Research At A Glance:
What We Know About
The Effects of Service-Learning on
Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities,
1993-1999

JANET EYLER, DWIGHT E. GILES, JR. AND CHARLENE J. GRAY

Vanderbilt University
December 7, 1999
Funded by the Corporation for National Service,
Learn and Serve America Subgrant through
National Service Learning Clearinghouse

I. What We Know: The Effects of Service-Learning On Students

A. PERSONAL OUTCOMES

Service-learning has a positive effect on student personal development such as sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development:


Service-learning has positive effect on interpersonal development and the ability to work well with others, leadership and communication skills:

Astin & Sax, 1998; Bacon, 1997 (dissertation); Dalton & Petrie, 1997; Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Freidus, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Gray, et al., 1998; Keen, & Keen, 1998; Mabry, 1998; McElhaney, 1998 (dissertation); Raskoff, 1997; Rauner, 1995 (dissertation); Rhoads, 1997; Sledge, Shelburne, & Jones, 1993; Peterson, 1998; Wade & Yarborough, 1996.

B. SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Service-learning has a positive effect on reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural & racial understanding:

Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos (in press); Balazadeh, 1996; Bringle & Kremer, 1993; Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Dunlap, 1997; Dunlap, 1998; Eyler, Giles & Braxton, 1997; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Gray, et al. 1998; Greene & Diehm, 1995; Greene, 1996 (dissertation); Hall, 1996 (dissertation); Honess, 1997; Jordan, 1994 (dissertation); Keen, & Keen, 1998; Kendrick, 1996; McElhaney, 1998 (dissertation); Myers-Lipton, 1996a; Myers-Lipton, 1996b; Ostrow, 1995; Rauner, 1995 (dissertation); Rhoads, 1997; VCU, 1997; Western Washington University, 1994.

Service-learning has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills:

Astin & Sax, 1998, Astin, Sax, & Avalos (in press), Barber, Higgins, Smith, Ballou, Jeffrey, Dedrick, & Downing,

Service-learning has a positive effect on commitment to service:
Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos (in press), Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Eldlund-Leen, 1994 (dissertation); Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles & Braxton, 1997; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Greene, 1996 (dissertation); Keen, & Keen, 1998; Kolcross, 1997 (dissertation); Markus, Howard, King, 1993; McElhaney, 1998 (dissertation); Oliver, 1997; Rauner, 1995 (dissertation); Rhoads, 1997; Smedick, 1996 (dissertation); Stukas & Clary, 1998; Tartter, 1996; Western Washington University, 1994.

Volunteer service in college is associated with involvement in community service after graduation:
Astin, Sax, Avalos (in press); Rauner, 1995 (dissertation); Smedick, 1996 (dissertation).

C. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students or faculty report that service-learning has a positive impact on students' academic learning:

Students or faculty report that service-learning improves students' ability to apply what they have learned in the "real world":
Bacon, 19978 (dissertation); Balazadeh, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Foreman-Wood, 1996; Gray, et al., 1998; Hall, 1996 (dissertation); Kendrick, 1996; Oliver, 1997; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; McElhaney, 1998 (dissertation); Miller, 1994; Nigro & Wortham, 1998; VCU, 1997.

The impact of service-learning on student academic learning as measured by grades or GPA is mixed:
Some studies have shown a positive impact of service on academic learning:
Astin & Sax, 1998; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993.

Other studies show no difference between service-learning and non-service-learning control groups:

Service-learning participation has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking and cognitive development:
Batchelder & Root, 1994; Boss, 1994; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Root, & Giles, 1998; Osborne, Hammerich, Hensley, 1998; Schmiede, 1995.

D. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Service-learning contributes to career development:

E. RELATIONSHIP WITH INSTITUTION

Students engaged in service-learning report stronger faculty relationships than those who are not involved in service-learning:
Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999.
Service-learning improves student satisfaction with college:

Students engaged in service-learning are more likely to graduate:

F. Process examined in Qualitative Studies
There is a growing body of studies that attempt to describe the process of student development involved in service-learning:
Bacon, 1997 (dissertation); Dalton & Petrie, 1997; Dunlap, 1997; Dunlap, 1998; Freidus, 1997; Hall, 1996 (dissertation); Hones, 1997; Ostrow, 1995; Rhoads, 1997; Schmiede, 1995; Smith, 1994; Ward, 1996; Wade & Yarborough, 1996.

II. What We Know: The Effects of Particular Program Characteristics on Student

A. Placement Quality
Placement quality has a positive impact on student personal and interpersonal outcomes:
Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mabry, 1998.

B. Reflection
Written reflection has an impact on student learning outcomes:

Discussion reflection has an impact on student learning outcomes:

C. Application of Service
Application of service to academic content and vice versa has an impact on students, particularly learning outcomes:
Boss, 1994; Batchelder & Root, 1994; Eyler & Giles, 1999.

D. Duration and Intensity of Service
Duration and intensity of service have an impact on student outcomes:

E. Exposure to Diversity
Diversity has an impact on students, particularly personal outcomes of personal development & cultural understanding:
Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray, et al., 1998.

F. Community Voice
Community voice in a service-learning project has an impact on student cultural understanding:
Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray, et al., 1998.

III. What We Know: The Impact of Service-learning on Faculty

A. Faculty Using Service-Learning Report Satisfaction with Quality of Student Learning:
B. Faculty using service-learning report commitment to research:
Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996.

C. Faculty report lack of resources as barrier to providing nature of service-learning:

D. Faculty increasingly integrate service-learning into courses:

IV. What We Know: The Impact of Service-Learning on Colleges and Universities

A. Colleges and universities report institutional commitment to service-learning curriculum:
Bringle & Hatcher, 1997; Gray et al., 1998; Campus Contact, 1998; National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1995; Robinson & Barnett, 1998, 1997; Sagaria & Burrows, 1995; Oliver, 1997; Scott & Ludwich, 1995; Sellnow & Oster, 1997; Serow, Calleson, & Parker, 1996.

B. Colleges and universities report availability of service-learning programs:
Bringle & Hatcher, 1997; Campus Contact; 1998; Gray et al., 1998; National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1995; Robinson & Barnett, 1998, 1997; Sagaria & Burrows, 1995; Scott & Ludwich, 1995; Sellnow & Oster, 1997; Serow, Calleson, & Parker, 1996.

C. Few colleges and universities require service-learning in the academic core:

D. Community service affects student retention:

E. Institutions report enhanced community relations:
Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Gray et al., 1998.

V. What We Know: The Impact of Service-Learning on Communities

A. Satisfaction with student participation:

B. Service-learning provides useful service in communities:

C. Communities report enhanced university relations: