BUILDING THE FIVE R/FIVE STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING ENGAGED LEARNING IN THE BUSINESS SCHOOL

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Abstract

In an era of social marketing among profit and not-for-profit organizations (Kerin et al., 2010), universities and business schools must evidence that they too are positioned to meaningfully give back to the communities in which they operate. In an effort to meet the difficult challenge of meeting diverse stakeholder needs, increasingly more institutions of higher learning are embracing the concept of community engagement through engaged learning.

The purpose of this study is to review the relevant literature in an effort to determine the most valued service and engaged learning outcomes among five stakeholder groups: students, faculty, universities, community clients, and communities at large. Juxtaposed with the philosophical foundation of the Five Rs of service and engaged learning (Reciprocity, Reflection, Reality, Responsibility, and Rewards of synergy), a theoretical framework is developed to aid future research in service and engaged learning pedagogy. Outcomes and benefits are articulated, and gaps identified for future research.

Key words: Five R/ Five Stakeholder Research Framework, Service Learning, Engaged Learning.
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1. Introduction

To meet diverse stakeholder needs many institutions of higher learning are embracing the pedagogical philosophy of engaged learning through student-learning initiatives focused on working with community groups and organizational clients. This type of community engagement is defined by the Carnegie Foundation (2009) as “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.” Similarly, curricular engagement is identified as teaching, learning and scholarship that engage faculty, students, and the community in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration (Carnegie Foundation, 2009). These interactions address needs identified by the community, deepen student civic and academic learning, and more generally enhance community well-being, while enriching the scholarship of the institution for both faculty and students.

There is confusion regarding the importance of engaged learning, and the relative placement of engaged learning in the university, much less in the business school. A framework for examining and understanding the consequences and benefits delivered by this strategic positioning and pedagogy to diverse stakeholders, and the inter-relationships between them is needed. The framework needs to identify relevant stakeholders, explicate specific and measurable outcomes delivered by the pedagogy to each stakeholder group. The framework should also provide a theoretical foundation for further research.

The purpose of this study is to review the relevant literature in an effort to identify the most valued service and engaged learning outcomes among five stakeholder groups: students, faculty, universities, community clients, and communities at large. Juxtaposed with the philosophical Five R foundation supporting service and engaged learning, (Reciprocity, Reflection, Reality, Responsibility, and Rewards of Synergy), a framework is presented for the purpose of improved faculty and institutional teaching and learning for aiding future research.
2. The Learning Process

There is converging and extensive evidence from multiple disciplinary perspectives regarding the characteristics of effective learning environments. Depth of understanding is enhanced through learning processes that include active learning, frequent feedback from qualified others, collaboration with a cohort of learners, and others; mentoring relationships; and application where students are involved in projects with real consequences but with a safety net for errors (Marchese, 1997). Well-designed engaged learning courses at the university level typically meet most of these components of effective learning environments (Hatcher and Bringle, 2004). Learning, as positioned as a function of interaction between the student and the environment, is nothing new, and has been a known philosophy and belief promoted and supported by educational leaders for over seventy years (Dewey 1938; Kolb, 1984).

The National Society for Experiential Education broadly defines service learning as “any carefully monitored service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience,” (National Society for Experiential Education, 1994). Intellectual rationales for service and engaged learning include theories of pedagogy, personal transformation, self-development, and individual change (Ostrander, 2004). Long-standing theories of experiential education making claims for enhanced learning when service is integrated into the academic curriculum also fall within this theory of change. Engaged learning projects are action-oriented because they require students to go somewhere and do something, experience and respond to stimuli, challenge themselves, test the boundaries of theory, and then to critically reflect on their experience (Kenworthy-U’ren and Peterson, 2005). Experiential learning enhances the educational experiences of students by providing them opportunities to go beyond textbooks and classrooms to address real-life issues and challenges (Lester et al., 2005). Five main objectives are commonly accepted as driving engaged learning: grounding academic knowledge in real-world conditions, connecting knowledge to practice, bringing academics and practitioners into closer relationships, improving conditions in local communities, and building democracy and civil society (Ostrander, 2004).

2.1 Stakeholders in the Engaged Learning Process

There are five major stakeholders who are generally recognized and acknowledged in engaged learning: students, faculty, the university, the community client, and the community at large. These stakeholders have multiple interests and expectations of the engaged learning process. The opportunities for most include building relationships and the opportunity for
networking, increased knowledge and learning, the possibility of direct or indirect economic benefit, resolving problems or perplexing issues, and stimulating experiences.

Engaged learning calls for faculty and students to engage with issues and questions that people or community clients in the surrounding community name as important, and to collaborate in partnership with people outside typical university boundaries (Checkoway, 1997). Engaged learning integrates theory and practice through exploratory learning activities (Hunt and Laverie, 2004). Student groups use and apply their academic knowledge in combination with their unique on-the-ground experience toward generating feasible solutions to issues or problems identified by and with community clients (Middleton, 2005), thus dealing with real-life issues and problems in real-time (Berry and Taylor, 2006). Real consequences to real people are seen in the experience (Berry and Workman, 2007). Engaged learning, as a broader set of campus initiatives that includes and builds upon service learning, can contribute to an expanded view of faculty roles and student learning, university ability to meet the needs of various stakeholders, as well as creating work outcomes that contribute to public service through higher education (Hatcher and Bringle, 2004).

3. Literature Review

3.1 Philosophy of Engaged Learning

Kolb (1984) claims that effective learning requires four different learning abilities, including concrete experience, reflective writing and observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Experience involves participation in the community or the non-academic workplace, while reflection involves thoughtful personal elaboration comparing learning from the experience with prior knowledge or understanding. Abstract conceptualization requires the integration of theory and various concepts from the classroom into the engaged learning experience. Engaged learning usually includes a doing phase, which Kolb (1984) names and identifies as experimentation, where students may implement recommendations and undertake actions plans for the community client.

Engaged learning’s experiential nature makes use of Kolb’s (1984) cycle for effective learning by providing real-world practice where students experience, reflect upon, conceptualize, and implement their classroom knowledge. Engaged learning is also a tool for awakening student civic responsibility, which in turn may assist the university in responding to perceived atrophy of civic engagement and socially unaware business practice. Simply stated, engaged learning pedagogy assumes that significant and important student learning takes place by combining
classroom theory with concrete experience in the field, and then overlaying critical or guided reflection on that experience (Dipadova-Stocks, 2005).

3.2 Purpose of Engaged Learning

Engaged learning goes beyond philosophy however, and has a well defined purpose and expected outcomes. Engaged learning is linked to a specific course and has the intentional goal of developing civic skills and dispositions in students, similar to the goals of service learning as noted by Bawden (2000). Most engaged projects give classroom materials a meaningful context, going beyond textbook concept or idea, again reinforcing the concept that most learning is context dependent (Zlotkowski, 1999; Reynolds and Vince, 2004). Expected student outcomes include superior learning of core course material because of increased interest and commitment. Another significant learning outcome though, in many cases, is the actual hands-on experience of implementing a class-related project for the community client which combines classroom materials with on-site pragmatic realities (McIntyre, Webb and Hitt, 2005). Because real consequences to real people are seen in the experience, engaged learning practitioners also typically expect these projects to have sustainable long-term benefits for all involved stakeholders, rather than one-time, short-term benefits for students only, as is often seen in other types of experiential learning activities (Kenworthy-U’ren and Peterson, 2005).

3.3 The How of Engaged Learning

Engaged learning enables students to move from theory to application. This is a dramatic shift for many students, as they leave the relatively safe confines of the classroom to actually learn through their direct experience in the community client’s work environment. Students are expected to address actual problems as determined collaboratively by the students and the community client, and are responsible for producing solutions and outcomes, again in collaboration with the community client. Realistically, these outcomes are not always successful, and this too provides a rich learning experience. Because focused reflection is built into engaged learning activities, students develop and then reinforce a key managerial skill: the ability to reflect critically on one’s experiences, almost as a feedback loop, and then to improve performance because of this awareness. Finally, students have meaningful opportunities to become increasingly sophisticated in their understanding of realistic business practice, and stand to gain an orientation to life-long, productive civic engagement as well (Salimbene et al., 2005).

In the living engaged learning experience students gain mastery of the course content in part through their practical experience in the field, and use the course content and pertinent
theory, along with their own energy and skill, to solve genuine and specific organizational problems (Berry and Taylor, 2006), and in turn receive significant benefits in terms of increased knowledge, understanding, and awareness of many business and social issues and problems. Students are expected to produce real-life results that make a positive and perhaps sustainable difference in the lives of the community client or organization, or others. Students have moved from academic concept to application, and because the engaged learning experience often allows implementation of suggested solutions, this is a highly significant advantage over the purely academic solution as presented in the case-study or lecture classroom (Brown, 2000). A further understand the benefits of engaged learning, a useful framework is the Five Rs of service and engaged learning (reciprocity, reflection, reality, responsibility, and rewards of synergy) which outlines the experience for the stakeholders involved.

4. The Five Rs of Service and Engaged Learning

4.1 Reciprocity

Reciprocity in Service and Engaged Learning positions students and community stakeholders as partners in a value exchange process. It involves both service recipients and students teaching each other and gaining in learning from the exchange. Students and community partners contribute different types of knowledge that work together to reinforce learning and improve performance by both parties.

4.2 Reflection

Quality and quantity of reflective activities have an impact on student learning (Eyler et al., 2001). Reflection encourages students to think deeply about “What did I learn? How am I different after this experience? How would I do this differently next time around?” It is evident that Reflection represents the most important value added component of service and engaged learning. Service and engaged learning participation has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development (Eyler et al., 2001). It is often only through the process of reflection after the activity is completed that students fully appreciate the significant learning they have just experienced.

4.3 Reality

Students and faculty report that service learning improves students’ ability to apply in the real world what they have learned in the academic world (Eyler et al., 2001). Reality is what
incorporates and applies real and rigorous academic content throughout the service and engaged learning activity. When students are required to analyze historical textbook case studies, performing “what if” scenarios and generating feasible solutions to the problems, they tend to discount the relevance from this learning as the events are historical or even invented, and do not impact them personally. But when students are working in real time with a real firm and are charged with developing real feasible solutions that will cost the firm real money, then students are forced to grapple simultaneously with the magnitude of multiple issues and current events significantly impacting the work they are doing. This aspect of Reality results in the accomplishment of real and meaningful work that will impact a firm’s performance, and the rewards expressed from students from this alone indicate that Reality is where the learning takes hold.

4.4 Responsibility

Service Learning has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills and often contributes to moral development (Eyler et al., 2001). In a service or engaged learning experience, students assume the obligations of citizenship, using their business skills, talents, and knowledge to improve those communities where they live and work. Service learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and demographic understanding, (Eyler et al., 2001).

4.5 Rewards of Synergy

Synergy is the interaction or cooperation of two or more individuals, groups, or organizations which produces a combined effect and output greater than that possible through individual effort. In service and engaged learning, rewards of synergy relate to the mutual benefits and positive outcomes derived from the partnership, both individually for each participating partner, as well as holistically for the institutions engaging in the service and engaged learning exchange process. Service and engaged learning provides useful service in communities, and communities report enhanced university relations (Eyler et al., 2001). Transformations in orientations toward service and community occur from all involved stakeholders. While students are learning core curricula of the course, their clients are simultaneously learning and benefiting from the application of course principles through action plans generated toward specific improved business outcomes. Thus, rather than learning occurring only among students enrolled in a course, faculty, clients and institutions additionally
learn through interacting together and creating value much greater than the sum of its separate parts.

5. Comparing Engaged Learning with Other Experiential Learning Pedagogies

There are three identified advantages of engaged learning and service learning over internships, part-time jobs, or the use of case studies in the classroom. The first difference is that service learning makes use of professor-supervised classroom course-content material and learning while undertaking the engaged learning project. Second, engaged learning projects include and require reciprocity with the client or client agency as both the student and the client are expected to benefit from the exchange in more than simply economic or transactional ways (Godfrey, Illés, and Berry, 2005). This hands-on experience with real-life consequences is simply not possible or even intended in an academic case method class. Critical or directed reflection is perhaps the major benefit, however, as this not only enhances self-knowledge and social awareness, but it also leads to constantly improved performance and outcomes both personal and business related. Finally, engaged learning encourages students to do things with rather than for others (Jacoby, 2003).

In engaged learning academic credit is not given for engaging with a community client; rather, academic credit is based on the academic learning that occurs as a result of the engagement with the client (Marais and Botes, 2005). As well, engaged learning (as does Service Learning) enables collaboration between the University and community partners.

Based on the literature, as well as primary research conducted among students in business school marketing and management courses, a theoretical framework is presented in Table 1. Five relevant stakeholder groups of business schools delivering on a service and engaged learning mission are identified: students, faculty, universities, community clients, and communities at large. Associated value-added outcomes of each group are presented, and a discussion of each follows.
**Table 1: Five R/Five Stakeholder Research Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Rs</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Community Client</th>
<th>Community</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Rewards of Synergy</td>
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<td>Students To</td>
<td>Student-to-student learning through teamwork.</td>
<td>Interactive individual relationships between professor and students.</td>
<td>S&amp;EL students enhance the reputation of university within community.</td>
<td>Reciprocal learning between students-clients.</td>
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<td>Business team skill development and honing.</td>
<td>Faculty mentors and coaches vs. 1-way lecturing to class.</td>
<td>S&amp;EL course inputs create high involvement and lasting positive memories of “College Days” Experience.</td>
<td>Clients gain “free or low cost consulting.”</td>
<td>Generation Y fresh ideas and value creation are provided to clients.</td>
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<td>Faculty receive daily feedback about students’ mastery of material.</td>
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<td>Faculty To</td>
<td>Individual student attention from faculty resulting in richer long term student-faculty relationships.</td>
<td>Shared continuous improvement tactics among other faculty members.</td>
<td>Faculty become University stewards to community through outreach to community and help brand their institutions.</td>
<td>Faculty participate in individual business value creation</td>
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<td>Cross-disciplinary research projects toward realization of professional goals.</td>
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Table 1: Five R/Five Stakeholder Research Framework: Continues

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<thead>
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<th>Student</th>
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<th>Community Client</th>
<th>Community</th>
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<tr>
<td>University To</td>
<td>S&amp;EL experiences result in increased learning and richer relationships between students and their alma maters.</td>
<td>Faculty develop professionall y and spread their teaching and research wings.</td>
<td>Universities sharing S&amp;EL mission become hotbeds and leaders for cross- university teaching and scholarship.</td>
<td>University creates value for individual businesses.</td>
<td>University propels community economic developmen t.</td>
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<td>Community Partner To</td>
<td>Students learn more deeply from solving real world problems. Internship placements for students. Final career placements for students.</td>
<td>Community clients keep faculty fresh in their disciplines. Potential for future faculty consulting activities.</td>
<td>Potential University human capital and developmen t partners.</td>
<td>Enhanced reciprocity, knowledge sharing &amp; networking among community clients during end of semester meetings.</td>
<td>Enhanced economic developmen t and increased community tax base.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community To</td>
<td>Students develop increased business citizenship skill sets. Big Picture perspective of students’ educational experiences. Internship and professional placement within local communities.</td>
<td>Big Picture perspective of how faculty teaching contribution s positively impact the community.</td>
<td>Long term community partnerships, economic developmen t, and strategic planning &amp; building.</td>
<td>Small Business Developmen t Center interface and propel businesses to next level of success.</td>
<td>Community partners within and across states develop local, state and national commerce.</td>
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5.1 Service and Engaged Learning Stakeholder Outcomes

The Five Rs of service and engaged learning work together to produce significant and multiple positive outcomes for diverse stakeholders. Importantly, each of the twenty-five cells is enhanced directly by the Five Rs: Reciprocity, Reflection, Reality, Responsibility, and the Rewards of Synergy. A brief explanation of each exchange relationship outcome listed in Table 1 follows.

5.2 The Student Interfaces

Students to Students: Service learning has a positive effect on interpersonal development, the ability to work well with others, and leadership and communication skills (Eyler et al., 2001). Enhanced student learning is experienced among students working together as a team and learning from each other toward the production of client based projects. Students develop and hone professional business team skills.

Students to Faculty: Rather than administering one-way lecturing pedagogy, enhanced teaching and learning opportunities develop as faculty members actively play the role of coach and mentor to individual students and student teams. Faculty members actively learn from and about their students through more personal interactions and immediate feedback. Faculty members are provided with rich readings about whether or not their students are effectively grasping the curriculum, and can constantly tweak the learning experience, highlighting or identifying experiential teaching moments. Students engaged in service or engaged learning report stronger faculty relationships than those who are not involved in service learning (Eyler et al., 2001).

Students to University: Students effectively working with community clients enhance the reputation of the university to the broader community. Satisfied community clients are able to speak with each other and other community individuals and organizations about the high quality of education being delivered at the university, and how its students directly assisted in their businesses growth. Long term potential benefits of satisfied service and engaged learning students could point to higher financial and human capital development opportunities for the universities as engaged students may feel more strongly justified in supporting their alma maters.

Students to Community Partners: Community clients or partners report satisfaction with student participation and work on community partner problems or issues (Eyler et al., 2001). Relationships are developed between students and community partners as reciprocal learning occurs, sometimes leading to other future mutual benefits after the engaged learning project is
over including paid internships or even employment. Clients gain free or low-cost consulting from students who help them to see their business through a younger, Generation Y lens.

Students to Community: Students create value for local communities by contributing to community-partner business success. Students provide services to small businesses in the community that in many cases would not otherwise have been met due to restricted resources. These services may include business or marketing plans, enhanced book-keeping or inventory supply systems, or more simply improved generic management practices.

5.3 The Faculty Interfaces

Faculty to Students: Faculty using service or engaged learning report satisfaction with quality of student learning (Eyler et al., 2001). Enhanced teaching occurs as students gain individual attention and coaching from faculty members throughout the semester project. Richer and longer lasting relationships between students and faculty members are developed. As well, because the engaged learning project is real, the learning and experience assumes an importance often missing in the typical classroom.

Faculty to Faculty: Enhanced faculty development occurs as faculty members are reminded constantly by their colleagues of the benefits of service and engaged learning. Teaching philosophies are shared and honed among colleagues, raising the awareness and motivation of genuine pedagogical improvement for all. Research projects both within and across disciplines can be developed among colleagues toward the realization of faculty goals such as improved teaching, improved community and university service, and even personal tenure aspirations.

Faculty to University: Enhanced university citizenship is realized as faculty members become university stewards to the community for meaningful business development. Faculty members position their universities as service and engaged learning branded. In times of complaint regarding the lack of relevance of the university generally, and when higher-education budgets are under constant attack, the service and engaged learning work of faculty give the university an opening to discuss their direct contributions to the community and society generally.

Faculty to Community Partner: Enhanced university outreach is accomplished through faculty members participating with their students in community partner value creation. Faculty members are seen as pragmatic experts who are concerned and willing to help a community or organizational issue, and not as distance and disengaged ivory tower elitists.
Faculty to Community: Value is added to the community economic base over the longer term as faculty members direct students toward community partner value creation. The quality of faculty/student connections is made visible to community stakeholders, and the university is positioned as a community partner sharing concerns and problems collaboratively.

5.4 The University Interfaces

University to Students: Service and engaged learning contributes to career development (Eyler et al., 2001), and engaged student course inputs create higher involvement and lasting positive memories among students of their “college days.” Service and engaged learning enhances institutional support and cohesion (Eyler et al., 2001) because of the obvious concern and dedication of the university for student learning and rich experiences. When universities engage students as they are learning, enhanced long-term relationships are built between students and their alma maters during and after their university experiences. The university provides not only the opportunity for engagement, but it also mitigates the risk involved so that the experience is even possible.

University to Faculty: When universities encourage and financially support service and engaged learning development among faculty members, professors are provided with invaluable training that serves to both improve their teaching, as well as encourage teaching experimentation. Faculty members grow and learn beyond traditional pedagogical methods, providing them with the support that encourages motivation and enables effective student learning experiences and improvement.

University to University: Universities whose mission includes service and engaged learning stand differentiated among others relative to the scope of their community outreach and the experiences of their students. Universities sharing the service and engaged learning mission become leaders for cross institutional teaching and research opportunities, creating visible benefits for all involved stakeholders, including government funding agencies.

University to Community Partner: Universities participate in value creation for local community business partners through service and engaged learning. Significantly, the university has resources that could and should benefit the community stakeholders, and the student engaged learning work is an example of sharing resources for the improvement of all.

University to Community: Universities report enhanced community relations as an outcome of service and engaged learning (Eyler et al., 2001). University outreach through service and engaged learning adds value to and propels the development of the community
economic base, as well as social and political support for the university itself. The university breaks free of the perception of ivory-tower aloofness, at least in part, and becomes relevant and important to the community with which it is a member.

5.5 The Community-Partner Interfaces

Community Partner to Students: Community partners offer students real world problems to solve as they study specific course curriculum. Student testimonials confirm that students value these real time learning experiences far beyond traditional lecture and classroom methods. In addition, community partners provide reciprocal learning opportunities for students as they coach student teams and teach them about their businesses. Satisfied community partners sometimes offer students paid internships and final professional career placements upon graduation.

Community Partner to Faculty: Community clients serve to keep faculty members fresh in their disciplines and business skills by offering their businesses as a focal point of study. In addition, future consulting opportunities can result from the faculty community partner relationships. As well, faculty members stay current with organizational issues and problems, adding to their own relevance and awareness of issues in their teaching and research.

Community Partner to University: Community partners of the university often result in valuable potential university human capital and financial resources. Community partners serve on university advisory boards, as well as donate time and money to student scholarships and university activities. The community partner often has enhanced respect and awareness of the challenges facing the university, the faculty, and the students of the university, and this connection is real. There are residual benefits as well, as further inter-dependent support is realized in future years, as the university/community bond is strengthened.

Community Partner to Community Partner: End of semester meetings among student and community clients enable clients to interact with each other. Enhanced business reciprocity of information, knowledge and networking among community partners results. This is an area ripe for further study, as little is known about these connections or the resultant benefits to the various stakeholders.

Community Partner to Community: Enhanced economic development and increased community tax base results when student client projects are implemented and businesses benefit.
5.6 The Community Interfaces

Community to Students: Community service affects student retention (Eyler et al., 2001), and students develop an increased sense of business citizenship by being positively recognized among satisfied community partners. Students develop a Big Picture perspective of learning and the power of education. Internship and professional employment opportunities often result for students among satisfied community partners.

Community to Faculty: Communities give faculty a “Big Picture” perspective of how their effective service and engaged learning teaching contributions can positively impact the local economy. As well, faculty members gain an appreciation of current business issues, making their teaching and research more relevant.

Community to University: Communities report enhanced university relations (Eyler et al., 2001). Communities working effectively with universities in service and engaged learning can result in enhanced long term development and strategic planning opportunities for all involved stakeholders.

Community to Community Partner: Community Small Business Development Centers working with universities often serve to propel community partners to the next level of business success. Community issues can frequently be assisted through service and engaged learning, especially in the non-profit sector of the community.

Community to Community: Community partnerships within and across states can develop as more universities embrace service and engaged learning toward the development of an improved city, state and national interface.

6. The Five Rs of Service and Engaged Learning Employed

The Five Rs of service and engaged learning (Reciprocity, Reflection, Reality, Responsibility, and Rewards of Synergy) provide the theoretical underpinnings of the value added learning and outcomes derived uniquely from the service and engaged learning teaching pedagogy. The student data was collected at the end of a semester long project in spring 2010 which included the development of annual marketing plans for community clients.

6.1 Reciprocity

Reciprocity in service and engaged learning positions students and community stakeholders as partners in a value exchange process. It involves both service recipients and students teaching each other and gaining in learning from the exchange. Students and community
partners contribute different types of knowledge that work together to reinforce learning and improve performance by both parties. Quotes from students related to Reciprocity include:

“We gave the client a business plan that was going to help their increase their enrollment for the upcoming year of 2011. We were able to come up with tactical recommendations that were going to help with that process. We received some basic information about what they did and what their current enrollment was.” (Student comments, 04/10).

“I was able to learn from my client that a business is worth it if you enjoy what you are doing, some of the artist at the Bride Academy made little money, but they had a passion for the subject that they were teaching. I think we were able to teach our client some possible ways of implementing some new ways to help their business, “(Student comments, 04/10).

“I believe that my group gave the client tactics that would create awareness for their company without spending a significant amount of money. The client taught me a lot. It was through this project that I got to actually see the things that we were learning in class hands on. I was able to see how it would work out with a real company. I think that it was perfect the way that it was. I feel that my group learned a lot from the little time that we had with our client. I feel that our client learned a lot from our presentation and from our marketing plan that we put together for them, “(Student comments, 04/10).

“I gave the client information on which its direct competitors were information about advertisement specialties. Information data gathered from a non generalizable survey and broke down the results for the client. As for what I gained for myself, I was able to implement some of the things I taught to the client in my own business. In particular I was able to implement advertizing specialties. My client taught me that it is okay to go to others for help with your business. They taught me that some forms of business advice can be given free of charge simply for asking or looking for it. What I taught my client in return was that people are willing to help and serve you if you are willing to ask for their help,” (Student comments, 04/10).

6.2 Reflection

Quality and quantity of reflective activities have an impact on student learning (Eyler et al., 2001). Reflection encourages students to think deeply about “What did I learn? How am I different after this experience? How would I do this differently next time around?” It is evident that Reflection represents the most important value added component of service and engaged learning. Service and engaged learning participation has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive
development (Eyler et al., 2001). It is often only through the process of reflection after the activity is completed that students fully appreciate the significant learning they have just experienced. Quotes from students related to Reflection include:

“I feel that this project made me reflect on what I learned and how I would do things differently the whole time. Because it is a whole semester project and we are constantly working and revising I think it definitely made me think about that the whole time. Also, because we are able to re-turn in our projects for more points it helped us think about how to change things and what to do,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“I really liked the fact that we were able to turn our projects in again for a second score. This way we were able to reflect on what we said and what we would do differently and actually were able to change it,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“This was a completely different way of learning than I’ve ever had. I am a hands-on person and so this was much better for me to learn the concepts. I learned them in class and then they stuck in my memory because of what we were doing outside of class and because I was actually applying them in a real-life experience;” (Student comments, 04/10).

6.3 Reality

Students and faculty report that service learning improves students’ ability to apply in the real world what they have learned in the academic world (Eyler et al., 2001). Reality is what incorporates and applies real and rigorous academic content throughout the service and engaged learning activity. When students are required to analyze historical textbook case studies, performing “what if” scenarios and generating feasible solutions to the problems, they tend to discount the relevance from this learning as the events are historical or even invented, and do not impact them personally. But when students are working in real time with a real firm and are charged with developing real feasible solutions that will cost the firm real money, then students are forced to grapple simultaneously with the magnitude of multiple issues and current events significantly impacting the work they are doing. This aspect of Reality results in the accomplishment of real and meaningful work that will impact a firm’s performance, and the rewards expressed from students from this alone indicate that Reality is where the learning takes hold. Quotes from students related to Reality include:

“The experience that I had in this class has been considerably different than any other class that I have had. The fact that we did in reality work with an actual client made it better. I had to apply myself and think about what would benefit the business the best. I’ve had classes
were we make things for business, they all have been companies were we never came in contact for them. The service learning project made all of the difference in leaning about marketing principles for me. Having to work on projects directly parallel to what I am learning has been the best way I have learned in my classes that I have had, “(Student comments, 04/10).

“I believe the biggest break-through we made with our client was with their website. They didn’t want to change their website and were uptight about it but we showed them that they could still cater it to their liking, but be a little more professional, “(Student comments, 04/10).

“I feel that this was so different than other courses because it was actually a hands on project and what we did actually mattered. It wasn’t just for a grade. It was for an actual client,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“I think that this (reality) was a huge part of this project. I knew the whole time when putting this project together that it was actually going to go to a real company. That made everything that I did more meaningful and I put a lot more of myself and my time into what I was doing, because I knew that it actually mattered. This class was different from any other course that I have ever had. I feel that the reality really hit me and it was so good for me to actually see what it would be like if I were to work for a marketing company,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“This experience was different than my experiences in other courses, mainly because we were able to work to give real assistance to a local business. We were able to help them in several ways including advertising, new program ideas, giving them greater awareness of their business environment. If I were to do another service learning project in the future I would, like I did this time, choose a business that I was interested in for my project. The greater interest you have in the business the more involved you probably are in the project. By being interested and involved in a project, students make it easier for the other students by being an active participant,” (Student comments, 04/10).

6.4 Responsibility

Service Learning has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills and often contributes to moral development (Eyler et al., 2001). In a service or engaged learning experience, students assume the obligations of citizenship, using their business skills, talents, and knowledge to improve those communities where they live and work. Service learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and demographic understanding, (Eyler et al., 2001). Quotes from students related to Responsibility include:
“I think that the responsibility was greater than I had in other classes. Again, doing a project for another business made it crucial that we all tried a little bit harder on our assignments. Also the fact that we were all working as a group made it, so we all wouldn’t slack off,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“The project has made it so I will look at businesses differently. I’m going to try to shop locally now, when possible. After seeing the struggles that some of these people make, I want to help out in any way I can,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“I think that project definitely has changed my perception. I never thought that I would be able to complete this project and do as well as I did. I now view myself as a socially responsible citizen for sure,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“This experience was different from other courses because we had a responsibility to help the client through our own research and efforts. We not only had to work for a grade and to learn material, but also to help the client we chose with a marketing plan. This experience helped to demonstrate how we can be of assistance to those around us by using knowledge gained through academic studies, in order to help the community,” (Student comments, 04/10).

7. Rewards of Synergy

Synergy is the interaction or cooperation of two or more individuals, groups, or organizations which produces a combined effect and output greater than that possible through individual effort. In service and engaged learning, rewards of synergy relate to the mutual benefits and positive outcomes derived from the partnership, both individually for each participating partner, as well as holistically for the institutions engaging in the service and engaged learning exchange process. Service and engaged learning provides useful service in communities, and communities report enhanced university relations (Eyler et al., 2001). Transformations in orientations toward service and community occur from all involved stakeholders. While students are learning core curricula of the course, their clients are simultaneously learning and benefiting from the application of course principles through action plans generated toward specific improved business outcomes. Thus, rather than learning occurring only among students enrolled in a course, faculty, clients and institutions additionally learn through interacting together and creating value much greater than the sum of its separate parts. Quotes from students related to Rewards of Synergy include:

“The service learning project has been a rewarding experience to me this semester. I have learned a lot and most importantly I have learned the importance of research before starting a
Knowing what your target market wants is key and knowing how they think is even more important. I really thought that everything was perfect. The only thing that I think would make the experience better is if we had the chance to work with the client longer,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“I definitely think it is a very valuable part of the business school program. I feel that giving people the responsibility that we were given was so important. We were able to create a valuable marketing plan for our client but we didn’t have to do it on our own. We weren’t just thrown out into the real world. We had our Professor to help us and coach us along the way. I feel that it is very useful to have this service-learning project. I learned so much from it this semester. I retained the material that she taught us and learned how it would apply in the real world,” (Student comments, 04/10).

“I can’t say that one thing was more significant than the other. I feel that the whole project was so important for me. I really needed to see how everything would apply in the real world. I wasn’t just doing things in class for the grade. I realized that this was for an actual client and for an actual business. It made me excited about school and about what I was learning. I think the whole service-learning project was significant for me. I think this whole project was useful to me. I think a lot of it had to do with me having an amazing group where we were all willing and wanting to work hard for our client,”(Student comments, 04/10).

“It was a great learning experience to see how money invested wisely into marketing for a business can make such a difference in the growth and success of that business. It was also interesting to see that some marketing tactics were relatively inexpensive yet effective,” (Student comments, 04/10).

8. Discussion—Value Added for each Stakeholder

8.1 Benefits of Engaged Learning for the Student

The real impact of engaged learning is best understood by looking at the impact on student beliefs and understanding combined with the effects on community clients. Expected student outcomes include superior learning of core course material because of increased interest and excitement with the project (Berry and Workman, 2007). Students expressed gaining keen insight about the complexity of issues raised within a real-business context, as well as a sense of confidence about the quality of contributions they will be able to make as business professionals in the future (Berry and Workman, 2007). Reality in the engaged learning experience enhances rigorous academic content by enabling students to apply classroom learning in a real-world
setting. Students undertaking engaged learning projects go beyond the classroom to address real-life issues and challenges (Lester, et al., 2005). Students are also expected to produce real-life results, moving from theory to application. Engaged learning overcomes the fundamental challenge of relevance in business education (Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002), and offers a practical experience in exercising skill and ability. Engaged learning is different from case study or internship because student actions have genuine potential to change the circumstance of the community client or the client’s client. The outcomes of engaged learning vary student to student, but superior learning and understanding of the substance of the course is the main objective, although awareness of civic responsibility and commitment to the common good are frequently cited benefits as well (Dipadova-Stocks, 2005).

8.2 Benefits of Engaged Learning for the Faculty

The main benefits for faculty is two-fold: first, they are able to do relevant and meaningful teaching/coaching work with their students, and second, they become increasingly networked and connected to the local community, thus increasing their own credibility, relevance, and knowledge for their own research work. Harkovy (1998) contends that undertaking engaged learning will improve both core teaching but also the research outputs of the faculty. The service component of the tripartite typical set of demands on academics (scholarship, teaching, and service, Checkoway, 1997), is commonly construed as internal committee University work or perhaps scholarly review work, but rarely as effective community service work. Engaged learning enables significant community benefit from the faculty and the university to the community, thus enhancing both faculty and university relevance and significance to the community.

8.3 Benefits of Engaged Learning for the University

Neither the historic, guiding philosophies that shape universities’ active involvement in society, nor the difficult on-the-ground practices necessary to bring such work to fruition, are new (Dewey, 1938; Ostrander, 2004). Universities are commonly criticized for their general failure to engage and respond to community and societal needs (Kezar and Rhoads, 2001), and there are also demands for business schools in particular to broaden the ethical and social awareness of their students (McAlister 2004). Some have argued for over a decade that today’s research universities may not survive unless they increase their connections to local communities and relate academic research and teaching more closely to real-world issues (Lerner and Simon, 1998; Overton and Burkhardt, 1999).
The quality of faculty and university knowledge itself is threatened by the academy’s disengagement from real-world concerns, and it seems self-evident that better knowledge results from grounding and testing in real-world conditions and contexts (Harkavy and Puckett, 1998). Universities need some link in addressing the major issues of the day or else they may become socially irrelevant and therefore not capable of being sustained as institutions (Boyer, 1990, 1994). This is not a new concern, but one with special resonance in today’s context where universities must increasingly justify rising costs by defending their legitimacy and contribution to society (Boyte and Kari, 1996; Marullo and Edwards, 2000).

Universities need sophisticated pedagogies that expose students to real-life issues and problems in real-life context. Fortunately, there are ample opportunities for the university to collaborate with the community and organizations in the community, and to respond to community needs (McAlister, 2004). To fully integrate and institutionalize, and thus sustain university civic engagement, it must build on a solid intellectual rationale that addresses and defines the intellectual project of university civic engagement. In some cases, this includes specifying researchable questions and conceptual problems and using the university as a change agent (Ostrander, 2004). The evidence indicates that institutional initiatives associated with civic engagement and service and engaged learning can be sustaining sources of change, and not just an ephemeral fad. In addition, they can be aligned with other changes taking place in the academy and produce both broad and deep change that includes individuals (e.g. student, faculty), institutions, and communities (Hatcher and Bringle, 2004). By becoming more civically engaged, institutions of higher education will be modeling a socially responsible behavior for their students. Finally, engaged learning will serve the self-interests of the academy by garnering recognition from external stakeholders such as funders, government officials, alumni, and community leaders (Harkovy, 1998).

8.4 Benefits of Engaged Learning for the Community Client

A goal of engaged learning is that each party benefits, learns from, and teaches the other during the course of the experience (Jacoby, 2003). Students feel that they were engaged in an exchange of value between their client and themselves, and that contributions were significant and meaningful to the community client (Berry and Workman, 2007). Engaged learning is different from case study or internship because student actions have genuine potential to change the circumstance of the client or the client’s client (Berry and Workman, 2007). The hands-on experience is not theoretical, but practical and “real,” and therefore has real benefits for the
community client. Engaged learning is action orientated and the project often includes implementation of the students work, and so students experience challenges that test their classroom learning (Godfrey, Illes, and Berry, 2005), but community clients also experience real work and real benefit from the student’s work.

8.5 Benefits of Engaged Learning for the Community

What is perhaps most challenging is establishing and maintaining relationships across social, cultural, and economic divides. There are inequalities of power and resources between the university and the community that seem to be often endemic to these relationships (Maurrasse, 2001), and a key factor in building a campus community partnership is the willingness and ability of the university to share power, decision making, and material resources with local communities and to actively and consistently demonstrate this in how the work is organized (Ostrander, 2004). Often the community is taken-for-granted and essentially ignored by the university and service and engaged learning helps in bringing these for-granted relationships into focus for all engaged stakeholders.

9. Future Research Directions

This research is intended to provide a theoretical framework for universities and business schools toward better understanding and assessing the diverse stakeholder outcomes related to delivering on a service and engaged learning mission. Many areas are ripe for future research, some of which are implied by this framework. First, while the purpose of this research was theoretical, some student data was included to add depth of perception of how they believed that their educational experience had been enriched by the service and engaged learning pedagogy. Future research should include data collected from each of the other stakeholder groups: faculty, university administrators, community clients and community leaders, in an effort to better understand these value added stakeholder outcomes as well. In addition, as enhanced business reciprocity of information, knowledge and networking among community partners results from service and engaged learning pedagogy, future research should focus on investigating the quality of these connections and the resultant benefits to the various stakeholders.

As universities embrace a service and engaged learning mission, and as the Carnegie Foundation brands them as institutions of distinction, it would be relevant to explore development results among and across universities longitudinally. That is, a university whose new mission includes this initiative may seek to correlate increased alumni development funds to the direct effects of this initiative through research. A future call to research is also self-evident
about the economic value generated within the community as a result of employing students in service and engaged learning missions. It is reasonable to expect that those business schools delivering on this mission would be contributing economically to their communities at a higher rate than those business schools not strategically positioned to deliver this pedagogy. In addition, alumni relations could be investigated to determine strength and duration of relationship between alumni and their alma maters.

10. Concluding Remarks

Engaged learning’s experiential nature makes use of Kolb’s (1984) cycle for effective learning by providing real-world practice where business students experience, reflect upon, conceptualize, and implement their classroom knowledge. Students expressed gaining keen insight about the complexity of issues raised within a real business context, as well as a sense of confidence about the quality of contributions they will be prepared to make as business professionals in the future.

To define the engaged university solely in ethical and educational terms will likely mean that engagement will continue to be a marginalized activity in which only a few community-minded faculty and students will choose to be involved as service added on their normal activities (Ostrander, 2004). The good news is that faculty and universities choose their own future, at least in part, based on how we individually face our challenges, and the values we choose to follow when making personal and corporate decisions and subsequent behaviors. Where does the business school go from here?

The purpose of this research was to begin to answer this important strategic question. Business schools and universities have needed a framework from which to better understand the benefits of service and engaged learning among diverse stakeholders. Many have previously been confused about the value added by this pedagogy, and some have wondered if it is even worth resource allocation and faculty investment (Eyler et al., 2001). Future strategic planning stands to be more directed and outcomes measured by employing the Five R/Five Stakeholder research framework. The framework also provides an impetus for business schools to further investigate the quality of stakeholder relationships, as well as the value that the business school is delivering to the university and greater community. The Five R/Five Stakeholder research framework serves a useful role in overall strategic planning and assessment processes to identify specific value-added deliverables derived from service and engaged learning pedagogy, as well as providing ideas and directions for future research.
References


