

## **Special Issue Editor's Introduction: Implementing Service-learning into the Forensics Experience**

Kittie E. Grace, Hastings College

At the 2010 National Developmental Conference on Individual Events, I took part in the Forensics and Service-learning and Community panel. One of the predominate concerns that influenced the panel revolved around the unknown future of many forensics teams. With our struggling economy, higher education struggles as well. A recent College Board report found that due to our weakened economy, schools have had to increase tuition and fees considerably (The College Board, 2011). The increase is still not enough, as state funding has not increased even though enrollment has (The College Board, 2011). This fragile financial situation has many universities and colleges in a panic. As Khan (2011) explains, "The cost of education overall has jumped 900 percent since 1978, while the total U.S. student-loan debt is nearly \$1 trillion" (para. 17). As schools find more ways to make cuts to programs, forensics teams are increasingly threatened. Unfortunately, our current economic state mirrors what Mills, Pettus, and Dickmeyer (1993) warned over eighteen years ago, "The idea of speech communication departments actually being targeted for elimination seems incomprehensible. However, in the era of tight budgets and a weak economy, such an occurrence is not unlikely" (p. 58). Current forensics programs may become targets for budget cuts as higher education looks for ways to reduce its expenses. As a result, the forensics community has started taking proactive steps to assuring our future within academia.

As forensics coaches, we play many roles in our student's lives including the role of teacher, mentor, counselor, parental figure, and even life coach. So much of what we do helps prepare students for a life outside of academia. As Engleberg (1993) taught us, coaches are continually educating students outside the classroom; helping students learn how to fly on an airplane or how to eat a fancy French meal. We have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our students. Now if we could only show administration how much we change lives.

One way to enhance administrative support for forensics programs is by implementing service-learning as a part of the educational experience. National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2011) defines service-learning as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (para. 1). This connection between education and service represents a growing trend in academia. Administration wants to know that students will be prepared to function in a world outside the ivory tower and academically based community service can provide that possibility. The Lumana Foundation (2011) explains that before undergraduates leave college, they should be well versed in five areas of learning: broad, integrative knowledge; specialized knowledge; intellectual skills; applied learning; and civic learning. Many accrediting agencies are now looking for these five competencies to identify if an institution will remain accredited (Higher Learning Commission, 2011). Often schools fall short of the civic learning component because civic engagement is not required of many institutions.

I argue, to enhance a program, this civic engagement should occur in the form of service-learning. Implementing service-learning into forensics programs provides another way to show administration that students are learning outside the walls of the classroom and are connecting with the community. This move to include service-learning as a part of the collegiate forensics experience provides a noncompetitive justification for the team. We teach skills that help enhance lifelong learning.

To assist forensics programs in implementing service-learning, I asked to guest edit this edition of *The National Forensics Journal*. I hope the four articles you read in this edition provide insight as to how our programs can benefit from service-learning. This edition includes multiple ways of using service-learning to give programs many ideas of how to get involved. Walker's article focuses on how to incorporate experiential-service learning into forensics programs in the form of community service, internships, and speech sources. Brossmann and Brossmann's give a detailed account on how debate teams can mentor and provide argumentation skills to juveniles at a correctional facility. Foote and Holm explain how events that forensics programs participate in every year can become places for service-learning. They explain how to use public speaking skills to make the showcase a place for service-learning. Finally, Wigert uses service learning as a way to reach his class and explains how important journal reflections are to enhancing learning gained from service projects. While his project focused on classroom learning, the experience can be modified to fit any forensics team.

By implementing new ways of learning into our programs, we can increase the visibility of our teams, gain approval from administration, and teach students valuable

life skills in the process. Hinck & Hinck (1998) tried to give a call for service-learning over twelve years ago explaining how, “...forensic directors can utilize service-learning activities as a way to advance the education of students, meet department and university goals in innovative ways, and advance the image of the forensics” (p. 1). It is time to finally pay attention to their plea and include service-learning into our teams, providing a richer educational experience for all.

#### References

College Board (2011, October 25). New college board trends reports price of college continues

to rise nationally, with dramatic difference in pricing policies from state to state.

*CollegeBoard Inspiring Minds*. Retrieved October 26, 2011 from

<http://press.collegeboard.org/releases/2011/new-college-board-trends-reports-price-college-continues-rise-nationally-dramatic-difference>

Engleberg, I. N. (1993). Frankfurters to forensics. *Communication Education*, 42, 304-306.

Higher Learning Commission. (2011). Criteria for accreditation. *Higher Learning Commission*.

Retrieved Nov. 2, 2011 from <http://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/criteria-for-accreditation.html>

Hinck, E. A., & Hinck, S.S. (1998). Service-learning and forensics. *National Forensic Journal*, 16, 1-26.

Khan, H. (2011, October 26). Obama speeds up aid for college students: How will it help you?

*ABC News Internet Ventures*. Retrieved October 26, 2011 from  
<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/10/obama-speeds-up-aid-for-college-students-how-will-it-help-you/>.

Lumina Foundation. (2011). *The Degree Qualifications Profile*. Indianapolis, IN:  
Lumina Foundation for Education, Inc.

Mills, D., Pettus, A. B., & Dickmeyer, S. G. (1993). The role of forensics when  
departments and programs are targeted for elimination: Ensuring a 'Call for  
Support' is heard, *National Forensic Journal*, 11, 53-58.

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. (2011). What is service-learning? *ETR  
Associates*.

Retrieved May 2, 2011 from <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-service-learning>.

## **Developing an Experiential-Service Learning Approach in Collegiate Forensics**

Ben Walker, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

### Abstract

Forensic teams often participate in some form of community service for a variety of reasons, but if teams are going to spend time helping communities they should find ways to maximize the learning opportunities for students as well. Most traditional approaches to forensic pedagogy work and are effective. However, by exploring alternative perspectives to forensic education and service learning, fresh opportunities for students to learn and grow can appear. In this essay, both service learning and experiential learning are examined in relation to education and forensics, and an experiential-service learning approach to forensics is suggested with potential applications of the approach provided, including emphasizing the experiential and service in community work, tracking down forensic internships and using experience as evidence in speeches.

*Keywords:* forensics, service learning, experiential learning, education

There can be little argument among educators that students learn through experience. Whether that experience is sitting in a lecture hall taking notes, examining bacteria under a microscope, or helping community members learn how to use social networking websites, the student learns something from the experience. Most forensic professionals would echo a similar sentiment: forensic competitors learn something from

their experience in the activity. There has been widespread debate over whether forensics is indeed educational (Burnett, Brand, and Meister, 2003; Hinck, 2003) or if it even should be considered instead as epistemic (Jensen and Jensen, 2006; Littlefield, 2006). Regardless of what the learning outcomes are, being in forensics can act as a learning opportunity.

Since administrators may not always see the value of competitive forensics (Kay, 1990), programs are constantly trying to find ways to justify their existence to administrations who question the usefulness of a forensics team (Kuyper, 2010; Sellnow, 1994). Grace (2010) proposed several ways to legitimize and maintain support for forensic teams at institutions of higher education; one of those ideas was to have students “participate in at least one community service activity each semester to increase community involvement” (p. 138). Schools support and encourage community service because of the positive feedback from the community (Preston & Jensen, 1995) and the certain relevant connection to social responsibility that we preach to our students as the importance of being civically engaged and the power of advocacy. However, coaches can do more for their students.

As rewarding as community involvement (not to mention the potentially enhanced reputation with funding committees) can be, forensic educators must stop and consider if the boat is being missed. If all we want to achieve with our student involvement outside the activity is to serve the community, we can embrace simply fundraising for charity without further thought. However, if a higher educational goal can be reached we must stop to consider alternative possibilities. Students can learn through experience and enhance their learning in forensics through going beyond mere community service and expand into a model of forensic experiential-service learning.

This paper examines the differences between experiential and service learning and the benefits they can provide. This paper also examines how forensic coaches can integrate experiential-service learning into their team culture through three methods (emphasize the experiential and service in community work; track down forensic internships; use experience as evidence in speeches), then presents ways to make experiential-service learning effective, before offering benefits of this approach.

### Exploring Pedagogical Options

#### *Experiential Learning*

Shaller (2005) noted that college students go through a phase called focused exploration, where they attempt to figure out what they will do with their lives. During this phase, Shaller argued, students should have abundant opportunities to explore what they know through studying abroad, service learning, internships, etc. Shaller also wrote that many students simply fall prey to what Huba and Freed (2000) found: most college faculty teach extensively with lectures, where students sit and are told to learn through writing down notes. This “banking method” is the main culprit of defunct pedagogy, with more active methods of learning being the answer to successful student learning (Butin, 2010). As Wurdinger and Carlson (2010) pointed out, more traditional methods of education (such as lectures) are not inherently poor practices, but should be used with a variety of teaching tools such as experiential learning.

Experiential learning, according to Itin (1999), is the process of making meaning from direct experience. Dewey (1938) described experiential learning as a system based on doing and evaluating. Instead of having our students recite information, students can experience a situation and learn from it. Wurdinger (2005) explains the difference with

an example of his daughter struggling to have interest in math worksheets from school, but being extremely interested in percentages of sales and how much the sale item costs when she was shopping. Situations like this show how learning can often be more effective through an experience; applied learning and knowledge often strikes a chord with students of all ages since the issue of relevancy is directly addressed with experiential learning.

At the core of experiential learning is the idea that we experience something and learn from it. Kolb (1984) posited that experiential learning consists of a continuous spiral of events, starting with direct experience, followed by periods of reflection where hypothesis are generated about immediate and future meaning, and then tested through subsequent experiences and actions. Bandura's (1976) observational learning attempted to explain how we learn behavior through observational experience; essentially, Bandura posited that we learn through watching others and trying what they do. This form of learning theory is helpful in certain situations because learning does take place through vicarious experience; however, experiential learning involves direct experience from the student, which means the focus is on the student learning process. The student may experience something and take away many things from it, and they may even process some of the learning through Bandura's observational lens. Experiential learning wants to leave how a student interprets their experience open for the student to figure out.

John Dewey spent most of his career researching and writing about the value of experience in the learning process. Phillips (1995) identifies Dewey as having a Constructivist stance, which maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning, or how people make sense of their experiences. This is similar to the stance

taken by Bandura (1976) but Dewey was more focused on the individual making sense of their world on their own. Dewey (1973) identified a “pattern of inquiry” (p. 223) that had important components to his learning theory: first, inquiry happens when there is a problem the student cannot figure out; then, the student observes the variables of the problem, develops a plan to solve the problem, tests the plan, and then reflects on the results of the test. Experiential learning is essentially a way for students to learn through experiences. Dewey’s pattern of inquiry is the fundamental problem solving technique that we teach to our students only specifically applied to a student’s educational experience.

For example, while at a forensic tournament, a student notices there is an interpersonal conflict brewing on his/her team. The student develops a plan to solve the problem: s/he will confront the two people that seem to be causing the conflict and have them verbally work out their differences. The student implements his/her plan and discovers the two people do not want to talk about it and resent the effort by the student, causing more interpersonal conflict on the team. The student then reflects on the results of his/her plan and the process starts over. The reflecting aspect of the pattern of inquiry is an important step, even if it is the final one. Jarvis (2001) argued there are two types of learning from experiences: non-reflective learning and reflective learning. Non-reflective learning happens when we remember an experience and blindly repeat positive situations; reflective learning happens when we genuinely reflect and evaluate the experience. In experiential learning, students make connections from their experiences during the reflection period.

### *Service Learning*

Due to the active nature of the learning approach, experiential learning is often used interchangeably with service learning, but there are significant differences between the two pedagogical tools. Much like experiential learning requires involvement from students, service learning requires the participants to be active in the service. While experiential learning focuses on how the learning takes place, service learning is centered on more on what the students do. Combining these approaches offers a pedagogically sound approach to service learning, ensuring learning takes place. Service learning itself can be defined as a “teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2011). Essentially, service learning must integrate curriculum into serving the community, thus strengthening the community as well as teaching course concepts and civic engagement. As Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, & Fisher (2010) noted, service learning “provides students with chances to interact directly with local agencies and to effect change in the community. Thus, service-learning holds the potential to significantly enhance the learning climate for students” (p. 209).

Service learning started with the concepts proposed by John Dewey. Dewey (1913) noted teachers often struggle to make content relevant to students; by involving students in real-life contexts, the challenge of making material interesting is significantly reduced. From Dewey’s point of view, knowledge and education were fundamentally social activities. Social problems could only be solved if citizens became engaged in identifying problems and proposing solutions (Dewey, 1916). Dewey never outlined a community service learning plan or even used the term “service learning”, but his thoughts of being civic-minded in learning paved the way for service learning.

Knowledge and education are now conceptualized by many scholars as tied to citizenship (Barber, 1992;Boyle, 1989; Lisman, 1998); along with this being recognized by scholars, an increased awareness has also been found of the decline of civic-engagement in all levels of American life (Bahlueller, 1997; McGrath, 2001; Putnam, 2000). Thus, service learning as civic-engagement has become a major push for educators who are trying to get students to participate in active, social learning.

Berman (2006) pointed out service learning can help students learn both in classroom and in the world outside academia. For service learning to be effective however, Sigmon (1979) argued the four “Rs” must be present: respect, reciprocity, relevance, and reflection. First, students serving must be respectful of the circumstances and ways of life of the people they are trying to help; students should not act like superior or as a hero. Second, the students and those being served should work together and both parties should benefit in some fashion. Third, service must be relevant to academic content; the service should give students opportunity to explore and question what is being taught. Fourth, reflection is needed to fully process the experience and learn; time should be given to students to reflect, discuss, and research. Since service learning attempts to incorporate curriculum into community service, it is an excellent tool for educators to use to enhance academic concepts. Unfortunately, as popular as it has become, service learning often produces mixed results for learning outcomes (Simmons & Cleary, 2005). Even successfully measured student learning from a service experience should be questioned, as many assessments rely on self-reporting (Steinke & Buresh, 2003) and student satisfaction and student learning are often confused (Eyler, 2000). Without clear pedagogical goals for service learning, students may miss the point

of why they are having the experience. Clear links to curriculum must be established for service learning to be productive.

There is a movement for more civic engagement and service learning in classrooms, but just like any tool when teaching, service learning needs to have a specific pedagogical purpose tied to the curriculum. Furco (1996) stated community service programs are primarily intended to benefit the recipient of the service activity, fostering students' civic and ethical development; this is not the same as service learning which includes an academic focus. Unfortunately, simple community service can be masked as service learning, without proper consideration and integration into the curriculum. I have seen this same problem occurring on forensic teams. While many teams offer excellent opportunities to give back to the community, some forensic community involvement stops at civic engagement without fully considering the potential for student learning. Take for example a team that collects canned goods for a local food pantry. Helping those in need is never a waste of time and the team should be lauded for their attempt to assist the hungry of their community. However, besides learning how to collect canned goods, what did the students on the team learn? This is an example of community service, but not service learning. As Jacoby (1996) argued, "Although community service has generally been perceived as a good thing, all good things cannot be the province of higher education" (p. 20), which is why a link to curriculum must be provided while students help communities.

To help address this service learning problem, classroom and forensic educators can combine Sigmon's (1979) service learning principles with the focused pedagogical nature of Dewey's (1973) experiential learning and help expose students to situations

that not only assist the community but also encourage problem solving and advanced learning. This can be complicated for traditional classroom teachers, but enacting an experiential-service learning paradigm in forensics can be even more difficult. Despite the difficulty, forensic educators should embrace both experiential and service learning on their teams in order to teach in a variety of manners. Helping students in multitude of ways makes sense. Students will receive a better educational experience if forensic educators, just like teachers who use more than lectures, embrace a wider variety of pedagogical tools.

#### An Experiential-Service Learning Approach in Forensics

Hinck and Hinck (1998) noted that “Service learning differs from community service and experiential learning in the sense that service-learning projects attempt to balance a student’s learning with the service provided to the community” (p. 10). While Hinck and Hinck are correct, blending the benefits of service learning with active critical thinking of experiential learning seems to be an admirable goal. Both Dewey’s (1973) pattern of inquiry and Sigmon’s (1979) four “Rs” of service learning emphasize a link to a curriculum and active learning. By taking an experiential-service learning approach, forensic coaches can adapt more effectively when coaching and teaching students. We can still do the things we currently do in forensics; what we have going for us has been tried and tested over years of forensic tradition and has worked well for the activity. Things often stay similar over time because of their successful and positive qualities. The purpose of this experiential-service learning approach is to enhance what we already value and appreciate in this activity by adding another tool to our pedagogical toolbox.

However, as mentioned before, implementing this approach will take extra effort from both the coach and the student.

### *Application*

If a curriculum does not directly apply to a forensic team (in almost all cases, it does not), taking an experiential-service learning approach can be difficult. The main concern is that not everyone agrees as to what forensics does or should teach students.

Richardson and Kelly (2008) offer a summary of a variety of viewpoints for forensics and offer their own “pedagogical prerogative perspective” that asserts forensics should focus on “teaching communication in a fashion that meets the needs of exceptional students” (p. 116). Teaching communication concepts to forensic students seems like an obvious start due to the activity’s connection with communication studies, and despite the many complaints about competition poisoning the activity, forensics is indeed educational. Much like the education system, forensics offers student learning objectives that sometimes come to fruition through instructional pruning and other times through the fires of competition. Defining these objectives would help immensely in teaching our students effectively. However, even with something like the 2010 NFA Pedagogy Report available, it is up to each coach and student to interpret together what they want to learn and how they want to go about learning it. On the surface, we’d like to think that forensics offers students chances to learn how to be better public speakers and performers, critical thinkers, researchers, leaders, and advocates. Adopting an experiential-service approach to some things in forensics offers alternative perspectives for our students to view and new paths for them to travel, learn, and achieve. The

following are a few suggestions on how to adopt an experiential-service learning approach to a forensic team.

*1) Emphasize the experiential and service in community work*

Many teams already perform community service and many organizations already help with charities, but forensic teams need to go beyond helping the community: teams need to emphasize the experiential and service learning. When a coach decides to partake in some sort of community service, s/he must first ask what the students should be learning from forensics. Matching learning objectives with service learning is the only way to maximize the learning potential of community service. The coach must determine what s/he wants the students to learn and then find a service learning project that matches the learning objectives and follows Sigmon's (1979) four R's of service learning. The "curriculum" focus becomes what the coach wants the students to learn. Before exploring the service learning project however, the coach must determine if there is a problem solving opportunity for the students that mirror Dewey's (1973) pattern of inquiry.

For example, a coach might want their students to learn how to peer coach better, so the coach might have her/his students volunteer to coach a local high school speech team or work at a speech camp. While suggestions have been made how to manage forensic peer coaching (Keefe, 1991; Boylan, 1996), this experiential-service learning project allows the students to serve a community in need (high school speech students) as well as face the challenge of not only providing effective feedback, but also of switching roles from competitor to coach. Instead of receiving coaching or coaching peers, the students make a fundamental shift into the role of coach, which gives the

students opportunities to learn how to provide criticism that is helpful but not hurtful. Students also gain the perspective of what an audience member might see thereby increasing their chances of learning advanced levels of audience analysis. By working with high school students in this fashion, collegiate forensic students can face challenges related to learning objectives and attempt to solve them (Dewey's experiential), and they can also serve a group of people and have a chance to reflect on it (Sigmon's service).

Students on my team have often accepted the challenge of helping coach the local high school speech teams. Not only do they provide valuable coaching help to the teams, but they learn what it is to see a performance and coaching session through the eyes of a coach. While I haven't attempted to collect a reflective assessment from the students, the learning opportunities are inherent in the partnership. Through casual conversations I have found the students that do work with the high school speech students tend to improve their understanding of providing and receiving feedback. Reflection is an important aspect of experiential learning, and thus is an integral part of an experiential-service learning approach to forensics. Giving students opportunities to experience something and serve the community is important, but finding time to reflect is also something forensic coaches should monitor to increase learning effectiveness. As Jarvis (2001) noted, without reflection learning is minimized from an experience.

## 2) *Track down forensic internships*

Hinck and Hinck (1998) are quick to point out that if directors of forensics frame service learning as internships, they might lose the community service aspect and begin to question to practicality of the project. Using experiential-service learning to benefit students is normally seen as involving the downtrodden of our society, but that does not

have to be the case. Projects that directly benefit shelters, food pantries, or similarly traditional service targets are excellent ways to spend time. All efforts to help those in need are noteworthy; however, all service learning requires that there is some pedagogical tie to the experience and a community is being served. A forensic internship is simply an alternative to consider when evaluating the educational goals of forensics. While Sigmon (1979) argued that service learning should have clear benefits for both parties and the helper should not act superior, there is no reason why both parties cannot equally benefit and be on even terms. Forensic internships are an ideal fit for students wishing to learn more about certain things forensics can teach them.

In the field of experiential learning, the idea of internships or apprenticeships has garnered plenty of attention in the literature. Cognitive apprenticeships attempt to teach learners “authentic practices through activity and social interaction in way similar to...craft apprenticeships” (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 37). Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner (2007) explained cognitive apprenticeships emphasize adaptive critical thinking as well as the skills related to the craft. This form of apprenticeship, or internship, treats “learners as independent reflective constructors of knowledge” (Fenwick, 2003, p. 152). Dewey’s (1973) pattern of inquiry called for students to create what they know through their experience, which is a learning opportunity internships are capable of providing.

One internship idea to consider is having a student start to learn about the academic writing process. Forensic scholars have called for an increased level of scholarship among forensic professionals due to the many benefits involved with more forensic writing and publications (Cronn-Mills, 2008; Hinck, 2008). Walker (2010)

argued for an increased effort to incorporate undergraduate competitors into forensic research by mentoring students in the writing, researching, and publication process. Students interested in learning about scholarly writing and research (even if their interest does not include forensic research) should be able to turn to forensic professionals and not only help with research, but learn how the process works. A student would have the opportunity to learn via Dewey's (1973) experiential pattern of inquiry as well as provide a service to the struggling forensic scholarly community. Also, a forensic internship can fit Sigmon's (1979) four Rs of service learning (respect, reciprocity, relevance, reflection): respect should be maintained between the student and academic; both parties benefit from the experience; there is a clear tie-in to what forensics can teach students; students can be given time to reflect and process on their own projects.

Scholarly work does not have to be the only type of internship a forensic student might do in an experiential-service learning project. Coaches can look for ways to help students learn out in the field. This is done widespread on many teams with students helping local high school speech teams or working at speech camps. Beyond working in speech competition, coaches could help students gain experience with people who make speeches and presentations such as politicians and heads of organizations. Students could also work with community outreach programs to help increase visibility through better modes of communication. Forensic internships give the students an opportunity to learn more about what forensics wants to teach, but does it by approaching it with experiential-service learning.

### *3) Use experience as evidence in speeches*

The last suggested implementation of an experiential-service learning approach is to rethink how we view evidence and sources in forensic competition. Experiential-service learning can be used as a supplemental source for evidence in a speech. Instead of citing evidence provided by other people, experiential-service learning creates an opportunity for the student to discover evidence on their own. Coaches and students can work together to find experiential-service learning opportunities that allow them to explore problems and help generate or learn about potential solutions. This approach would take more effort than reading a news article, but the rewards could be exponentially higher for the student if they are able to learn and present information in a way they have never done before.

Take for example a student working on a Persuasive speech about a problem with homelessness in major cities. Instead of stopping at the secondary research of reading, the student seeks out an opportunity to work directly with city officials to know more about the problem and actively work towards a solution. This requires more than writing a letter to or having a discussion with your congressional representative; experiential-service learning can get students actively involved in the issue they are speaking about. If students are presenting what they have learned through experience, it can only enhance a speech that has secondary research to back up what they are saying. We should encourage our students to explore other ways to find information and be open to the idea that a person can learn many different ways, whether it is out of a book or by direct involvement. I am not saying that the way evidence is currently presented in the forensic community is not done well. Experiential-service learning is simply a supplemental tool to increase the learning potential of students.

It is important to note using experiential-service learning as evidence in a speech is not a tactic to merely increase pathos, it is evidence in itself. There will be many detractors to this approach who will probably argue that experiential-service learning may be overused by students instead of doing traditional secondary research, losing the benefits of what has always been done. Types of evidence just need to be varied, just like it always has been. Faking an experience is also a concern but unethical use of evidence is nothing new in forensics (e.g., Frank, 1983; Markstrom, 1994; Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003; Perry, 2003). While unethical practices do happen in competitive collegiate forensics, there is no way to prevent all occurrences from happening. The truth is judges cannot know for sure what students are presenting is ethical, so judges act with the assumption that students are being honest. If coaches start to worry about catching and punishing students from other teams, competition becomes to focus instead of education. A coach should focus on teaching their students ethical practices and not worry about what other teams do. Experiential-service learning is an educational tool to help give students opportunities to learn in new ways and coaches should embrace new educational tools such as this.

### *Effectiveness*

Even though some applications of an experiential-service learning approach were just suggested, there are some important aspects to consider when searching for an efficient implementation. To be effective in implementing an experiential-service learning approach, forensic educators should obviously make sure students are following Dewey's patten of inquiry and Sigmon's four "Rs"; beyond this article's definition of

experiential-service learning there are a few more specific suggestions for how to make the students' experience an effective learning situation.

*1) Let the students pick the project*

As tempted as forensic educators might be to tell students what their best option is for an experiential-service learning project, the students must pick the project themselves. Similar to speech topic or literature selection for competition, students will connect better with a project if they are the one choosing what to do. Coaches should feel free to make suggestions for projects based on how well they know the student, but the student should select what project they would like to partake in. Furco (2002) found that outcomes of service vary from student to student, even when students work on the same project, so predicting what a student will learn is often a mystery. By allowing the student to select their own experiential-service learning project and take ownership of the experience they are more likely to get the job done and do it well (Furco, 2002). Furco also found when students performed service they thought was "meaningless" or "boring", their levels of empowerment, satisfaction, and learning all decreased significantly. Forensic coaches should allow their students to take the reins of a project in order to maximize student interest and learning.

*2) Direct students to people*

It is easy for students to get lost in a project where they are helping a community organization but not actually meet the people their work is impacting. Students can do paperwork and things of that nature, but they should be directly engaged with the people and community that need help. Dewey (1916) argued that education should be about the

community and helping people. Dewey would argue to make sure students are aware of the need for assistance and are actively a part of the problem solving; the best way for students to know about a need and help with the problem is having them dive into the community and work directly with the people in need. By connecting to the community in which they are trying to help, students are more likely to connect to the project, thus increasing learning.

### *3) Discuss the project*

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important aspects of experiential-service learning is reflection. While journals or mental solitude can be effective forms of personal reflection, students new to reflection processes often do not demonstrate significant growth in critical thinking or a deeper understand of the curriculum (Molee, Henry, Sessa, & McKinney, 2010; Wessel & Larin, 2006). Grossman (2009) noted that students often need years to refine their reflection skills to make them an effective learning tool. To attempt to counter this, initial student reflection needs to be a shared experience. Students should discuss their project with their coach and with other participants (if applicable). The coach should be able to guide the student through a reflective process in order to make sense of what the student experienced, helping to maximize the pedagogical benefits of the experiential-service learning project.

### *Benefits*

Forensics is not merely a laboratory to practice communicative skills as many scholars have suggested (Dreibelbis & Gullifor, 1992; Friedley, 1992; Swanson, 1992; Zeuschner, 1992); rather, forensics offers real situations where communicative issues

come into play. While educators teach students in order to enhance the future, forensic professionals must realize their students' communicative choices impact the present as well. Experiential-service must be viewed as immediate communicative practice and learning. By taking a proactive approach to education, forensic professionals can make sure students are learning now as well as in the future. The benefits to an experiential-service learning approach in forensics are many.

Hinck and Hinck (1998) noted that service learning can have two benefits for students: it pushes students out of their comfort zones, and emphasizes personal and social responsibility. Where an experiential-service learning approach varies from what Hinck and Hinck support is the focus on the learning theory (Dewey's pattern of inquiry). If done right, an experiential-service learning approach can have three main benefits:

*1) Improved undergraduate education*

A good undergraduate education encourages cooperation among students, communicates high expectations, encourages active learning, and respects diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Experiential-service learning can provide forensic students opportunities to enhance their education through active learning. Making connections between curriculum concepts and the real world is something that service learning can help students do (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993), but educators must provide a clear link to learning objectives or the connections might not be made (Eyler, 2000).

*2) Effective preparation for participation in a democratic society*

By getting students involved in their communities, forensic educators can get students to begin to understand what being a responsible citizen in a democratic society entails. Astin (1994) argued that service learning is the most effective means of achieving higher education's mission: "to produce educated citizens who understand and appreciate not only how democracy is supposed to work but also their own responsibility to become active and informed participants in it" (p. 24). Instead of just speaking about problems, causes, and solutions, forensic students will actively be seeking to make a difference.

### *3) Increased readiness for the world of work*

One of the goals of educators should be to make sure students are ready to face the challenges ahead of them in the work force (Boyer, 1988). Academic knowledge can only go so far, however, without above average problem solving and social skills. Service learning can provide students opportunities to "acquire a set of transferable skills rather than prepare for a single lifelong career" (Jacoby, 1996, p. 21). In working to help improve communities, an experiential-service learning approach could increase proficiency in interpersonal and organizational communication as well as help develop creative problem solving, constructive teamwork, and well-reasoned decision making. By being linking curriculum to active learning, students may be better prepared to face the challenges of life after college.

### Conclusions

Developing an experiential-service learning approach in forensics will take some work. This is a serious undertaking for a student and coach, which requires diligence to

stick with the project, a willingness to think outside the box, and the perseverance to ignore the inevitable critics. The traditional understanding and implementation of service learning can be an effective tool; this essay's goal was to simply outline an alternative perspective that might increase learning opportunities for forensic students. Richardson and Kelly (2008) noted "it is the role and responsibility of each generation of directors of forensics to preserve the integrity of the activity as a unique learning environment and intensive teaching space" (p. 116). By occasionally having an experiential-service learning approach in forensics, coaches can continue to find new ways to provide learning opportunities that will benefit forensic students for years to come. We can do more for our students than have them do community service—we can continue to provide a variety of learning opportunities that help them and others.

## References

- Astin, A. W. (October 1994). "Higher Education and the Future of Democracy." Inaugural lecture as All Murray Cartter chairholder, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Bahlmüller, C. (1997). Civil society and democracy reconsidered. *Civnet's Journal for Civil Society*, 1(1), 1-23.
- Bandura, A. (1986). Modeling theory. In W. S. Sahakian (Ed.), *Learning: Systems, models, and theories* (2nd ed., pp. 391-409). Skokie, IL: Rand McNally.
- Barber, B. R. (1992). *An aristocracy of everyone: The politics of education and the future of America*. New York: Ballantine Books.

- Berman, S. (2006). *Service learning: A guide to planning, implementing, and assessing student projects* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Boyer, E. L. (1988). *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Boylan, K.C. (1996). Peer coaching: Forensics students as tutors. *Speakerpoints*, 3(1).
- Boyte, H. C. (1989). *Commonwealth: A return to citizen politics*. New York: The Free Press.
- Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher*, 18(1), 32-42.
- Burnett, A., Brand, J., & Meister, M. (2003) Winning as everything: Education as myth in forensics. *National Forensic Journal*, 21(1), 12-23.
- Butin, D. (2010). *Service-learning in theory and practice: The future of community engagement in higher education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. Racine, WI: Johnson Foundation.
- Cronn-Mills, D., & Schnoor, L. (2003). Evidence and ethics in individual events: An examination of an AFA-NIET final round. *National Forensics Journal*, 21(1), 35-51.
- Cronn-Mills, D. (2008, August). The pitfalls, perils, and promise to increasing forensic research. Peoria, IL. National Developmental Conference on Individual Events.
- Dewey, J. (1913). *Interest and effort in education*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: The Free Press.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Collier Books.

- Dewey, J. (1973). Experience and philosophic method and interest in relation to the training of the will. In J.J. McDermott (Ed.), *The philosophy of John Dewey*. University of Chicago Press.
- Dreibelbis, G. C., & Gullifor, P. (1992). Forensics as a laboratory experience in mass media. *National Forensic Journal*, 10 (1), 77-82.
- Eyler, J. (2000, Fall). What do we most need to know about the impact of service-learning on student learning? *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, 11-17.
- Fenwick, T. (2003). *Learning through experience: Troubling orthodoxies and intersecting questions*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.
- Frank, R. L. (1983). The abuse of evidence in persuasive speaking. *National Forensic Journal*, 1(2), 97-107.
- Friedley, S.A. (1992). Forensics as a laboratory experience in interpersonal communication. *National Forensic Journal*, 10(1), 51-56.
- Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In B. Taylor (Ed.), *Expanding boundaries: Serving and learning* (pp. 2-7), Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service.
- Furco, A. (2002). Is Service-Learning Really Better Than Community Service? A Study of High School Service Program Outcomes. In S. Billig & A. Furco (Ed.), *Service-learning: the essence of the pedagogy* (pp. 23-50). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Pub..

- Grace, K. (2010). Assessment in forensics: It's a dirty job but we need to do it!  
Bloomington, MN. National Developmental Conference on Individual Events.
- Grossman, R. (2009). Structures for facilitating student reflection. *College Teaching*, 57, 15-22.
- Hinck, E. A., & Hinck, S. S. (1998). Service-learning and forensics. *National Forensics Journal*, 16, 1-26.
- Hinck, E. (2003). Managing the dialectical tension between competition and education in forensics: A response to Burnett, Brand, & Meister. *National Forensics Journal*, 21(2), 60-76.
- Hinck, E. (2008, August). Overcoming obstacles to scholarly engagement. Peoria, IL. National Developmental Conference on Individual Events.
- Huba, M.E., & Freed, J.E. (2000). *Learner-centered assessment on college campuses: Shifting the focus from teaching to learning*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Itin, C. (1999). Reasserting the philosophy of experiential education as a vehicle for change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 22(2), 91-98.
- Jacoby, B. (1996). Service-Learning in Today's Higher Education. In B. Jacoby and Associates (Ed.), *Service-learning in higher education: concepts and practices* (pp. 3-25). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Jarvis, P. (2001). *Learning in later life: An introduction for educators and careers*. London: Kogan Page.

- Jensen, J., & Jensen, G. (2006). Learning to play well with others: Forensics as epistemic in creating and enhancing communication competence. *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 91(2), 17-31.
- Kay, J. (1990). Research and scholarship in forensics as viewed by an administrator and former coach. *National Forensic Journal*, 8(1), 61-68.
- Keefe, C. (1991). Developing and managing a peer forensic coaching program. *National Forensics Journal*, 9(1), 65-75.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kuyper, C. (2010). Justifying forensic programs to administrators using humanistic outcomes. Bloomington, MN. National Developmental Conference on Individual Events.
- Levesque-Bristol, C., Knapp, T. D., & Fisher, B. J. (2010). The effectiveness of service-learning: It's not always what you think. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 33(3), 208-224.
- Lisman, D. (1998). *Toward a civil society: Civic literacy and service-learning*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Littlefield, R. (2006). Beyond education vs. competition: On viewing forensics as epistemic. *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 91(1), 17-31.

- Markstrom, R. L. (1994). *A case study of source citations found in the 1993 AFA-NIET final round of extemporaneous speaking*. Unpublished master's thesis. North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND.
- Markus, G., Howard, J., & King, D. C. (1993). Integrating community service and classroom instruction enhances learning: Results from an experiment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15*, 410-419.
- McGrath, M. (2001). *National Civic Review: Vol. 89, No. 4. Fostering civic engagement in America's communities*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Molee, L. M., Henry, M. E., Sessa, V. I., & McKinney-Prupis, E. R. (2010). Assessing learning in service-learning courses through critical reflection. *Journal of Experiential Education, 33*(3), 239-257.
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. (2011). What is Service-Learning? Retrieved September 24, 2011, from <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-service-learning>
- Perry, L. (2003). Engaging ethos: Source citation accuracy in intercollegiate forensics. *National Forensics Journal, 21*(1), 52-66.
- Phillips, D. C. (1995). The good, the bad, and the ugly: The many faces of constructivism. *Educational Researcher, 24*(7), 5-12.
- Preston, C. T., Jr., & Jensen, S. L. (1995). Community service and recruiting in intercollegiate forensics. *The Forensic, 80*, 1-9.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- Richardson, R., & Kelly, B. (2008, August). Re-examining competition and education in collegiate forensics: Establishing the need for a pedagogical prerogative perspective. Peoria, IL. National Developmental Conference on Individual Events.
- Sellnow, D. (1994). Justifying forensic programs to administrators: An experiential education opportunity. *National Forensics Journal*, 11(2), 1-14.
- Shaller, M. (2005). Wandering and wondering: Traversing the uneven terrain of the second college year. *About Campus*, 10(3).
- Sigmon, R. (1979). Service-learning: Three principles. *Synergist*, 8(1), 9-11.
- Simmons, L., & Gleary, B. (2005). Student and community perceptions of the "value added" for service-learners. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 28(2), 164-188.
- Steinke, P., & Buresb, S. (2002). Cognitive outcomes of service-learning: Reviewing the past and glimpsing the future. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, 8(2), 63-71.
- Swanson, D. R. (1992). Forensics as a laboratory experience in organizational communication. *National Forensic Journal*, 10 (1), 65-76.
- Walker, B. (2010, August). Student research as a method for developing new forensic leaders. Bloomington, MN. National Developmental Conference on Individual Events.
- Wessel, J., & Larin, H. (2006). Change in reflections of physiotherapy students over time in clinical placement. *Learning in Health and Social Care*, 5(3), 119-132.

Wurdinger, S.D. (2005). *Using experiential learning in the classroom: Practical ideas for all educators*. Lanham, MD: ScarecrowEducation.

Wurdinger, S.D., & Carlson, J.A. (2010). *Teaching for experiential learning: Five approaches that work*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Zeuschner, R.B. (1992). Forensics as a laboratory experience in small group communication. *National Forensic Journal*, 10 (1), 57-64.

# **Empowering Words: A Service-Learning Project between John Carroll University**

## **Debate and the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility**

Brent G. Brossmann

John Carroll University

&

Jeanette E. Brossmann

Lakeland Community College

### **Abstract**

Debaters from John Carroll University and Lakeland Community College's debate programs are engaged in a service learning program at the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility (CHJCF). Students are taught debate skills, provided with topic research, and engage in four tournaments per year. The program is designed to foster skills in critical thinking, advocacy, public speaking and perspective taking for the correctional facility students. For the college debaters, the program provides opportunities to refine their own skills while realizing the power of volunteerism. In the process, their preconceptions are consistently challenged.

The essay provides an assessment of the first two years of the program, including discussions of goals, obstacles and accomplishments. It concludes that the program has a positive impact on the CHJCF students, a conclusion shared by the coaches, college debaters, guards and state administrators who have observed the debate tournaments. The volunteers are universally supportive of the program.

In August of 2009, John Carroll University's Director of Debate was enjoying lunch with Stanley Miller, the Executive Director of the Cleveland NAACP. The

meeting focused on the benefits of debate for high school students. Miller pledged his support to a fledgling urban debate league, but also suggested that another group of students could benefit even more. An hour later, the debate coach was making an impromptu pitch at a business meeting of leaders from the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility (CHJCF), the Ohio's Department of Youth Services, and other community interests. Shortly thereafter, John Carroll University's (JCU) debaters were teaching debate at CHJCF, trying to make those proposed benefits a reality.

Service-learning features students using what they learn in classrooms to help improve the communities in which they live. For example, service learning projects have been employed to directly benefit individuals and organizations, including peer teaching about health issues (Bute & Kopchik, 2009), helping campers with diabetes-mellitus (Vogt, Chavez & Schaffner, 2011), and assisting youths in gaining knowledge and skills concerning sports, cooperation and teamwork within a teacher education program (Galvan & Parker, 2011). These studies and others cumulatively demonstrate the positive impact on the recipients as well as benefits to the students. Kahl (2011) specifically encourages this sort of scholarship for undergraduates, indicating it is one of the key critical changes that needs to be made in communication education. In Ohio, debaters from John Carroll University use what they learn in competitive debate to help young men incarcerated in the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility. The CHJCF students learn effective language skills, advocacy, conflict resolution, listening, critical thinking, self-control and empowerment through competitive debate.

Service learning projects also provide indirect benefits to the community by influencing students' awareness and empathy (Buch & Harden, 2011; Zaidi, Ahmed, Ud Din Saif & Khan, 2011), and desire for future service (Buch & Harden, 2011). These

service learning opportunities need to be viewed as meaningful (Bludau, 2006) and involve opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences (Levesque-Bristol, Knapp & Fisher, 2010). For this project, the college debaters learn about the CHJCF students and themselves; they challenge their preconceptions and discover ways to use their skills to improve their community. As one JCU debater observed, "the program is absolutely valuable. In my opinion, the program's effectiveness lies in its ability to show students *how* they can improve themselves and develop skills and characteristics that are valued by society. I know that the thinking skills developed through debate have unlimited application."

This essay details the service-learning relationship between JCU debate and CHJCF. It begins by describing the goals for the CHJCF students and their debate tutors, who are primarily students at JCU. They are undergraduate volunteers, both male and female, who are either on the JCU competitive debate team or students with some previous debate experience. Lakeland Community College (LCC) has also supplied two volunteers - a debater and her debate coach. The paper also describes the program format and identifies a number of challenges faced by participants. The primary sections detail the perceived benefits to the students at CHJCF and to the debater tutors. Both sections are bolstered with quotations from JCU debaters who have tutored at CHJCF and have responded to a survey concerning their experiences. The responses indicate clearly that they have embraced the "teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2011, para. 1).

Goals

The benefits of debate have been well documented. There is a rich heritage of literature describing the valuable skills debaters learn, including advocacy (Bartenan, 1998; Brand 2000; Williams, McGee & Worth, 2001), presentation skills (Millsap, 1998; Williams, McGee & Worth, 2001), critical thinking (Brembeck, 1949; Colbert, 1987; Hill, 1993; Rowland, 1995), social responsibility (Rogers, 2005), cultural understanding and tolerance (Rogers, 2002; Rogers, 2005), academic success (Rogers, 2005; Mezuk, 2009) and college readiness (Mezuk, 2009). Due to the needs of the CHJCF students, this program prioritizes argument development and presentation skills within a framework that consistently emphasizes perspective taking, tolerance and the use of language in resolving disputes. All of these benefits are secondary to our primary goal - to help these young men realize that education, generally, and debate, specifically, can provide them with life-changing skills. Officials at CHJCF acknowledge these benefits. Clifford Smith, Administrator for the Office of Community Partnerships of the Ohio Department of Youth Services, made the three hour drive from Columbus to watch the first debate tournament. He was very impressed and shortly thereafter, the program was featured on the cover of the state's *Volunteer News Brief*, which observed that the students "are discovering the power of words in settling conflicts while developing a new way of thinking" (January, 2010, p. 3).

In addition to the goals for the CHJCF students, the program is also designed with specific goals for the JCU debaters. One goal is to help them understand debate from a different perspective; those who teach are likely to agree that one never learns material as well as when one has to teach it to others. However, there are also non-debate goals, including developing an appreciation for service, interacting with members of society with whom they were unlikely to have much prior experience, and

recognizing the personal ways in which they can use their skills to form stronger communities. These goals are frequently discussed by the debate director and the volunteers, both in weekly planning sessions and in the debriefing session that occurs in the ride back from the CHJCF to the university each week. Success in achieving these goals is found in the answers to the survey questions and in observing current volunteers recruit future volunteers. Arguments about how the experience has "changed them," or given them "new perspectives" are common.

#### Format

The parameters are simple. We meet with the CHJCF students approximately 28 weeks per year. Although we have experimented with different formats, we currently use four seven-week periods. We meet one evening per week for the first six weeks and twice during the seventh. We hold a four round tournament in the seventh week with two rounds each night. We typically get approximately 75 minutes per night, although we stretch that a little during tournaments. The CHJCF students strongly prefer this format since the tournaments are their favorite part of the program. The age range is generally 15-19, although at least one student stayed actively involved until his release on his 21st birthday.

The CHJCF are all volunteers who respond positively to encouragement from the supervisor of volunteer programs, Rev. Clark, or from the guards. A weekly call is made to the dormitories as soon as the JCU volunteers arrive, which results in a different, but overlapping student base every week. CHJCF students have started the program as late into a semester as the last week, creating some problems with

preparation. However, the program operates under a principle of inclusion, so no student has been turned away.

The JCU debate tutors are also volunteers, drawn from both the competitive debate team and from any other volunteers with debate experience. While most of the volunteers compete on the university's debate program, at least one volunteer has come from the debate class required of all communications majors, and another was a freshman who was a public forum debater in high school. Many of the volunteers rotate on a weekly basis, and the number of volunteers increases for the tournament. However, each semester, a single volunteer embraces a larger role which includes attending every week, coordinating research efforts, providing some of the lectures and judging practice rounds and the tournament. As the program enters its third year, JCU's top debater has offered to run the CHJCF program and is coordinating all aspects. JCU's Director of Debate still attends the weekly meetings, but only to support and observe.

A typical night includes five to ten minute of debate instruction, focusing on argument construction (claim, data, warrant), presentation, listening and note taking (flowing) , or any of a wide variety of debate skills. That is followed by an additional five to ten minutes of topic discussion, where students are asked to generate and support arguments for or against particular positions. Those discussions are generally energetic. Early in the semester, JCU's Director of Debate leads the lecture and discussions, but as the semester continues, those roles are taken over by the JCU debaters. The JCU debaters develop confidence as they watch teaching models and then adopt their own styles and preferences. This is all done in a nurturing environment as JCU debaters seek input from the coaches, and the CHCJF seek input from coaches, debaters and each

other. The director carools to the facility with the debaters, providing time to brief before each evening and debrief as we drive back to the university.

The rest of the evening is dedicated to debates, with the JCU volunteers typically judging but occasionally debating. The format is flexible to encourage maximum participation and meaningful debate experiences. Combinations of one on one (Lincoln Douglas) and two or three person teams have been used to maximize the number of people debating at any one time. Time limits are adjusted to reflect the time available in a given night, although a constructive, a rebuttal and a cross-examination period are all included whenever possible. The tournaments have used a two person team format, utilizing five minute constructives, 90 second cross-examination periods, and three minute rebuttals, although there is no reason why that format is sacrosanct.

As for topics, the CHJCF students are given tremendous leeway in generating issues for debate. We seek ideas for the tournaments, narrow it to four or five that the directors and tutors find most promising, and then allow the CHJCF students to vote. Tournament topics have included lifting smoking bans in bars and restaurants, gun control, national health care and drug legalization. In addition, we debate a number of student selected topics in the early weeks as we gather research for our tournament. Those evening debates include topics ranging from legalizing gay marriage to whether the better basketball player is Kobe or LeBron.

The cost of the program is exceedingly low. The tutors volunteer their time. There is a minimal cost to printing articles and sample arguments. The coaches donate flow paper and the facility provides pencils. As for rewards, we secure permission to bring a laptop and a laser printer into the facility during tournaments, allowing us to print personalized certificates. Every participant receives a certificate, as do the top five

speakers and each member of the top three teams. These numbers can vary based on participation. This head coach has been in debate for 36 years, but has never seen more appreciative award recipients. CHJCF provides plastic slip-sheets to protect the certificates and the students save them and bring them back in subsequent semesters to show new students what they can achieve if they are "good enough." The students inform us that they send copies of their certificates to the judges who review their appeals for early release.

In addition to the normal format, we sometimes show debate oriented films early in the semester for recruitment and end evenings with logic puzzles. Educationally, the logic puzzles are a valuable and fun way to develop deductive reasoning skills. Promotionally, they encourage students to return, since bringing a solved puzzle back the next week earns a choice of candy bars, provided by the authors.

### Challenges

There are a number of challenges that continue to face the program including resources, time constraints, competing programs, logistics and some obstacles specific to working with young men who are incarcerated. Some of these challenges are specific to the students at CHJCF, others are obstacles faced by the JCU debaters.

The first obstacle is to recruit volunteer debaters. In addition to the time issues faced by all potential volunteers, a variety of factors negatively influence the debaters' desire to help. One is as simple as recognizing the value of "the other." As one debater observed, "even my own debate partner originally pondered why we should help these kids. I was kind of surprised, but I understood his position. These kids had their chance and they blew it." However, that respondent now tutors frequently, encourages others to do the same, and has assumed the role of coordinating tutor for the coming season.

He acknowledges the impact the program has had on his life and theirs, noting it is "an extremely helpful life lesson."

A related factor is the apprehension associated with entering a correctional facility. Many have concerns as soon as they realize must go *into* the institution. Others become concerned as soon as they see the razor-wire surrounding the facility's walls. Legitimate security concerns require them to leave their cell phones and keys in their vehicles or at the front desk, where they sign in, turn in their driver's licenses, and receive visitor's badges. They pass through a metal detector, and then turn out pockets and roll up pant legs to ensure no contraband is smuggled into the facility. A guard leads them through a short hallway where the door behind them is locked prior to unlocking the door in front. The system helps prevent escapes, but it can be psychologically troubling to a group of volunteers momentarily locked up in a very small space. Several volunteers - and both coaches - have talked about this discomfort in debriefings after initial visits to the facility, but the volunteers seem to adjust to it rather quickly. The tutors are lead to a large room where the meetings occur, and await the arrival of the students, who are also led by guards. The debates occur simultaneously in different corners of the same large room, frequently the cafeteria, but sometimes in either the library or the "blue room," which serves as both the chapel and the all-purpose room, while one or more guards observe. The guards are friendly and every effort is made to be pleasant, but there is no escaping the fact that the young men are incarcerated. As one tutor responded, "while the students seemed to enjoy the program, it was still being conducted in a corrections facility. The program gave me an insight into the unfortunate reality that is juvenile corrections; it is sad (albeit understandable) to

see people so young having their freedom restricted. But I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in helping those in need."

The key to recruiting volunteers is demonstrating the safety and benefits. Most debaters understand the tremendous value in what they do, so persuading them to help others is not difficult. Reassurances about the safety convinced a few to come, and once they started talking to their peers about the program, finding other volunteers was easy. At the core is a simple message - the young men who live at CHJCF truly appreciate outsiders who come to share their skills. It gives them something to do, but more importantly, it lets them know that someone cares. They express their appreciation frequently. The guards, students and supervisors confirm that the young men at the facility demonstrate appreciation to all volunteers.

There are clear variations in the amount of time the JCU debaters dedicate to the program. Some are only available as judges, dedicating one or two evenings per semester, as our numbers allow us to rotate in new judges for each of the tournament. Others get involved in a different rotation, as the third volunteer every week. In addition to the nights they judge, these tutors attend four or five additional nights per semester. Finally, one of the debaters always steps to the forefront to become the undergraduate coordinator for the program. This debater works with the director to create a weekly lesson, provides that lesson to the other volunteers, coordinates topic research, and attends every CHJCF debate function. Those students run the program in weeks when the director cannot attend. Additionally, Lakeland Community College has become more active in working with the program. The second author has represented Lakeland multiple times in the last year, has brought a Lakeland student to help, and is training

additional Lakeland students to assist in the future. This is a huge contribution to the continuing success of the program.

With respect to preparing for debates, the biggest obstacle is the lack of research capability. The CHJCF students are not allowed internet access, which means the research must come from their library or be brought in by the debaters. Given time limits, most of the research is completed by JCU debaters. This creates additional concerns as outside materials must be reviewed before they can be distributed. Further, none of the supplies - legal pads, pencils, manila folders – are allowed to leave the meeting room. Although there are legitimate security concerns for this limitation, it is a significant obstacle to developing research skills.

To offset this, JCU debaters create sample arguments and collect a variety of original articles on both sides of each topic. Those are provided to CHJCF personnel for review, and are stored in the room where they debate. Students have the opportunity to read the material during weekly sessions, but can also check it out during other points during the week. Additional research can be done in the CHJCF library. The result is less than optimal, but does provide each student the opportunity to cull evidence to support arguments, an important part of the research process. The importance of this research was best demonstrated by a CHJCF student who requested that we speed up the process of getting research to them since “arguing about opinions is useless” now that he could “debate with facts.”

Another major challenge is keeping a stable number of participants each week. The CHJCF debate program faces many of the same concerns as any debate program -- some students lose interest, some get ill, some have other programs that interfere. However, debate in a correctional facility faces additional barriers over which we have

no control -- inmates are released transferred, denied privileges, or are forced to attend state mandated programs which get scheduled independently of our program.

Additionally, given the relatively small population and tightly controlled environment, alternative programs scheduled at the same time are likely to hurt attendance. The effect is that we seldom know how many kids will participate in any given night as our numbers have ranged from 1 to 32. Typically, a large number show up for the recruitment night and that number declines almost immediately, although the participation of a dozen students on any given night is common.

The eagerness of the CHJCF debaters is obvious. Students apologize for "ditching practice" to attend celebratory meals and parties. They are even more apologetic when their misbehavior results in disciplinary action that prohibits them from attending debate meetings. Conversely, they become angry when they believe that such punishment was unjust. Every semester, the CHJCF students check and double-check with us to make sure that the tournament will occur before particular release dates. The tournament has been moved forward a day to allow the participation of a young man scheduled for release later in the week.

Another major obstacle stems from differences between the CHJCF students. Some would not be out of place in traditional high school and college classrooms, while others are battling significant physical, mental, emotional and/or drug related problems. Those differences are magnified by the fact that some students attend almost every meeting for multiple semesters while others are new or attend infrequently. The ideal solution is separate divisions based on talents, but program size precludes that. However, in a remarkable demonstration of camaraderie and teamwork, the CHJCF debaters have resolved most of this problem through cooperation. From setting up the

room for the debates, to selecting partners, to helping *opponents* gain a better grasp of arguments, the CHJCF students cooperate well. They are quick to laugh at themselves and others, but rarely in a malicious manner. Several CHJCF debaters scheduled for release prior to that semester's tournament have chosen to attend weekly meetings anyway, offering to help others and filling in when someone's partner is missing.

A final obstacle is recruiting. Given the nature of correctional facilities, there is no opportunity to recruit directly. Oversight personnel are extremely helpful and send encouragement, but even their messages are filtered through the guards. Some guards are extremely supportive and their dormitories are almost always represented. A number of guards claim they see the CHJCF debaters in a new light, and some guards actively interact with the students during practice, challenging their ideas or adding supportive examples. However, bringing the students to meetings is an additional burden on the guards who must change their routines to do so. Those who do not perceive a benefit have no incentive to support the program. Program volunteers have contact with only those guards who are already supportive, making it impossible for the coaches to address guards who do not wish to participate. Students suggest this is a primary reason why some dorms have strong attendance and others have none.

#### Benefits to CHJCF Students

We are not able to interview the CHJCF students about the benefits they perceive, nor are we to contact them after their release. However, it is impossible to work with these young men for any period of time and not observe the impact the program has on them. For example, one JCU debater noted, “At our first meeting, we were talking about who the best pro basketball player is, and it devolved into a shouting match. But by the end of the semester, everybody was standing up straight, looking

poised and giving articulate presentations for and against the need for a statewide smoking ban in public buildings. It was incredible to see the change that took place in a semester” (Bruening, 2011, p. 21).

The primary goal of the program is to help these young men realize that education and debate can help them take control over their lives. That includes the empowerment that stems from effective advocacy, but also the self-control necessary to listen and think before responding. At no time was this more evident than in our first debate of a new semester. With 18 students and three volunteers, the students were divided into three person teams. Each group was asked to pick a topic, and one student suggested gay marriage. Fearful of potential jokes and ad hominem attacks, the young man was asked why he wanted to debate that topic. He responded, "I don't have a father. I have two mothers. And I am tired of people slamming them. I want to have a debate, because I want to defend them." The topic was selected and each team was given three two-minute speeches and a one minute rebuttal. The young man who proposed the topic spoke first, and we rotated through the other participants. Each student refuted the claims of the person who spoke directly before him and added some new reasons. The original speakers were each given a minute to respond. In a little more than 15 minutes, each side presented seven minutes of arguments. The quality of the arguments were appraised, and the conversation turned to perspective taking and the benefits of switch-side debating. A second debate followed immediately, with the negative team from the first debate now advocating gay marriage and the young man with two moms concluding with arguments against.

At the end of the night, the young man caught the director by the arm and said, "I want you to know that was probably the hardest thing I've ever done, but I see the value.

It never would have happened outside - I would have beat the crap out of him for saying that. But you made me listen, think and wait before I could answer. I couldn't do that before. I still don't agree with any of their points, but now I can see why they believe some of them. Thanks." That exchange encapsulates what the program attempts to accomplish. As Andy Labuza, the program's undergraduate coordinator for the first year claimed, "debate is about defending and attacking arguments, not people" (Cooney, 2009, para. 5).

The JCU debaters recognize the skills being fostered in the students they tutor and judge. Surveys of the JCU debaters acknowledge skill development in critical thinking, advocacy, listening and perspective taking. The students develop a healthy respect for themselves and what they are learning. Two brief stories offer illustrate this point.

One of the JCU debaters was struck by a pair of young men who spent the entire fall semester arguing against each other. Many of the disagreements turned personal. However, as the semester continued, both started making better arguments, and while they still argued against each other, the disagreements lost the personal edge. In the spring, both returned, partnered, becoming friends and a significant force in the tournament.

Another JCU volunteer found a sense of respect in shaking hands. This is not encouraged in the program. The CHJCF oversight official discourages hand shaking for security reasons, especially with the potential for personal bonding and hygienic concerns. The JCU debater noted, "I was surprised that many of the students insisted on shaking hands after each debate round. Many students came to me to shake my hand after judging and when distributing awards at the end of the tournament. The handshake

served not only as a sign of respect among competitors but also as an acknowledgment of their mutual accomplishment."

The cooperation that the students develop over time is impressive. Although there is a lot of "good natured ribbing," especially when students make mistakes, there is also a developing appreciation of self and others. One of the most powerful educational moments for the LCC debate coach occurred during a debate at the institution when a relatively experienced team was debating against a team that was attending their first tournament. When it was time for the first negative to speak, the student fumbled and stuttered and anxiously looked around. After a few endless seconds, the affirmative team in unison stood up, walked around the table and started to assist the opposing debater. Asking for prep time to be given to the other team, one of the experienced debaters quickly rifled through evidence and explained arguments and strategies that the first negative could run. He then shared a few words of encouragement, including a comment about how he tends to stutter when he is nervous, and then walked back to the other side of the table, ready to compete. Somehow these young students found collaboration within the competition. They were able to see beyond the debate to something that was far more important.

Another tutor revealed an incident where one CHJCF student consistently referred to his partner as an "idiot." When asked why, the response was, "because he is." When the "idiot" was asked if his partner ever supported him, he responded, "f\*\*\* no." A discussion followed about the harms of labeling, the damage done when partners belittle each other, and the benefits of mutual support. They agreed to attempt more cooperation. Later, the tutor had the opportunity to judge them in a round in which they

cooperated fully, showed no signs of hostility, and won on a persuasive argument made by the student formerly known as the "idiot."

The students have also learned to argue much more effectively. More than one guard has jokingly complained about this development. The transition is from asserting claims to developing arguments. One tutor described an interaction with a student who claimed that we should protect the rights of gun owners. Recognizing that no reasons had been offered, the student was asked why. The student provided the honest answer – he wanted a gun. When asked if he should have something just because he wanted it, the student replied, "I guess that's not a great argument." The tutor noted that over time the young man started making much better arguments, bolstering his claims with support and reasons. Several respondents noted they had observed the same transition from asserting claims to developing arguments.

The students also learn how to speak persuasively. This is an awakening for many of them. Some tell us that the experience is valuable because "it's the only place we're allowed to argue," while another contended "it's the first time anyone has actually listened to me." For those combating additional barriers - speaking impediments, behavioral problems, confidence issues, etc. - the challenges are even greater. And yet, there is no doubt that most of the participants improve their ability to stand up and speak persuasively. Some improve dramatically.

The benefits were also evident to non-debaters. Several guards watch the debates, sometimes interjecting themselves during practice. Several noted how impressed they are with the students, often admitting that they now see the students differently. A couple of guards let the researchers know the students frequently continue the debates in their rooms. Clifford Smith, the Administrator of the Office of

Community Partnership for the Ohio Department of Youth Services, recognizes the life skills the students are learning. He observes, "It teaches research skills, it enhances their communication skills, and it helps them in every aspect of their daily lives. There are so many situations in which they can learn the skills they use in the program. When they apply and interview for jobs, when they get a job, when they're on the job and trying to research issues or gather information to enable them to do the work that needs to be done – all of these skills are valuable to them" (Bruening, 2011, p. 21).

Other indications of the power the program come from CHJCF students themselves. One pleaded for a debate textbook for the facility's library. Once donated, he immediately checked it out, read it cover to cover, and brought it with him to every meeting. He delighted in calling out his peers for ad hominem attacks, false causes, circular reasoning and a variety of other fallacies. Originally, his peers ridiculed him, but within a couple of weeks they requested more textbooks.

The clearest indication of the change in these students, however, is in their other requests of us. In semesters with large influxes of new students, we often hear a lot about either the toughness or the despair of the students. However, those who stay with the program for any period of time ask different questions - "can you help me find the right college," "where can I debate in college," or "can I debate for you?"

#### Benefits to JCU Students

The debate tutors learn valuable lessons through their service at CHJCF. They learn about the young men in the facility and about themselves. They learn more about debate and a great deal about teaching. They learn that they have meaningful roles to play in society; in this case, in a way none of them had considered. Perhaps it is coincidental that of the four tutors who have graduated from JCU since the program

began, two have gone to law school, one into sociology and one has decided to teach. The prospective teacher specifically ties that decision to the program, observing that the CHCJF students "have shown me that I love to teach. I really think it is great when a student who was struggling understands a concept and is able to succeed." All indicate that the program had a tremendous influence on them. Every respondent recommends others join the program, although several of them limited the recommendation to those who can handle the additional concerns that come with working with young men inside a correctional facility.

One major benefit for the tutors is the opportunity to confront their own preconceptions. The changes in perspective are profound, as the tutors recognize that the young men legitimately want to improve themselves. This is a sharp break with the preconception that these are kids who "had their chance and they blew it." As one tutor noted, "this was a very good learning experience for me. It definitely helped change a lot of the assumptions I had going into the program." Another observed, "I had no previous exposure to a corrections facility and was startled by the youth of the students. The students made some serious life mistakes but I saw a genuine desire from many of the students to learn about the topics being debated and to develop thinking skills. I was impressed."

One of the more profound interactions occurred during a tutor's lecture. Three young men were sitting in the back and one of them was obviously bored. He kept distracting his friends, and was asked to settle down several times. Finally the young man was threatened with removal if he insisted on distracting others. At that point, he stood up, turned to his friends and encouraged them to leave this "boring and stupid" program. One friend stood to go, but the other remained sitting. The distracting student

made several attempts to get his sitting friend to leave with him, but the young man remained sitting. By this time, everything else had stopped, and people were focused on the commotion. As the distracting student made a final attempt to convince his friend to leave, the sitting student looked up and said, "if you don't see the value, you're the stupid one. He's trying to help us. Can't you see that?" The JCU tutors were deeply touched.

Finding effective ways of communicating with a diverse group of young men is a common theme. Tutors noted how the interactions forced them to improve their own communication skills. It required reflection about why they had trouble reaching some students and about ways the tutors can modify their messages to help comprehension. Two respondents wrote about how much they learned about teaching and debate through the interaction, while another commented about directly transferring the lesson to other arenas, rethinking his communication strategies in general.

The debate tutors find the experience gratifying, calling it "personally fulfilling," "very rewarding," and "interesting and enriching." They realize the skills they are honing as debaters can be used not only to improve their lives, but also their communities. One noted, "every time I go there, I feel like I at least made some difference." A female tutor observed "the young men in this facility don't have the best backgrounds and if I can help give them an opportunity to improve their lives, then I think it is a program worth anyone's time." It is important to note that almost every JCU debate tutor who volunteered at CHJCF has since volunteered to work in the urban debate league.

### Recommendations

The tutors made several recommendations for improving the program. Most are typical of any program – requests for more time, more people and more resources. The

tutors are correct on all of these counts, although it is also important to appreciate the opportunities that are present. The most energetic lessons occur on nights when 15-20 students are participating, but the tutors are reminded that their opportunity to make a real difference is often magnified on those nights when only two students participate.

Other recommendations focus on making the format as simple as possible, removing most of the conventions of academic debate. For example, there is a clear fairness issue that limits new arguments in rebuttals, an effort to make sure that both sides have sufficient time to discuss the issue. However, that is to be weighed against the detriment of rejecting quality arguments simply because they occur late in the debate. Given the other difficulties these young men face, perhaps it is best to reward quality arguments whenever they occur.

One of the best examples of this took place in a free-flowing debate that focused on whether students who are at least 18 years old should be allowed to smoke in the facility. New concerns and new answers dominated the debate from start to finish. However, it was fascinating to watch the young men work through these issues. Certainly smoking would cause additional behavioral problems - but not if they were only allowed as rewards for good behavior. But, even in that case, there would be additional thefts – unless the administration held all the cigarettes, rewarding them singularly at the time of their consumption. Still, even that would increase the risk of fire - but not if smoking is restricted to the outdoor volleyball pit since sand does not burn. However, that would still put the guards at risk from second-hand smoke - except if it was limited to guards who already smoke and are willing to smoke with the good-behavior crowd. While there is clearly a fairness issue involved in allowing the

affirmative to consistently change its proposal, it may be acceptable if education is prioritized over competition.

The final recommendation heard from many stakeholders is to expand. There has been discussion with other members of the debate community about creating similar programs in other facilities within Ohio. The possibility of allowing the top teams from each institution to debate against each other has been raised. State budgets and tough economic times certainly complicate that vision, but the benefit of debate within juvenile correctional facilities is real.

### Conclusions

As the Director of Debate at John Carroll University, the transformative power of debate has been a significant element in how debate is portrayed to our members and recruits. As many high school debaters and college freshmen have heard, JCU Debate is proud of our competitive success, but the real testament to the power of what we do is found in what our alumni are doing five, ten or twenty years down the line. We encourage our current students to use debate to empower themselves to help achieve their personal goals and dreams. Given the power found in persuasion, critical thinking and in mastery of information, it becomes rather easy for them to understand the ways that a commitment to debate can become a life changing event. For example, Mezuk's (2009) 10-year study of African American males debating in the Chicago urban debate league found that those who debated 25 or more rounds were 70% more likely to graduate from high school, three times less likely to drop out of school, significantly improved their ACT scores and class grades, and were twice as likely to be "college ready" in English according to the ACT benchmark. Similarly, Rogers (2002) four-year study of college debaters and non-debaters found that debaters were more active

politically (voting and donating time to campaigns), socially (activism and volunteerism), had slightly better grades, demonstrated more cultural tolerance, were more likely to believe in the just society tradition, and much more likely to seek professional internships. In both situations, the transformative power of debate is real and clear - it provides life changing skills, perspectives and opportunities.

We cannot make the claim that the skills referenced in these studies are imparted to the students of the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility. It is clearly a unique setting, and while its students face some of the same difficulties as other high school students, there are other complications. The debate opportunities the CHJCF students receive pale in comparison to what truly dedicated high school and college debaters receive. Additionally, our observations provide us with a very different type of data than that compiled by Mezuk (2009) and Rogers (2002). Nonetheless, our observations clearly suggest that something transformative is happening within this program, and that change has been observed by coaches, tutors, guards and representatives of the Ohio Department of Youth Services.

Among the changes we have observed in the CHJCF are improved public speaking, better quality of argument, an increasing commitment to using arguments to resolve disagreements, and the development of perspective taking skills. The potential of debate to empower students is a frequent topic of conversation with and between the CHJCF students. New debaters still tend to start with a very edgy tone in the beginning of the semester, and become more refined and better reasoned as the season continues. While perspective taking requires time, the benefits of switch-sides debating eventually win out. In short, we have no desire to overstate the benefits of the program, but it is clear that these young men are finding their voices, discovering ways to improve their

reasons, recognizing the importance of perspective, and gaining an appreciation for the exchange of ideas. Those skills are empowering.

For the college debaters who are tutoring at the facility, the exchange is mutually beneficial. The respondents talk about how teaching the material has improved their own skills, provided new perspectives of the incarcerated students, and demonstrated the importance of contributing to their own communities. Almost all have volunteered to return to the CHJCF and most have. In fact, the JCU debaters have asked to take on a greater role, moving from coordinating assistants to actively taking over the program and running all phases of it in year three (with faculty support as opposed to faculty leadership).

Debaters have long prided themselves on the important skills they learn, including advocacy, critical thinking and public speaking. Debaters from John Carroll University and Lakeland Community College are engaging in a service-learning project with the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility to bring those benefits to the young men serving their sentences there. The program is growing, as Lakeland Community College now assists, and there are hopes of developing similar programs at other correctional facilities within the state. In the process, students from both the colleges and the correctional facility are learning important lessons about themselves and each other. In the process, they are coming to a better understanding of the power of debate.

## References

- Bartenan, K. M. (1998). The place of the forensics program in the liberal arts college of the twenty-first century: An essay in honor of Larry E. Norton. *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 84(1), 1-15.
- Bludau, J. (2006). Introducing service learning into a school: Engaging students, teachers and community partners in meaningful projects. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 73(1), 20-24. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Brand, J. (2000). Advancing the discipline: The role of forensics in the communication field. *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 86(1), 1-14.
- Brembeck, W. (1949). The effects of a course in argumentation on critical thinking ability. *Speech Monographs*, 16, 172-189.
- Bruening, J. C. (2011). Argument for corrections. *John Carroll University*, 15(1), 21.
- Buch, K. & Harden S. (2011). The impact of a service-learning project on student awareness of homelessness, civic attitudes, and stereotypes toward the homeless. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 15(3), 45-61.
- Bute, J. J., & Kopchick, C. L. (2009). Health communication and health education: Empowering students to educate their communities. *Communication Teacher*, 23(2), 71-76. doi:10.1080/17404620902780221.
- Colbert, K. (1987). The effects of CEDA and NDT debate on critical thinking. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 23, 194-201.
- Cooney, D. (2009, October 9). There's no debating JCU's new program with youth. *The Carroll New*, 86(7).

- Galvan, C., & Parker, M. (2011). Investigating the reciprocal nature of service-learning in physical education teacher education. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 34(1), 55-70. doi:10.5193/JEE34.1.55
- Hill, B. (1993). The value of competitive debate as a vehicle for promoting development of critical thinking ability. *CEDA Yearbook*, 14, 1-23.
- Kahl, Jr., D. H. (2010). Making a difference: (Re)connecting communication scholarship with pedagogy. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38(3), 298-302. doi:10.1080/00909882.2010.490845.
- Mezuk, B.. (2009). Urban debate and high school educational outcomes for African American males: The case of the Chicago Debate League. *Journal of Negro Education*, 78(3), 290-304.
- Millsap, S. (1998). The benefits of forensics across the curriculum: An opportunity to expand the visibility of college forensics. *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 84(1) 17-26.
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. (2011). What is service-learning? Retrieved from <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-is-service-learning>.
- Ohio Department of Youth Services. (2010, January). Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility holds debate tournament. *Volunteer News Brief*, 1, 1-3.
- Rogers, J. E. (2002). Longitudinal outcome for forensics: Does participation in intercollegiate, competitive forensics contribute to measurable differences in positive student outcomes? *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*, 23, 1-27.
- Rogers, J. E. (2005). Graduate school, professional, and life choices: An outcome assessment confirmation study measuring positive student outcomes beyond

student experiences for participants in competitive intercollegiate forensics.

*Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*, 26, 13-40.

Rowland, R. C. (1995). The practical pedagogical function of academic debate.

*Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*, 16, 98-108.

Williams, D. E., McGee, B. R., & Worth, D. S. (2001). University student perceptions of the efficacy of debate participation: An empirical investigation. *Argument &*

*Advocacy*, 37, 198-209.

Zaidi, N., Ahmed, M., Ud Din Saif, S., & Khan, W. (2011). Preparing medical students through service learning to provide social justice. *Professional Medical Journal*,

18(2), 280-284. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

**Forensics Service-Learning on Campus:  
Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve**

Justin Foote

Miami University

&

Todd Holm

Miami University

Abstract

On campus service-learning opportunities are valuable educational experiences for forensics students and the university community. This paper provides details of Miami University service-learning projects and the impacts they have for forensics students, the university student body, and the forensics program. Service-learning can provide an even richer experience for forensics students while engaging a significantly larger portion of the student body in public discourse about current events as well as modeling effective public communication styles. While many forensics programs already offer showcases, these on campus performances (with slight modification such as including a structured debriefing and reflection sessions), can become valuable on campus service-learning experiences.

*Keywords:* service-learning, on campus, audience debate forum, forensics showcase

## Forensics Service-Learning on Campus:

### Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve

The life of the Director of Forensics (DOF) is full. Between coaching students, recruiting students, traveling to tournaments, participating in faculty meetings, teaching classes, making hotel and vehicle reservations, entering teams for tournaments, and occasionally writing an article for publication the thought of adding one more activity to an already overly burdened calendar can easily be seen as the “one bridge too far.” As Hinck and Hinck (1998) note “Adding an additional project without a clear rationale for what it returns to the students, the director, the program, the university, and the community would probably dissuade a director from considering service-learning” (p. 4). Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2011). When we look at a service-learning project as more work it is easy to overlook the potential competitive benefits our students receive from such projects. Perhaps more importantly this perspective does not consider the opportunities missed by students at our colleges and universities but not on our teams.

This article examines the issue of service learning in the forensics community by first providing a rationale for the integration of service learning into a team’s annual activities, offering a case study by examining Miami University’s Audience Debate Forum Series and Forensics Showcases and how those are implemented and finally discussing the benefits of these practices. It should be pointed out that the Audience Debate Forum series predates both of the author’s tenure at Miami University and we

hope they will continue long after the authors have moved on. We don't claim credit for the inception but wish to share this wonderful educational option with the community.

#### Rationale

A DOF focuses on coaching a team to be competitively successful but inherent within that process is developing young citizen orators as the ancient rhetoricians had envisioned citizen orator. The ability to stand and deliver a well thought out and articulate argument before a public audience was Quintilian's idea of the citizen orator. Developing these citizen orator can take on a variety of form and formats. The idea of going out into the community and finding an organization in need of communication skills training, developing a workshop or seminar for those people, and then helping students prepare materials that would make such a project beneficial to both the client and the student can be a daunting task. It is one that many faculty members without the additional duties of forensics professional avoid because of the volume of workload involved. However, the second national conference on forensics noted, "Forensic educators should initiate and encourage participation in ongoing forums of forensic activity that are available to campus and community audiences" (Parson, 1984, p. 41). Not all service-learning projects occur outside the university community. In a traditional "college town" there are often more members of the university than the surrounding town. More importantly, the students at the university have a more direct need for the kinds of service-learning projects a forensics team can readily provide.

Certainly, if forensic students went out into the community and prepared workshops for people seeking employment on how to conduct themselves in job interviews or if they were to pair with a local high school to coach a forensics team or even if they worked on campus in an Oral Communication Center as tutors these

projects would be seen as service-learning opportunities. They are using skills related to what forensics teaches. Forensics teaches strong communication skills. But more specifically what forensics does, and what forensics students do, is stand and deliver performances (obviously that is not the extent of the skills acquired in forensics but it is certainly at the heart of what we teach). Whether that is debate, public speaking, limited preparation events, or an oral interpretation event, we teach students to stand and deliver with confidence, to engage an audience, to critically analyze research and literature, to synthesize information from a variety of sources (even disciplines) and present their ideas in a public forum.

In fact these are the very skills that employers say they want out of recent college graduates. Hart (2008) surveyed employers about the most important skills new hires should possess and found the skills that forensics teaches were at the forefront of the responses: Communication (73%), critical & integrative thinking (73%), and problem solving (64%). It is those skills that our students are most adept at using to help others. Hart (2008) goes on to report that 83% of business leaders believe that supervised/evaluated internship/community-based project where students apply college learning in real-world setting were “very effective” or “fairly effective” in ensuring that college graduates have the skills/knowledge they need to be successful in the business world. This could be why Judge (2006) says “My suggestion is to look on campus for service-learning opportunities” (p. 189). Couple that idea with Hinck and Hinck’s observation,

Forensics programs seem uniquely suited to address issues of social responsibility. Debate topics focus on social problems. Individual events, such as extemporaneous speaking, persuasive speaking, and rhetorical criticism, address

current events and controversies. One could even argue that many interpretive performances are aimed at increasing awareness of social issues. (1998, p. 8)

One could make the argument that a quality forensics program has an obligation to conduct on campus service-learning projects. As Hinck and Hinck (1998) point out, service-learning has come about as a response to two concerns in higher education: First, the leadership role colleges and universities should play in addressing society's problems and second, the need for colleges to be more accountable for the breadth and depth of resources devoted to educating students. The same is true of forensics. Forensics has an on-campus leadership role in addressing society's problems. In a world of ever tightening financial situations, it is even more important that we show accountability for the resources our programs are given.

Forensics can be an expensive activity. It is probably not as expensive as varsity athletics but when it is compared to intramural sports, an on-campus choir, or even the campus Republicans or Democrats, it can easily have a higher student-served to dollar-spent ratio. This is important when administrators start crunching numbers and looking for places to make cuts under the auspice that the participation of the few, no matter how meaningful or positive, is not as worthy as the participation of the many. The student-served to dollar-spent ratio is sometimes more important than the national recognition a program might bring to a university. Whether we agree with the reasoning or not, it is a fact of life. So as we begin to look at service-learning it is important to understand how our programs and our students will benefit by this experience both in and out of a competitive setting.

Our Experience: A Case Study

“Communication is tied to service learning” (Gibson, Kostecki & Lucas, 2001, p. 187) because of communication education’s tradition of preparing students for public deliberation and taking an active role in public life. For many years Miami University Forensics has hosted “Audience Debate Forums” (ADF) and “Forensic Showcases”. We host a total of four Audience Debate Forums and two Forensic Showcases each year. These public performances on campus service well over 1,200 students annually. The purpose of this paper is to explain the benefits of the service-learning project and provide readers with the logistical and pragmatic aspects of these projects so that they could be carried out on other campuses.

### Benefits

“The classroom is often thought of as a barren place, far removed from the more immediate and relevant concerns of students” (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999, p. 239). Forensics is seen as a more vibrant and engaging outgrowth of the classroom. Service-learning can be seen as a natural extension of forensics. Forensics has often been described as the laboratory for communication studies where students take the theoretical ideas learned in public speaking, debate, rhetoric, persuasion and a variety of other classes and implement them in a competitive public speaking situation. In essence, forensics takes theory and applies it but in a somewhat artificial setting (a competitive environment). Service-learning in the form of on-campus presentations and debate forums takes the applied skills of forensics and puts it back in a public forum and a real setting while providing a meaningful community service based in communication pedagogy, that teaches civic responsibility and participation while strengthening the campus community. This type of service-learning project benefits three distinct audiences: the student body, forensics competitors, and the forensics program.

## Benefits to the Student Body

The student body that watches the audience debate forums and showcases benefit in a variety of ways. One of the ways they benefit that we may not fully appreciate is by making them more aware of social issues, politics, and current events. People involved in forensics are routinely surrounded by students with a higher awareness of current events and civic issues. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that most of our classroom students know very little about politics, the economy, national or international affairs. To put this in perspective, last semester I took pictures of six world leaders (US Vice President Joe Biden, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Mexico President Felipe Calderón, then Britian Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, France President Nicolas Sarkozy) to my Honors Public Discourse class and asked the students to identify the people in the pictures. Out of a class of 20 students who were all in the Honors Program (which means they scored at least a 27 on the ACT) I had one student who was able to identify three of the six people pictured. Four members of the class could not identify anyone in the pictures. Of the 16 students who could identify people pictured 10 could not identify US Vice President Joe Biden (but they were able to identify Hillary Rodham Clinton). As a follow-up to this activity, the next class I took pictures of six more political figures but this time they were pictures of the governor of the state, our senators, a picture of Tina Fey dressed as Sarah Palin, one of our state representatives, and the president of the university. Again students were asked to name the people in the pictures and again the results were depressing. Most of the class immediately recognized Sarah Palin (or should I say they misidentified Tina Fey as Sarah Palin) but after a minute or so of looking at the pictures most of the students in the class had decided that the person in the picture was Tina Fey and not

really Sarah Palin. But not all the students agreed. Two or three students were able to identify our university president and two students were able to identify the governor of the state. When asked if the governor of the state was a Republican or a Democrat I got a fairly even split and eventually two students insisted they actually knew his political affiliation, the rest of the class admitted they were guessing.

Our extempers and Parliamentary Debaters were able to identify all or nearly all of the political officials and none were fooled by Tina Fey's portrayal of Sarah Palin. That is not surprising. More surprising to me was that forensics students who primarily did oral interpretation events were able to identify four of the world leaders and three of the state leaders and most were fairly certain about our governor's political affiliation (and they were correct). Clearly forensic students have a better grasp of political issues than our general student body. I realize the sample size was small and the data were not scientifically obtained but it identifies a significant shortcoming in our students.

Because our ADF's are student run, they show college students that their peers have an understanding of social and political issues and can discuss those intelligibly in an open forum. That kind of modeling of social awareness reminds students they should be cognizant of social and political issues and that some of their peers are aware. Beyond that, the audience debate forums are designed to encourage students to participate in the debates and discussions following the initial presentations. The ability to participate in open discourse about civic issues is important to fostering civic involvement. Klofstad (2010) reported findings from her study which concluded "individuals who discuss politics and current events with their peers also participate more actively in civil society" (p. 2353). She goes on to report that "civic talk can have a causal influence on how citizens participate in the processes of self governance"

(Klofstad, 2010, p. 2365) and participation in civic activities. Her findings indicated that engaging in public discourse at events such as the Audience Debate Forums can increase civic participation by as much as 38%.

At the audience debate forums our students also model argumentation skills, they show other students how research can be synthesized into cogent arguments, audience members get a chance to participate in public civil discourse. Student in the audience see effective public speaking skills modeled. The audience sees a student prepare an impromptu speech in less than two minutes. They even get to see how a good speaker and the exploration of literature can help them better understand the human condition and the power of the narrative form.

#### Benefits to Forensic Students

Forensics students also benefit *competitively* from these performances. Hinck and Hinck (1998) explain that “service-learning activities push students out of their comfort zones” (p. 7). Forensic students become very comfortable speaking in front of a small group of people. Most rounds of competition have between one and five people in the audience, even final rounds at most tournaments don’t have more than 15 people in the audience. However, national tournaments and national caliber tournaments are a different environment. Audiences can grow to well over 100 at large seasonal tournaments or national tournaments. Rarely do our students have the opportunity to practice performing in front of a crowd that large or even in the room that large. With our Forensic Showcase drawing 300 to 400 students and being held in a room that seats 1,000, our forensics students learn a lot about the impact of the audience and the environment on their presentations. They find they must adapt in ways that they hadn't considered.

Deanna Sellnow reminds us that “Audience analysis is another communication concept which forensics programs may foster by moving beyond the formal classroom setting” (1994, p. 4). Our public speakers and oral interpretation performers find there is the extra pressure of engaging and connecting to a large, non-forensics audience who tends to be less responsive than the audiences they are used to having. Limited prep students and debaters find that they are trying to sway the opinion of an audience that is more accustomed to ethos or pathos than logos in their decision-making process. Our public speakers find that it is more difficult to truly engage an audience of 200 or 300 than it is to engage an audience of two or three.

We also find that performances in a larger room with more people simply take more time. A prose that never runs more than nine and a half minutes suddenly shoots up to 11 minutes. A nine minute informative speech somehow goes 10:30. To the student the pacing seems the same, but the stopwatch doesn't lie. A review of the videotape following the performances shows subtle differences. The emoting of an emotion might take two or three seconds longer than some of the pauses took before. Speaking louder, projecting, and engaging students in the back of the room (as well as the sides and the front row) adds a second or two here and there throughout the entire speech causing it to run long. These are things we talk about with students before national tournaments but it doesn't have as much impact as when they experience it firsthand. They benefit from having that experience on our home campus while there is still time to develop strategies to adjust to those factors instead of realizing them after a national semi-final round.

Benefits to the Forensics Program

Many of the benefits of service-learning to forensics program are probably obvious. “Service-learning activities can bring much favorable publicity to a program” (Hinck & Hinck, 1998, p. 11). Miami University regularly travels a combined speech and debate program of 25 to 30 participants. If we divide our budget by the 30 students we “serve” it appears to be a significant investment on the part of the university that benefits very few students. However, when we divide our budget by the twelve hundred plus students and team members who benefit from the totality of our program (our competitive team, our ADFs, and our forensic showcases) it is clear that the university is receiving a great deal for the money they are giving us. These forums also help to develop closer connections between our department, the university and the forensics program and that is something ‘administrators are willing to reward since such projects enhance a university’s image in the community’ (Hinck & Hinck, 1998, p. 10).

Engaging in experiential-learning, service-learning, and public performances also helps to keep us true to the mission of forensics: to create the citizen orator as Quintilian envisioned the citizen orator (the good person speaking well). Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2001) argue “the educational value of forensics has been supplanted by the desire to win” (p. 106). While we would disagree with this position and contend that competition is the assessment tool by which we measure the effectiveness of the educational experience our students receive, we also acknowledge that competition can, and has, lead to unethical behavior. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2001) also remind us that “we have ‘nested’ our educational laboratory in a competitive setting” (p. 107) and warn us that while competition can bring out the best in performances it can also lead to ethical violations especially when competition is seen as the end and not the means. Public forums, such as the audience debate forums and showcases we offer to our

student body, have no real competitive component to them. They are for educational purposes alone. While there is a ballot and someone “wins” that is more to help the audience understand what makes one performance or argument better than another. Our students place little stock in the results (especially since we know the ADS usually wins the Forensics Showcase and the conservative position usually wins the ADFs). While competition is not important in the activities, learning is very important. We talked to our forensics students about adapting to a new audience, a new physical environment, how nonverbal communication changes with the size of an audience, how your rate of speech is influenced by an audience the size, and how a larger audience must be given time and opportunity to react to humor or they will not react to it at all. This is the substance of the learning that takes place for forensics students through our service-learning projects. That learning may subsequently help us in competition, but it is not the driving force behind our service-learning projects.

#### Implementation of an ADF

Hopefully by this point we have made a strong enough argument that you see the benefits of a service-learning project such as our ADF and/or forensic showcases. What follows is advice that we would offer to get the most out of this type of on-campus service-learning project and some of the formats we have used.

#### Logistics and Pragmatics

Because of the way our basic communication course is structured, and to maintain continuity across sections while still allowing for individualized instructional preferences, our department certain requirements that must be met in all sections. This brings continuity while allowing autonomy. One of the universal requirements is that students attend two on-campus qualifying public performances which include 1) the

Audience Debate Forums, 2) the Forensic Showcase, or 3) the Basic Course Showcase. In fairness to students and their time, we keep each of these public performances to one hour.

For each of the ADFs and for the Forensic Showcase we print a simple ballot with the forensics students' names and topics/positions/events on them. For the ADFs we ask the audience to circle the team/side they believe won the debate and list a couple of reasons or arguments that most influenced their decision. For the Forensics Showcase we just ask students to circle their favorite (here is a hint, it is usually the ADS). The ballots also have a blank for the student's name, their instructor's name and the section number so that ballots can be quickly sorted and returned to instructors (for those who require it or give extra credit for it). We stop handing out ballots shortly after the first speaker begins and we only allow each student to hand in one ballot as they leave (they cannot hand in a ballot for a friend who may or may not have attended). Before we leave we determine the winner and sort the ballots by instructor and they are in faculty mailboxes in the morning.

#### Audience Debate Forum Formats

While the style of debate presented in our ADFs to the student audience varies, the underlying breakdown of the ADF consists of two simple sections: team member presentations and student audience discussions. The first part of the ADF consists of members of the forensics team presenting arguments for and against a previously selected topic. This presentation allows for an educated start to the basic concepts of the issue being debated and helps guide the second part of the ADF, the student audience discussion. The student audience discussion receives the largest allocation of time during the ADF. The student discussion section allows for individual students to present

their ideas and thoughts on the topic being debated. Through the student discussion section we are best able to see the service-learning aspect of ADFs come to fruition.

When planning the ADFs, multiple aspects are considered to maximize our student audience's learning and participation. The three biggest areas of concern for running an effective ADF are: topic selection, format, and student audience preparation. These three areas are important for a successful ADF that engages both the members of the forensics team presenting the arguments and students participating in the open-discussion section of the ADF.

### Topoi

Topic selection can be a very complicated issue for the ADF. Finding a good topic is generally our most important factor in developing an effective ADF. Because of this, we take several factors into account when choosing a topic for the ADF. First, the topic will almost always focus on a current event issue in the media, something for which the students probably already have some information. Second, we try to find a topic that has some direct affect on the student body. This can be complicated and the forensics students presenting the arguments need to explicitly show the links to how Miami University students could be affected. Third, we try to find a topic that has some local zest. If we can link the topic to a local event or issue on campus we usually are assured of a greater student attendance at the ADF and that students will be more likely to voice an opinion on the issue. These factors, however, do not guarantee a solid and participatory ADF. The last part of topic selection focuses on how we can get a separation of views so we have student audience comments both for and against the issue. Knowing the basic makeup of the student body can make topic selection much easier. For example, Miami University has a strong politically conservative presence on

campus as well as a strong Greek life. We use information like this when creating the topic resolution. By crafting the resolution to focus toward a prominent group on campus we can usually increase student audience discussion. We must be sure however that the topic resolution does not appear to be “attacking” any group. Topic resolutions that are too biased in either direction have led to student discussions in which name-calling between groups occurs. Here are some of our sample resolutions we either used for recent ADFs (the Tea Party resolutions were used in different semesters).

1. The political legitimacy of the Tea Party makes its use of violent rhetoric inappropriate.
2. Miami University should change their Fall scheduling to afford more travel time over Thanksgiving weekend. {This was used when the university was talking about getting rid of fall break and what they should do with those days instead.}
3. The local police department PD should not use the Miami University bus system as a tool to catch students for underage consumption. {This was used when the local PD were riding the buses to cite students leaving the bars.}
4. This house believes the Tea Party Movement is good for American politics.
5. Miami University needs to enforce stronger guidelines on Greek Life. [This was used after multiple Greek organizations did significant damage to multiple off-campus banquet facilities including one of historical importance and brought negative national publicity to the university .

#### Audience Debate Forum Formats

The ADFs typically follows a simple format. We start with a brief introduction from the emcee of the event informing the student audience how the ADF will run, how

to get credit from for being there, and then telling them what will be expected of them during the time period. After the introduction the forensics students debate begins with some constructive arguments both for and against the topic to allow for ideas to begin shaping the student debate section. The floor is then opened for comments from the audience. We try to rotate comments between pro and con to make sure that there is a constant discussion. After the open student audience debate we bring the ADF back to the forensics students for closing arguments. After the closing arguments students are given ballots and instructed to vote for the side they felt “won” the debate based on the arguments made in the debate, not based on what they believed coming into the debate. They are also asked to write down the two or three arguments or comments that most influenced their decision. These are the basic parts to the ADF. The forensics student portion varies with what we choose to demonstrate for the student audience (building arguments, refuting arguments, identifying fallacies, source credibility, delivery, etc.).

The formats of the forensic student debate section typical follow a very basic debate style. We generally use one of three formats which are outlined below. Ideally, we have two debaters for each side of the argument, one to provide the constructive argument and the other to provide the rebuttal argument. In their “teams” the students are responsible for doing the research to provide a well-rounded and educated debate.

<b>2 x 2 Normal ADF</b>	<b>2 x 2 “Parli” ADF</b>	<b>1 x 1 Normal ADF</b>
<b>Format</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Format</b>
Opening Introduction	Intro/Topic Release	Opening Introduction
5 Mins	5 Mins	5 Mins
Pro Constructive	Audience Debate	Pro Constructive
7 Mins	10 Mins	7 Mins
Con Constructive	Pro Constructive	Con Constructive
7 Mins	7 Mins	7 Mins
Audience Debate	Con Constructive	Audience Debate
10 Mins	7 Mins	15 Mins
Con Rebuttal	Audience Reflection	Con Rebuttal
5 Mins	5 Mins	5 Mins
Pro Rebuttal	Con Rebuttal	Pro Rebuttal
5 Mins	5 Mins	5 Mins
Audience Reflection	Pro Rebuttal	Thank you/Voting
5 Mins	5 Mins	5 Mins
Thank you/Voting	Thank you/Voting	

We do not expect rigorous research but we do expect both teams to have a good sense of the issues surrounding the topic. At the ADF the debaters present in tournament attire and conduct themselves as if the ADF was a judged debate. One debater from the affirming team will take the first speech which is outlined beforehand. The other team will then be responsible for creating a negative constructive speech addressing issues brought up by the affirmative team as well as their own independent argumentation.

Then we break for audience participation and end with both teams presenting a rebuttal speech based on both the information gathered from the other team as well as comments brought forth by the audience.

When presenting the information for each side of the topic the teams present a persuasive case without using a litany of debate jargon. While we are trying to show the students attending the ADF what the Debate Team does, we are not focused on the debating it is more about the argumentation. So our students don't run kritiks. Rather than saying something is a T-argument we say that the argument isn't pertinent to the debate (and we try to make sure we are always staying on topic). In general we avoid debate jargon so that we can better engage the audience. We find that most audiences are not interested in debates about debating but would much rather the debaters focused on the issue at hand (which we have also found to be true of lay judges).

Although we try to use two teams of two debaters this has not always been the case. Sometimes the logistics of the ADF and the availability of our students (who are often involved in several organizations on campus) force us into using a limited number of debaters. We have run a few ADFs using a single debater on each side of the topic (more of a Lincoln-Douglas format). While this adds more responsibility to each debater we allow the rest of the forensics team to help with research so a lone debater does not get bogged down in research.

Most recently we have decided to run the ADFs as more of a Parliamentary style debate. We released the topic to the debaters after the audience had been given their instructions and then used a truncated amount of time for the audience to give suggestions as to how they would construct the debate, then allowed the debate team to give their constructive, followed by a brief audience discussion, and then ending with

the debate team’s rebuttal speeches. All of these format modifications have led to educational ADF’s that the student body has enjoyed.

Forensic Showcase Formats

The forensics showcases have always been the most popular of the on-campus performances students can attend. This could be because it is one of the last two opportunities student shave to attend the public performances or it could be because it most closely resembles the kind of public speaking activities that are done in the basic course or it might be because some instructors have been known to tell students that it is the most enjoyable of the presentations. Whatever the reason, the forensic showcase routinely draws and audience of 300 or more. The format for the showcase is fairly simple with a few variations.

2 min Coach Welcome and Introduction	2 min Coach Welcome and Introduction
10 min Public Speaking Event	2-3 min Audience picking Extemp
1 min Transition and Introduction	Question
10 min Oral Interpretation Event	10 min Public Speaking Event
1 min Transition and Introduction	1 min Transition and Introduction
9 min Impromptu (topic selection & spkg)	10 min Oral Interpretation Event
1 min Transition and Introduction	1 min Transition and Introduction
10 min Oral Interpretation Event	10 min Oral Interpretation Event
1 min Transition and Introduction	1 min Transition and Introduction
	7 min Extemporaneous Speech

10 min Public Speaking Event (usually ADS)	1 min Transition and Introduction
2-3 min Thank you and ballot collection	10 min Public Speaking Event (usually ADS)
	2-3 min Thank you and ballot collection

As a rule of thumb we try to offer two public speaking performances, two oral interpretation performances and one limited preparation event and we break them up when possible. We have been surprised at how many of our basic course students enjoy Communication Analysis/Rhetorical Criticism and oral interp performances but it is important that the students understand what the event is going into it. With just a brief introduction and overview of what the event is (and letting them know it is okay to laugh) they seem to get much more out of it.

With the ADFs, we need to prepare the audiences, with the Forensic Showcase we find we need to prepare our students. We remind our ADS students that jokes about extempers will not go over and they change those to jokes about something currently happening on campus, a campus idiosyncrasy or legend or our general education requirements. These link better to the immediate audience and are usually well received. We select our oral interp events carefully as well. We have a fairly conservative campus so we try to pick literature that is edgy without being offensive to a conservative crowd.

With the extemporaneous and impromptu speeches basic course students sometimes don't believe that our students just received the question or quotation. You must remember, to the average student being able to write a researched seven minute speech that is delivered fluently or being able to develop a well organized five minute

speech in under two minutes is akin to magic. So we let the audience develop the prompts while the forensics students are out of the room. If we are having someone do extemp we start by asking them to identify a current political or economic issue (sometimes non-performing forensics students are “starters” for this discussion but that too can be dangerous). Then we pick one prompt that the audience likes and develop a question (if that goes quickly we might give the student a choice of two questions). For impromptu we do a similar thing but we might suggest students offer song lyrics or their favorite cartoon character line or advertising slogan as the quotation. Then the speaker is given the prompt and start preparing. Extempers leave the room to prepare while we go through three performances. Impromptu speakers prepare in front of the audience.

### Benefits

Perhaps the most important aspect of ensuring strong student participation in the Audience Debate Forum is preparing the student audience. As discussed earlier most college students have little awareness of current events or social issues. The week of the ADF, after we have selected a topic, we send an email to all the teachers whose classes attend the ADF. This email contains the resolution being discussed as well as some links to stories profiling the topic. The teachers are then asked to pass those links along to their students and take a few minutes in their class before the ADF to discuss the topic with their students in a small classroom setting. This helps the students gain a sense of familiarity with the topic so when the ADF begins; they already have a base of information about the topic and have thought through their opinions and positions. We have found this approach greatly increases the student audience participation and sharing of ideas. Also, while not required, most teachers will have a follow up discussion with their classes as to how the ADF went and what the students thought

were the strongest arguments. Usually, if some of the comments stand out to the teacher, good or bad, they will let the forensics team know and we use these comments to enhance the student's experience at future ADFs.

### Engaging the Audience

The ADFs require audience participation to be a truly effective service-learning experience. But sometimes we find that students are too timid to stand and voice their opinions in a large group (at least initially) and we do not have a lot of time to waste on dead air. To help combat this sense of shyness we often plant "starters" in the crowd. These are students from the forensics team that have some basic knowledge about the topic and know how to make a reasoned argument. These students will, if necessary, get the audience discussion started if the other students are reticent to engage in open discussion at the onset. These "starters" are also used to direct discussion back to the topic if the student discussion begins to shift into another topic. These "starter" students however, should be reminded that they should not control or dominate the audience discussion. We are trying to encourage the open flow of ideas from the audience and a "starter" who tries to control the room can actually hinder such discussion. "Starter" students are invaluable when discussion starts slow or starts to get away from the original topic as they allow the discussion to be refocused without the emcee having to step in and take control.

### Reflection

Because we live busy lives it is easy to finish an on-campus public performance like an ADF or a showcase, close the doors on it and move on to the next task to be tackled. But that denies everyone involved what is perhaps the most important aspect of service-learning: Reflection (Dubinsky, 2006; Gibson, Kostecki & Lucas, 2001; Hinck &

Hinck, 1998; McEachern, 2006). McEachern (2006) claims, “Reflection is, by definition, a critical part of any service-learning class; without it, the course merely has a community service component” (p. 312) and goes on to add that reflection plays “an important role in making the experience meaningful” (p. 312). Dubinsky (2006) goes so far as to state that “Service-learning pedagogy rests on a stool of three legs: service, learning, and reflection” (p. 306).

For on-campus service-learning projects like Audience Debate Forums and Forensics Showcases, there are three separate groups that require reflection: Basic course students, forensics students and forensics coaches. Because each of these groups learn something different from the experience it best if these reflections occur separately. We encourage basic course instructors to spend a few minutes at the beginning of the next class talking with their students about what they thought of what they saw. We let the instructors know who won the debate or showcase and if there were any themes in the reasons students gave on ballots. The instructors often talk to students about what was most appealing about the arguments that swayed them. They will talk about the use of ethos, pathos and logos or transitional movements or even just basic organization issues. Five minutes of helping students realize what they saw and what swayed them can be very enlightening for the entire group.

Forensics students also benefit from the experience but often do not realize what they experienced until you orally process the experience with them. In our regular weekly meetings following an ADF or Forensics Showcase we add a “what did we learn” section to our agenda (something we also do with national caliber tournaments and nationals). We discuss, as a group, how the room, size of the audience, audience reaction and other factors influenced the performances and what that means for us in

terms of adaptation at the next national tournament. This period of reflection takes the performances from being just another performance to a teachable moment. Our debaters realized that logic, while a favorite among debate coaches, is not always the strongest motivator for a lay audience and that it is the combination of pathos and logos that seems to get the lay audience's vote. Since Parliamentary Debate encourages lay audiences, that is information that is very helpful because those are also the kinds of observations that lay judges are not always self-aware enough to write on ballots.

#### After Thoughts

The idea of the public forum, town hall meeting, civic-minded organization discussion, even city council meetings are all played out as forums for public discourse, deliberation and debate. Our Audience Debate Forums allow for exactly that; public discourse, deliberation and debate about social issues relevant to the audience with speakers from a peer group. While we could easily have sent students to a local city council meeting and ask them to participate, that kind of experiential learning would have been forced and consequently fake. Student-led, student-oriented discussion of relevant social issues provides an authentic experience for public discourse and provides a service to the university community by bringing both sides of these issues to light.

As we teach students in class about research and "ways of knowing" too often we focus on newspapers, magazines, and websites that provide us sources comprised primarily of statistics and examples and random dates and names. Most of our students have never experienced literature as a "way of knowing" or a form of evidence in an argument. These unique on-campus performances, with proper preparation and reflection, can provide an experience for students on and off our teams to become better, more well-rounded citizen orators.

## References

- Burnett, A., Brand, J., & Meister, M (2001). Forensics education? How the structure and discourse of forensics promotes competition. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 38, 106-114. Retrieved from [http://www.americanforensics.org/AA/aa\\_info.html](http://www.americanforensics.org/AA/aa_info.html)
- Dubinsky, J. (2006). The role of reflection in service learning. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69(3), 306-311. doi:10.1177/108056990606900308
- Gibson, M. K., KostECKI, E. M., & Lucas, M. K. (2001). Instituting principles of best practice for in the communication curriculum. *Southern Communication Journal*, 66(3), 187-200. doi:10.1080/10417940109373198
- Hart, P. D. (2008). How should colleges assess and improve student learning? A survey of employers conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2008\\_Business\\_Leader\\_Poll.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2008_Business_Leader_Poll.pdf)
- Hinck, E. A. & Hinck, S. S. (1998). Service learning and forensics. *National Forensics Journal*, 16(1), 1-26. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforensics.org/national-forensic-journal>
- Judge, T. M. (2006). Service learning on campus. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69(2), 189-192. doi:10.1177/108056990606900208
- Katula, R. A., & Threnhauser, E. (1999). Experiential education in the undergraduate curriculum. *Communication Education*, 48(3), 238-255.  
doi:10.1080/03634529909379172
- Klofstad, C. A. (2010). The lasting effect of civic talk on civic participation: Evidence from a panel study. *Social Forces*, 88(5), 2353-2375. Retrieved from  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sof/>

- McEachern, R. M. (2006). Incorporating reflection into business communication service-learning courses. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69(3), 312-316.  
doi:10.1177/108056990606900309
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. (2011). What is service-learning? Retrieved from <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-is-service-learning>
- Parson, D.W. (Ed.). (1984). *American forensics in perspective: Papers from the Second National Conference on Forensics*. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.
- Sellnow, D. D. (1994). Justifying forensics programs to administrators: An experiential education opportunity. *National Forensic Journal*, 11(2), 1-14. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforensics.org/national-forensic-journal>.

## **Engaging Forensic Students in Service-learning and Reflection:**

### **Integrating Academic Work and Community Service**

Lee R. Wigert

Hastings College

#### Abstract

The current study examined the influence of service learning on academic performance, civic responsibility, connecting academics to the real world, and on motivation. It was determined that guided reflection on the service learning experience was the key factor in change. Participants taking a Health Psychology class and a Field Work Practicum class were required to participate in a service learning opportunity. The Health Psychology students had to perform a minimum of ten hours of service learning, while the Field Work students had to perform a minimum of 120 hours of service learning. Findings indicated that the more hours spent in service learning, 1) the greater was the enhancement of intellectual skills and academic performance, 2) there was an increased commitment to civic responsibility, and 3) motivation moved from extrinsic to intrinsic. Thus, the more hours spent in service learning, the greater was academic and personal growth. The benefits of service learning are especially relevant to forensic teams.

Engaging Forensic Students in Service-learning and Reflection:  
Integrating Academic Work and Community Service

The need to establish connections between service-learning and forensic programs has been raised by Hinck and Hinck (1998). Their concern was to strengthen educational experiences and goals by involving forensic students in community service projects. An important challenge to directors of forensic programs was to develop a new paradigm of service to the community. Hinck and Hinck proposed that forensic directors “establish the connections between service-learning and forensic programs in hope that forensic directors can utilize service-learning activities as a way to advance the education of students, meet department and university goals in innovative ways, and enhance the image of the forensics program, department, and university within the community” (p. 1). Service-learning is more than volunteerism: it is a directed program of civic involvement connected with academic learning through structured reflection.

Directors of forensic programs have responded to the challenge of Hinck and Hinck (1998) to utilize service learning in motivating forensic students to be active citizens in a democratic community, to promote educational growth on the part of the student, to engage students in reflective learning, and to enhance professional and personal roles and rewards for forensic directors (Howard, 2001).

Since the late 1990s, service-learning has spread like wildfire across the academic community. Service-learning has been integrated with educational objectives to enhance the academic learning in the classroom, to make connections between the classroom and the real world, to promote intellectual and personal growth, and to teach

students the need for and value of civic service and community responsibility (Chesbrough, 2010).

The National Service-learning Clearinghouse (2011) defines service-learning as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (p. 1). A more specific definition of service-learning is a “course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility” (Bringle, Hatcher, & McIntosh, 2006, p. 1).

Individual reflection is what separates service-learning from other volunteer work. Following Socrates’ belief that an unexamined life is not worth living, service-learning requires guided personal reflection on the experience of helping others (Ash & Clayton, 2004). It is this reflection that provides the vital learning when one provides service to others (Eyler, 2001). Service-learning requires intentional reflection to enhance the learning experience (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997), strengthen the relationship between service and commitment (Chesbrough, 2010), stimulate academic curiosity and foster personal growth (Hinck & Brandell, 1999).

Ash and Clayton (2004; 2009) have argued for the importance of rigorous, *structured* reflection. They found that a rigorous reflection framework has three phases: (1) *Description* (objectively) of an experience, (2) *Analysis* in accordance with relevant categories of learning, and (3) *Articulation* of learning outcomes. Further, meaningful structured reflection should allow the student to “integrate the understanding gained

into one's experience in order to enable better choices in the future as well as enhance one's overall effectiveness" (Rogers, 2001, p. 41). Kiser (1998) proposed that areas of effectiveness can be organized in three categories: academic, personal, and civic.

Structured reflection is a vital pedagogical skill for forensic students (Althaus, 1997; Ash & Clayton, 2004). Service-learning and reflection needs to be incorporated into forensic activities: "Service-learning activities can challenge students to develop new understanding of self, community, and the value of their disciplinary knowledge since such activities call on students to apply their knowledge of speech communication in real world contexts" (Hinck & Hinck, 1998). Critical reflection *generates* learning, *deepens* learning and *documents* learning (Ash & Clayton). This process does not occur automatically; rather, is must be designed. Covey (1989) argues that any process must begin with the end in mind. This is true of critical reflection.

Service-learning benefits the student—forensic, as well as others—by changing the focus from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation (Crews, 1999), connecting relevancy of academics to the real world (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997), expanding the learning environment (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999), engaging students in purposeful learning (Howard, 2001), increasing retention of academic skills (Eyler, 2001), and by helping to foster civic responsibility (Degelman, 2000; Rhoads, 1997).

Service-learning helps forensic students engage in the problems, issues and opportunities of life in a meaningful way. It provides a means by which one can discover one's passion, articulate positions, and argue for best practices. In doing so, the forensic student can find meaning, purpose, value, and fulfillment while strengthening the community and serving others. Service-learning is a partnership between the academic community and public agencies, non-profits and community based

organizations (Guest & Schneider, 2003). This partnership is more effectively created and carried out when the forensic coach is a “seasoned practitioner with experience in both community and academic matters” (Sigmon, 1996, p. 37).

The primary pedagogical components regarding the benefits of service-learning forensic educators should focus on include: training to the specific experience (Howard, 2001), the experience itself (Eyler, 2001), and opportunities for critical reflection during and/or following the experience (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Bringle, & Hatcher, 1999).

Clayton (2009) notes essential elements of the pedagogy include integration of learning and service goals, academic learning goals supplemented by specific civic learning goals, an organized, structured process, reciprocity between the students and the community, and structured reflection.

#### Overview of the Current Study

Service-learning, done well, can enhance academic learning and have significant impact on the community. Service-learning courses should adhere to the same academic standards of quality as traditional courses. Faculty members need to guide the work in the community and the reflection process, so that the work students perform is needed, effective, and increases the learning of the course content. Although the current study used psychology students, it is highly relevant to forensic students. Social psychology is the scientific study of how people think about, relate to, and influence one another (Myers, 2010). The research findings in psychology are inherently important to forensic students. Debaters certainly are involved in thinking about, relating to, and influencing others.

The purpose of the current study was to better understand the learning outcomes facilitated by a service-learning requirement in college classes. This was designed as a

classroom project that in the future could be modified and used by forensics coaches to fit the needs of their teams. The primary focus was to determine whether a well-designed service-learning requirement would result in positive effects for the students. The primary focus was on critical thinking as it is a key characteristic of critical reflection (Ash and Clayton, 2009).

### Hypotheses

Requiring a service-learning component in an academic class will result in positive outcomes for the student in terms of academic learning, personal growth, increased motivation and a greater commitment to civic responsibility. Previous research has also found that guided reflection is the critical component in connecting academic learning with service-learning.

Hypothesis 1. Service-learning will help students apply academic concepts to the real world.

Hypothesis 2. Structured, guided reflection will help students to examine their experiences critically and articulate specific learning outcomes.

Hypothesis 3. Reflection on the service project will enhance the quality of their academic learning, and of their service.

Hypothesis 4. Students will self-report an increased commitment to civic responsibility as a result of service-learning.

Hypothesis 5. Students will gain a broader appreciation of the discipline, resulting in motivation changing from extrinsic to intrinsic.

Hypothesis 6. The greater number of hours spent in service-learning will correlate with increased academic learning.

## Method

### Participants

The study consisted of 17 male and 13 female undergraduate taking a psychology class at a small liberal arts school. Twenty-three of the participants were enrolled in Health Psychology; seven were taking Field Work Practicum. The average age of the participants was 20.9 years-of-age ( $SD=1.10$ ). Within the sample, 80% of the participants were European American/White, 10% were African American/Black and 10% were Hispanic or Latino.

### Procedure

All 23 participants in the Health Psychology class were required to do a minimum of 10 hours of service-learning, while the seven Field Work Practicum participants had to put in a total of 120 hours of service-learning. The participants were required to write a total of 60 pages of reflective writing on the service-learning project. This included weekly reaction and reflection papers on the assigned chapter, a wellness journal, and a reflection paper on their service-learning experience. All students were required to reflect on how the service experience related to their academic coursework.

### *Health Psychology Placements*

The Health Psychology students were to select a placement from a list of approved service-learning opportunities. The service-learning placement opportunities were pre-arranged by the instructor to coordinate with class material and subject matter. One of the weekly assignments in the Health Psychology class was to keep a wellness journal. Topics included physical, emotional, social, spiritual, occupational, environmental, intellectual and relational wellness.

The primary service-learning placement was the “Neighborhood After School Program” at Grace United Methodist Church in Hastings, Nebraska. The professor secured a grant for the project through the Center for Vocation, Faith and Service to provide a lap top computer, educational materials, recreational materials, and resources for the program.

Those participants who worked on this project developed curriculum and staffed the Neighborhood After School Program. The after school program included treats, open gym time in the Family Life Center to play basketball, volleyball, and structured recreational games, board games and other activities. The lessons were prepared and presented by the students. Lessons included subjects on health, wellness, relationships, getting along with parents, exercise, diet, and spiritual growth. Four students from the Health Psychology class spent over 30 hours each working with the after school program.

Other service-learning placements for the participants in the Health Psychology class included volunteering as coaches for youth programs (physical wellness); the youth program at an Evangelical Free church (spiritual, social and relational wellness);

support staff at Perkins Pavilion (skilled nursing facility) of Good Samaritan Village (a full service retirement home); the Kids Against Hunger program sponsored by the local Noon Kiwanis Club (nutritional wellness); and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and relational wellness).

### *Field Work Placements*

The seven students in the Field Work class worked in the following placements: one with a neurologist at her office, with hospital privileges; the second with a Speech Pathologist in private practice; the third with a School Psychologist in the Hastings Public Schools; the fourth with a chiropractor; the fifth and sixth at The Bridge, a residential living facility for women recovering from alcohol and drug addictions; and the seventh student was placed at the Crossroads Rescue Mission.

### *Journals*

All of the participants in the Health Psychology and Field Work Practicum classes were required to write a weekly journal on their service-learning experiences, and write guided reflection essays on the meaning of their volunteer work, and how it connected to their academic learning. Each participant was expected to relate the service-learning experience to specific ideas, principles or concepts in the text book or lecture notes.

### *Assessment and Content Analysis*

The DEAL Model for Critical Reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2004, 2009) was employed to assess the guided reflection pieces and learning outcomes. This model of assessment was designed for *summative purposes* and was used to measure and document outcomes. Additionally, the assessment was utilized for *formative purposes* throughout the semester to improve the guided reflections and to help students make

better connections between service and academic learning. Ash and Clayton report that formative assessment is key in designing both teaching and learning. Formative assessment aids in checking the reflection process against the learning outcomes generated. The DEAL model of content analysis and assessment consisted of the following three sequential steps:

1. Description of experiences in an objective and detailed manner.
2. Examination of those experiences in light of specific learning goals and objectives.
3. Articulation of Learning, including goals for future action that can be taken forward into the next experience for improved practice and further refinement of learning.

Ash and Clayton (2009) describe in detail how prompts for learning goals can be utilized to enhance student learning. They have designed a comprehensive system using Bloom's Taxonomy for vary levels of evaluation.

### Results

All students benefited by participating in the service-learning requirement. For the most part, the intensity of the learning was directly related to the depth of the guided reflection. Content analysis showed the participants who contributed more hours to their service-learning placement, and wrote more in-depth reflections on their experiences, gained more from the service-learning requirement. This is consistent with Exley's (1998) findings showing the more quality hours spent in service-learning and reflection, the greater the growth from the experience.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that service-learning would help students apply academic concepts to the real world. Content analysis and self-report showed that the service-

learning experience helped each student apply academic concepts to the real world. A student working at the Crossroads rescue mission wrote: “I am very pleased with my placement at the city mission and plan to volunteer there throughout the rest of my time in college. I am currently leading a women’s group that the program director has made mandatory for all of the women living at the shelter. I will use my experiences at the city mission to navigate through the literature that explores female homelessness and propose an area of further research.”

Hypothesis 2 predicted that guided reflection would help students to examine their experiences critically and articulate specific learning outcomes. Each student reported that guided reflection helped them to examine their service-learning more critically. Content analysis revealed that guided reflection helped students examine their experiences critically, and articulate specific outcomes. One of the more noticeable outcomes from the service-learning requirement for the Health Psychology class was the depth and breadth of the reflections in the wellness journals, diaries, and weekly papers. Content analysis revealed the students in the Spring 2011 Health Psychology class (as compared to the Fall 2010 class in which there was no service-learning component) wrote more insightful papers, engaged in more specific reflections on the academic papers, and made more meaningful connections between their academic work and career goals. Obviously, they learned more about civic responsibility and community service.

The service-learning experience for the seven field work students enabled them to pursue their passions and to articulate more specifically their professional goals. After working with professionals in their fields of interest, all seven of the students decided on their professional careers and goals.

The guided reflection particularly helped the student working with the neurologist. She was especially able to examine her experiences critically, as well as articulate specific learning outcomes. She reflected in her journal: “My time spent with the neurologist completely changed my academic focus. I was just taking classes, hoping to enter some type of health profession after graduation. My service-learning experience was awesome. I had an epiphany. Lights turned on in my head. A specific purpose came to mind. Now, my academic learning is geared towards becoming a neurologist. As I read the text, I do so with the practical world and real life experiences in mind. Now I study to prepare for the specific work I want to do. I am so looking forward to next summer and doing a service-learning project in a neurological lab. My life and career focus has dramatically changed.”

The real-world experiences for this student provided a new, enlightened perspective on the importance of academic work. All six hypotheses were supported in this student’s experience with service-learning.

Service-learning for forensic students will strengthen educational experiences and goals by involving them in community service projects. Service-learning activities challenge students to develop a new understanding of self, community, and the value of their disciplinary knowledge. Service-learning activities and reflection call on students to apply their knowledge of speech communication in real world contexts (Hinck & Hinck, 1998).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that reflection on the service project would enhance the quality of their learning, and their service. A content evaluation of the journals, as well as self-reports, and class grades supported the prediction. Ash and Clayton (2009) report that critical reflection oriented toward well-articulated learning outcomes is key to

generating, deepening, and documenting student learning in applied learning. When the journals of the Fall 2010 class that had no service-learning component were compared with the quality of the journals from the Spring 2011 class that had a service-learning requirement and guided reflection assignments, it was quite obvious that both service-learning and guided reflection enhanced both the quality of learning and of service. This is quite consistent with previous research (Ash and Clayton, 2009; Chesbrough, 2010; Hinck & Hinck, 1998).

Hypothesis 4 predicted students will self-report an increased commitment to civic service as a result of service-learning. Content analysis revealed that the service-learning requirement increased their understanding and awareness of the importance of civic responsibility for all students. This is consistent with previous research (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Bringle, Hatcher & McIntosh, 2006; Hinck & Brandell, 1999; Howard, 2001; Sigmon, 1996). A student working at Crossroads City mission reflected, “Contributors to female homelessness vary, but often include poverty, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse and domestic violence. These are life’s hardships that the women of the city mission have revealed to me. The ability of some to overcome these issues amazes me. Prior to this experience, when I thought of homelessness, I saw a frightening man and stopped thinking about it. I’d never met a homeless woman. Thinking of all the homeless made me feel guilty for all the blessings I had, so I didn’t (think of homeless people). I was ignorant and frightened, which is why I am so thankful for this experience.”

This provides an excellent example of how a forensics student might use a service-learning placement to gain a greater understanding on an issue, and develop a passion to commit oneself to civic engagement and social change.

A very successful service-learning placement for Field Work students has been at The Bridge. Throughout the last several years, students placed at The Bridge were helped with applying academic concepts to the real world and developed an increased commitment to civic responsibility as a result of their experience. One student wrote of her experience at The Bridge: “When I first heard about my opportunity to go and do my observations and service-learning at The Bridge, I was nervous and skeptical. I was nervous because I had never really been around people who had done drugs or abused alcohol before, and so I didn’t have too much empathy for them since I just believed they were paying for their poor decisions. Fortunately, after being at The Bridge for almost three months, listening to the women’s stories, talking with them twice a week, and reading materials concerning addictions, I have been able to feel for these women, and other addicts, and now have compassion towards them that was not there at the beginning. Personally, I have been able to gain insight into the world of addictions through the best source there is: the women at The Bridge who have gone through and are going through these destructive patterns.”

Another student performing service-learning at The Bridge scored quite high on the DEAL Model for Critical Reflection. She described her experience, examined the experiences in light of specific goals, and articulated her goals for future action. She reflected: “My lack of understanding at the beginning for these women has slowly transformed from an outlook of annoyance to one of admiration. It was a shock to me to see how much I have in common with these women, in the sense of likes and dislikes, the wanting to succeed during hardships and the need for emotional support when the going gets tough. I have seen growth and change in the women, and the excitement they

have even in their smallest accomplishments...” This student is going to graduate school in Social Work this fall, with a passion to help addicted women transform their lives.

Imagine the power of a speech delivered by a forensic student experiencing this transforming educational and personal growth experience. Reflection on the experience helped the student internalize it, and make deeper and more meaningful connections to the academic material on addictions and recovery. Such an experience transformed an academic subject matter into a real-life opportunity for learning, personal growth, and commitment to a cause.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that students would gain a broader appreciation of and motivation for the discipline. Content analysis generally supported this prediction in that most students exhibited a greater motivation to learn the material because they had to reflect on the service-learning experience and connect it to the academic learning portion of the class. Several students reflected in their journals that the service-learning experience changed their motivation to study from an extrinsic to an intrinsic motivation. Learning became more meaningful and fun. The content analyses revealed that the more effort, dedication, and commitment put into the service-learning project and the reflection papers, the greater was the development of compassion and empathy, and that extrinsic motivation became more intrinsically oriented.

One student who helped create the curriculum for the Neighborhood After School program reflected in her journal: “I found that service-learning in itself was very rewarding, and intrinsically motivating. Just being able to help out and to be a part of sculpting young minds was a very rewarding and meaningful learning experience. One part I really found interesting was seeing the different stages in the youth with whom I was working. I had just taken Introduction to Psychology the semester before this

experience, and to see some of the learning theories at work enhanced my understanding of the academic work, increased my commitment to community service, and fostered personal growth.”

Hypothesis 6 predicted the greater number of hours spent in service-learning would correlate with increased academic learning. An examination of the final class grades revealed the more hours spent in service-learning combined with increased quality of guided reflection correlated with increased academic learning. Comparisons between the Fall 2010 Health Psychology class (no service-learning requirement) and the Spring 2011 Health Psychology class revealed the average course grade in Spring 2011 (92%) was higher than Fall 2010 (86%). Obviously, this result lacks scientific rigor as students were not randomly assigned to the classes. However, the service-learning requirement added a dimension to learning that enhanced academic performance (Howard, 2001), motivated student learning (Chesbrough, 2010), connected relevancy of academics to the real world (Guest & Schneider, 2003; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997), expanded the learning environment (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999), engaged students in purposeful learning (Howard, 2001), increased retention of academic skills (Eyler, 2001), and helped to foster civic responsibility (Degelman, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002).

The seven students in the Field Work Practicum experience benefited most from the service-learning requirement primarily because of the intensity of the experience, and the number of contact hours required. Each student was required to put in 120 hours in their field work placement, and to write daily guided reflections on their experiences. Each of the students integrated their community service with guided reflection to enrich

their learning experience, enhance their academic learning, and become more intimately involved in an area of civic service.

The overall content analyses of the journals, writing assignments and guided reflections revealed that all six hypotheses were supported in the present study. The student who worked with a school psychologist and a guidance counselor for his service-learning requirement (120 hours) in the Field Work Practicum class epitomized the positive effects of service-learning. Content analysis of his guided reflections revealed that all six hypotheses were confirmed in his learning experience. A sample from his journal provides evidence of this. The student reflected on his experience: “Throughout my experience, I have read numerous journal articles related to the field of school psychology. These journal articles helped me gain a better understanding of the field of school psychology in terms of educational and career resources, as well as the current issues in modern school psychology. Being a school counselor or a school psychologist is more than behavior modification, conflict resolution, and testing. Either one of these careers requires a person to become very close with students. Young children often times do not respond to people they do not trust. Trust is a key component of both of these positions. Building healthy relationships with each and every student is the key to developing trust.”

Previous research (Chesbrough, 2010; Hinck & Hinck, 1998) revealed that service-learning and reflection promotes personal growth and development. The DEAL critical reflection analysis documented the growth of the student working in the school system. He articulated his learning, and used it to work on future practice and further refinement of learning. A selection from a journal entry reads: “Developing a trusting relationship with the students can last for years. The school counselor and school

psychologist are people who truly make an impact on the lives of children. Some children often lack the parental support, but these two positions give children a lot of support that often times develops into relationships that last beyond the school years. I not only want to learn the technical aspects of school psychology; I also want to focus on the importance of relationships to growth and learning.”

This student was able to describe his experiences, examine them in light of specific learning, and articulate how he could use this experience for future action. He observed: “I learned that the field of school psychology must be willing to adapt because the current educational system leaves some children in need, with no help at all. There are many children who often fall just short of the spectrum for special education. These children are forced to learn in the same classroom as other children and often times struggle to get by. I’ve learned that the current educational system is standardized. Just like a standardized test, the current education system fails to offer individual learning techniques that some students need.”

This reflection exhibits that the well-designed service-learning project had a very positive effect on the student. Content analysis revealed that: service-learning helped the student to apply academic concepts to real work experiences (Hypothesis 1); guided reflection helped the student to examine his experience critically and to articulate specific learning outcomes (Hypothesis 2); reflection on the service-learning experience both enhanced the students’ quality of academic learning, and the quality of service provided to the students with whom he worked (Hypothesis 3); the student made an increased commitment to civic duty (Hypothesis 4); the student gained a broader appreciation of, and motivation for their discipline (Hypothesis 5); and that the greater

number of hours spent in service-learning increased the overall value of the experience (Hypothesis 6).

This reflection exhibits the psychological learning of how people think about, relate to, and influence one another. Certainly, such psychological insight is invaluable to the forensic student who seeks to understand human behavior and cognition. Service-learning will enable the forensic student to apply academic concepts to the real world, and conversely, apply real world learning to the academic setting. The way of learning will enhance the ability to communicate not only ideas, but experiences in a speech or debate.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore learning outcomes from a service-learning component/requirement of an academic class. Particular focus was on the importance of guided reflection as a tool to learning. One critical aspect in service-learning is reflective teaching strategies (Exley, 1998). Silcox (1995) stated that reflective teaching strategies include creative projects, journal writings, directed writings, *feelings oriented* oral reflection, and *cognitive teaching* oral reflection. The present Health Psychology class was designed based on the foundation of these particular reflective teaching strategies.

The reflection journals were enhanced by employing what Ash and Clayton (2004) believed to be the most critical element in service-learning: *guided* reflection. Guided reflection is essential for students to “examine their experiences critically, thus enhancing both the quality of their service and learning” (p. 138). Guided reflection is central to service-learning. In fact, guided reflection is the critical piece that differentiates service-learning from volunteerism. It is this pedagogical refinement that

Hinck and Hinck (1998) suggested forensic directors need to make to transform the connection between serving and learning. As stated by Ash and Clayton (2004), “the ultimate goal of reflection in service-learning is to help students explore and express what they are learning through their service experiences so that both the service and the learning are enhanced” (p. 139).

The Health Psychology students were required to do weekly directed writings, daily reflective journal writings and wellness journals, and to engage in both feelings oriented and cognitive oral reflections. Students were given weekly feedback on all of their writing assignments, and personal reflections were performed both orally in the class sessions, and weekly in the written assignments. Content analysis was employed to assess and evaluate the depth and breadth of the reflections.

As predicted by Silcox (1995) the reading projects fostered group bonding and leadership; the journal writing fostered personal growth (Chesbrough, 2009); the directed writings provided opportunities for directed learning (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997); the feelings oriented reflections promoted bonding, awareness and sensitivity (Rhoads, 1997); and the cognitive oral reflections fostered leadership, cognitive learning, personal growth and critical thinking (Sigmon, 1996; Silcox, 1995).

Content analysis revealed that the seven students in Field Work Practicum and the four Health Psychology students who spent more than thirty hours each in the “Neighborhood After School Program” showed greater growth in all areas: applying academic concepts to the real world; examining their experiences critically, and articulating specific learning outcomes; enhanced academic learning; and greater intrinsic motivation. Their academic learning was enhanced by the increased number of

hours of service-learning. This is consistent with Exley's (1998) research that showed the more hours spent in service-learning, the greater the growth from the experience.

These results are beneficial to faculty, coaches and directors of forensic programs. The academic value of the service-learning project, a deeper appreciation for the discipline, and the connections developed between the real world and the academic setting were increased substantially due to the greater number of hours engaged in service-learning and guided reflection. Results of previous research and the present findings will help directors of forensics programs develop and structure service-learning projects so that students gain maximum benefit for academic enhancement, commitment to civic responsibility, motivation to internalize learning, make connections between the academic and the real world, and to achieve an enhanced sense of personal values.

The students in the Health Psychology class reflected on the importance of intrinsic motivation as a defining factor in psychological, physical, social, relational, and spiritual health.

This might be explained by the level of intrinsic motivation of these particular students (Crews, 1999) Research (Wigert, 2001) has shown that intrinsically motivated learners—those that believe they are masters of their fate and have a generalized expectancy that their strivings will be successful—develop cognitive problem-solving strategies that bring orderliness to their life. Cognitive consistency and orderliness of events increases life satisfaction (Ellison, 1991).

What is very interesting to note is the role service-learning played in moving extrinsically motivated students to become more intrinsically motivated. In line with previous findings, the service-learning experience, combined with intrinsic motivation, seemed to mediate the effects of intelligence on learning (Guest & Schneider, 2003).

That is, in each of the service-learning situations, the best academic students generally performed at the highest academic level. However, it is particularly interesting to note that in many situations, the average to above average students wrote meaningful, in-depth reflections similar to the best academic students. This lends support to the argument that service-learning enhances and expands the learning environment (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999), engages students in purposeful learning (Howard, 2001), increases retention of academic skills (Eyler, 2001), helps foster civic responsibility (Degelman, 2000), and provides an experiential education that enables one to discover his or her passion, and to engage in the kind of work that brings joy (Buechner, 1993). Service-learning helped many students embark on personal growth, and helped some to discover their passion(s).

The guided reflections lead to the transcending of old realities and the construction of new ones on one's cognitive map of meaning (Potthoff, 1979). Thus, service-learning enhanced and facilitated intrinsic motivation. Shapiro, Schwartz and Astin (1996) concluded that intrinsic motivation enhances learning, life satisfaction, provides for greater social interaction and support, and improves psychological and physical health.

Forensic and debate students can benefit greatly by developing their cognitive problem-solving strategies more completely. Service-learning helps in changing an extrinsic motivation for learning (grades) to a more intrinsic motivation (personal values, internal satisfaction). This was especially true of the student who worked with the neurologist. The service-learning experience provided a new and different motivation (intrinsic) for doing her academic reading, and understanding course content.

The service-learning component of the classes helped students gain more out of their education, achieve higher grades, develop more positive attitudes towards academics, and even higher academic aspirations. This was supported in the present study. Service-learning enhanced academic achievement and “can and does have a positive impact on the psychological, social and development of students who participate” (Hinck & Brandell, 1999, p. 3). This certainly is a desired outcome for all students.

Additionally, the service-learning participants increased discussions of their experiences with each other, and the students received emotional support from other students, and the professor. Forensic students frequently espouse the importance of team-work, bonding, and providing emotional support to each other. Consistent with previous findings (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Lee, 2000), the results of the present study showed that:

- Utilizing service-learning as part of an academic course adds significantly to the benefits associated with community service.
- Service-learning appears to have its strongest effect on the students’ decision to pursue a career in a service field. This was particularly true for the Field Work students.
- The majority of students reported that their service experience “made a difference.”
- The qualitative findings suggest that both students and the faculty develop a deepened sense of civic responsibility and personal effectiveness.
- The power and enrichment of reflection is what decidedly connects the service-learning experience to the academic course material.

Consistent with previous research (Pawar, 2009), the content analysis of the journals revealed several students reported an enhanced experience of individual spirituality, an awareness of workplace spirituality, and a passion for people. Organizational spirituality has been shown to enhance employee performance, satisfaction, and well-being (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Pawar, 2009). Service-learning increased workplace satisfaction because of reflection on the work experience (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Pawar, 2009). The sense of personal values highlighted by workplace spirituality encouraged students to focus on moral and ethical interactions with co-workers (Pawar, 2009).

A future research direction for service-learning and forensics is examine the positive relationship between service learning and increased happiness, performance, satisfaction, psychological capital, and positive attitudes (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Gavin & Mason, 2004). A forensic student engaged in a service-learning placement is more likely to experience these positive outcomes. David Myers (2010) reports that happiness, satisfaction, psychological capital, and a positive attitude makes persons more productive and efficient.

## Conclusions

Service-learning is a pedagogy which integrates service to the community with academic study. The benefits include fostering civic responsibility, increasing retention of academic skills, engaging students in purposeful learning, expanding the learning environment and connecting the relevancy of academics to the real world. More specifically, service-learning will help students apply academic concepts to the real world; guided reflection will help students to examine their experiences critically and articulate specific learning outcomes; students will experience an increased commitment

to civic responsibility; and students will gain a broader appreciation of and motivation for their discipline.

The key ingredient to service-learning is the reflective process. It is important to teach students guided reflection so that it is utilized before, during, and after the service-learning experience. It is very important that the service-learning experience be connected to the learning objectives of the course. The connection between service and learning is facilitated by structured opportunities for guided reflection on, and examination of, their service experience.

Forensic students—students in speech and debate—would benefit greatly from service-learning, as would any college student, because personal reflection allows for the opportunity to develop and demonstrate: a knowledge base, intellectual skills, and interpersonal skills and values. More specifically, service-learning will enable forensic students to develop critical thinking skills, demonstrate effectiveness in communicating orally and in writing, increase their ability to work with others, and achieve group goals. Additionally, the service-learning experience will help forensic students demonstrate the development of self-awareness in interpersonal and intrapersonal domains. Importantly, service-learning, because of the commitment to community service and intentional reflection on the experience, will enable forensic students to demonstrate concern for and action towards civic responsibility and social justice. Certainly, many of the topics of debate in this day and age focus on civic responsibility.

Experiential learning will increase the debater's intrinsic motivation to know, articulate and become more passionate about their subject matter.

Service-learning will facilitate forensic students in intellectual and personal growth, promote living effectively in the global community, and develop characteristics

that encourage creativity, curiosity, change, and responsible citizenship. Service-learning and reflection encourage the acquisition of intellectual skills, problem-solving abilities, and the communication skills necessary to contribute to the well-being of society in general. A well-rounded citizen, a more informed forensic student, and a highly motivated debater will certainly experience more academic achievement and success in debate competition. In addition, their life will be richer.

Furthermore, students in forensics spend a lot of time together, and with their professor/coach. Service-learning will not only strengthen the bonds they establish, it will also improve inter- and intra-personal skills, civic responsibility, and make more real the issues they debate, and the causes they champion. Adding a service-learning component likely will help students to develop a deeper sense of personal effectiveness in speech and debate. In the long run, service-learning is likely to have its strongest effect on students' decisions to become more connected to a career choice.

### References

- Althaus, J. (1997). Service-learning and leadership development: Posing questions not answers. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-learning*, 4, 122-129.
- Ash, S. L., & Clayton, P. H. (2004). The articulated learning: An approach to guided reflection and assessment. *Innovative Higher Education*, 29, 137-154.
- Ash, S. L., & Clayton, P. H. (2009). Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education* . 1, 25-48.
- Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. (1998). How undergraduates are affected by service participation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 3, 251-263.

- Astin, A. W., Vogelgesang, L. J., Ikeda, E. K., & Yee, J. A. (2000). How service-learning affects students. Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Boehm, J. K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). Does happiness promote career success? *Journal of Career Assessment*, 16, 101-116. doi:10.1177/1069072707308140.
- Bringler, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1999). Reflection in service-learning: Making meaning of experience. *Education Horizons*, 77, 179-185.
- Bringler, R. G., Hatcher, J. A., & MacIntosh, R. (2006). Analyzing Morton's typology of service paradigms and integrity. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 13(1), 5-15.
- Chesbrough, R. (2009). Students and service: Who participates and why. *Student Affairs Leader*, 37, 1-4.
- Chesbrough, R. (2010). College students and service: A mixed methods exploration of motivations, choices, and learning outcomes. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Chesbrough, R.D., & Deffenbaugh, D.G. (2010). Engaging men in service: Lessons from Hastings College. In G. Kellom, M. Groth (Eds.). *Engaging college men: Discovering what works and why*. Harriman, TN: Men's Studies Press.
- Crews, R. (1999). Benefits of service-learning. *Communications for a Sustainable Future*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado at Boulder.
- Darling, N., Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, R. (2005). Participation in school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent adjustment [Electronic version]. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 37, 51-57.
- Degelman, C. (2000). Fostering civic responsibility through service-learning. *Service-Learning Network*, 8, 1-18.

- Ellison, C. G. (1991). Religious involvement and subjective well-being. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 2, 21-35.
- Exley, R. (1998). *Service-learning and curricular integration: AACCC Service-learning Resource Guide*, Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges
- Eyler, J. (2001). Creating your reflection map. In M. Canada (Ed.). *Service-learning: Practical advice and models* (pp. 35-43). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass..
- Gavin, J.H., & Mason, R. O. (2004). "The virtuous organization: The value of happiness in the workplace." *Organizational Dynamics* 33, 379–392.
- Greenleaf, R. (1977). *Servant leadership*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Guest, A., & Schneider, B. (2003). Adolescents' extracurricular participation in context: The mediating effects of schools, communities, and identity. *Sociology of Education*, 76, 89-105.
- Hatcher, J. A., & Bringle. (1997). Reflections: Bridging the gap between service and learning. *Journal of College Teaching*, 45, 153-158.
- Hinck, E. A., & Hinck, S.S. (1998). Service-learning and Forensics. *National Forensics Journal*, 16, 1-25.
- Hinck, S. S., & Brandell, M. E., (1999). Service-learning: Facilitating academic learning and character development. *National Association of Secondary Schools Principals*, 8, 16-25.
- Howard, J. (2001). *Service-learning course design workbook*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan OSCL Press.
- Howard, J. (2001). *Three necessary criteria for academic service-learning*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan OSCL Press.

- Jacoby, B. (1996). *Service-learning in higher education: Concepts and practices*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 0787902918.
- Kiser, P. M. (1998). The Integrative processing model: A framework for learning in the field experience. *Human Service Education*, 18, 3-13.
- Krishnakumar, S., & Neck, C. P. (2009) The ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of spirituality in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 17, 153-164.  
doi:10.1108/02683940210423060.
- Marsh, H. W., & Kleitman, S. (2002). Extracurricular activities: The good, the bad, and the nonlinear. *Harvard Education Review*, 72, 464-512,
- Myers, D. G. (2010) *Social Psychology*. 10<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Pawar, B. (2009). Individual spirituality, workplace spirituality and work attitudes: An empirical test of direct and interaction effects. *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*, 30(8), 759-777. doi: 10.110801437730911003911.
- Potthoff, H. (1979). *A whole person in a whole world*. Denver, CO: Illif School of Theology.
- Rhoads, R.A. (1997). *Community service and higher learning: Explorations of the caring self*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Rogers, R. (2001). Reflection in higher education: A concept analysis. *Innovative Higher Education*, 26, 37-57.
- Shapiro, D. H., Schwartz, C. E., & Astin, J. A. (1996). Controlling ourselves, controlling our world: Psychology’s role in understanding positive and negative consequences of seeking and gaining control. *American Psychologist*, 51, 1213-1230.

Sigmon, R. L. (1996). Design considerations: Building relationships between the academy and workplaces in service-learning programs. In R. Sigmon (Ed.), *Journey to Service-learning*, Washington, D. C.: Council of Independent Colleges.

Silcox, H. C. (1995). *Reflection: The key to service-learning*. New York: National Helpers Network.

The National Service-learning Clearinghouse. (2011). What is service-learning. URL <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-is-service-learning>

Wigert, L. R. (2001). An Investigation of the relationships among personality traits, locus of control, religious orientation and life satisfaction: A path analytical study. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.