration, intensity of service, and reflection affects learning
• Application of service to academic content affects learning outcomes
• Feedback affects learning, skills, and commitment to service
• Contributes to career development
How do you do Service Learning?

- Roles
- Relevance
- Reciprocity
- Reflection
- Risk Management
- Reporting
Roles

Instructor

Transmit

Student
A Thought

“... many years ago, the writer George Leonard described lecturing as the ‘best way to get information from teacher’s notebook to student’s notebook without touching the student’s mind.’”

UVU Service-Learning Opportunities

• Faculty Development:
  • Service Learning Fellowship
  • Service Learning Faculty Learning Circles

• Project Funding:
  • High Impact Community Partnership Seed Grants
  • Community-based Research Faculty Fellows

• Program Support:
  • Service-learning Designated Programs
  • Service-learning Designated Courses
  • Service-Scholar Program
Q & A