Sustaining service-learning and maximizing its benefits: The perspectives of community and academic partners

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APHA Annual Meeting
November 10, 2009
Presenter Disclosure

Amanda L. Vogel

(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose
Goals for this Talk

• Introduction to service-learning (SL)

• Describe study of ten-year sustainability and impact of SL in a cohort of health professions schools

• Share selected findings that highlight community and academic perspectives on:
  • Contributors to sustaining SL
  • Benefits of SL
  • Challenges and responses
What is Service-Learning?

- Experiential learning
- Collaborative community-academic partnerships
- Reciprocity
- Balance of service and learning
- Reflective practice
- Immediate goals: student learning, service to community agency
- Long-term goals: capacity building, greater institutional engagement, town-gown relations
HPSISN

• 1995-1998

• National demonstration program for SL in health professions education

• Sub-grants, technical assistance, and professional development to 17 health professions schools/programs

• Goals:
  – Create community-academic partnerships for SL
  – Integrate SL into the curriculum

• Supported by: Pew Charitable Trusts, CNCS, HRSA
• Administered by: Center for the Health Professions, UCSF
Study Design

Factors Influencing SL in Health Professions Education Nationally

HPSISN Cohort

Case Study 1
Case Study 2

Phase 1
Phase 2

Methods

Phase 1: HPSISN Cohort (16/17)
- Telephone interviews (n=23) and document review

Phase 2: Case Studies
- Selection criteria: sustained SL, different institutional settings, guaranteed broad participation
- Document review, site visits, interviews (n = 47)
  - Community partners: 15
  - Academic partners: 32
- Pre-structured case outlines, memo-writing, matrices

Approved by JHSPH IRB
# Research Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University 1</th>
<th>University 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private, faith-based teaching institution</strong></td>
<td><strong>Private, secular, AHC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nursing, PT, pharmacy, health administration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Medicine, public health, nursing, PA, PT</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2500 students, all in SL</strong></td>
<td><strong>150 students in SL</strong></td>
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**Community Agencies**
- Elementary school
- High school
- Independent living

**Community Agencies**
- FQHC
- Homeless services, women
- Homeless services, families
What factors contribute to their institution’s/agency’s sustained participation in SL?
Academic Perspectives

- Align SL with institutional mission, goals
- Support for SL from high-level administrators
- Align SL with programs’ educational goals, integrate into core courses
- SL center at high organizational level, full-time staff with specialized skills
- SL partnerships also used for internships, fellowships, faculty research, practice and service
- Support for faculty participation in SL
- Demonstrated ability of SL to achieve educational goals, broader institutional goals
Community Perspectives

- Desire to enhance training of future healthcare providers
- Desire to inspire students to go into careers in community health, volunteer in community health
- SL provides beneficial services, products to their clients
- Community-academic partnership could lead to other benefits (professional development, research)
- Personally enriching to agency staff
- Agency director supports SL
What have been the benefits of SL?
Academic Perspectives

• SL provides avenue for institutional service
• SL trains students in skills for quality of care, community health
• SL instills ethic of civic engagement
• SL builds relationships with local agencies/local community
• SL enhances public relations/fund raising
• SL attracts new students
Community Perspectives

• SL enhances services for their clients
• SL provides services/products in areas where agencies lack expertise, staff time:
  – Research
  – Health education
• SL leads to permanent new resources (capacity building)
• SL is personally enriching to staff
What challenges have they experienced?
How have they responded?
Academic Perspectives

Challenges to Sustainability:
• Competing educational priorities
• Competing priorities for faculty time
• Turnover in key champions among administration

Responses:
• Link SL to valued educational, institutional priorities
• Use evaluation to demonstrate success
• Engage in “internal marketing”
• Use data for PR activities
Academic Perspectives

**Challenge:** Maximizing the educational benefits of SL for students

**Responses:**
- Integrate SL into courses, link to course learning goals and student assignments
- Involve faculty in shaping students’ service experiences
- Provide professional development, TA to both academic and community partners
Challenge: Maximizing the benefits of SL for community partners

Responses:
• Year-long SL projects
• Aim for capacity building in all SL projects
• Create systems to support partnership process
• Professional development, TA for both academic and community partners
• Regular evaluation
Community Perspectives

Challenge: Ensuring that SL contributes to agency priorities, not only marginal projects

Limited Responses/Recommendations:

• SL director and agency director consult annually on agency priorities, how SL can contribute

• Community SL partner consults with development staff about future directions and how SL can contribute
Summary

• To support sustainability:
  – Academics: Institutionalization
  – Community partners: Motivation to participate
  – Both: Clear benefits of SL to achieve institutional/agency goals

• To maximize benefits:
  – Attend to all aspects of SL: Curriculum, service, partnership process
  – Cast a wide net: Include SL staff, faculty, community partners, agency directors
To Learn More

• amanda.vogel@nih.gov
• sarena@u.washington.edu
• www.ccph.info (search for HPSISN)
  – These slides
  – Prior presentation slides
  – Publications

Thank you