

21. Description of Three Stages of Research Service Learning

1. Gateway Courses

Gateway courses provide fundamental knowledge and skills and encourage students to continue pursuing their policy interests in subsequent courses. One model is the first-year FOCUS program sponsored by the Hart Leadership Program, “Humanitarian Challenges at Home and Abroad.” Bringing together faculty from documentary studies, history, political science and public policy with 30 freshmen, the program examines human rights, genocide, refugee and immigrant children, and documentary work as humanitarian action. All 30 students participate in service learning activities.

After participating in the FOCUS program, a number of students apply for Service Opportunities in Leadership, and choose to undertake community-based research projects about refugee and immigration issues, human rights, or humanitarian aid concerns. Each year several SOL alumni who are seniors apply to our post-graduate initiative, the Hart Fellows Program.

2. Community-based research

In the research service learning model, community-based research projects are conducted during faculty supervised summer internships or as group or individual study projects during the academic year. Community-based research provides a wide range of service learning opportunities. The unifying principles are that students be actively involved in community service, collaboratively design a research project that addresses a need of a community agency, produce a report or product for the community at the end of their commitment, and reflect critically on what they learned during the entire process.

Community-based research projects allow students the opportunity to develop important new skills and knowledge about research, social problems, the challenges of working in communities, and the necessity of policy change.

For many students, conducting primary research in a community is a far different experience from the familiar process of gathering secondary research materials. Students must face the challenges of continually refining their methodologies, adjusting tactics and strategies when obstacles arise, and reflecting on the complexities of their role as researchers in stressed communities with multi-faceted social problems.

With their community partners and faculty supervisors, students create tangible projects that they leave with the community at the end of their service commitments such as survey results, summary reports of research findings, documentary articles, oral history interviews, feasibility studies and business plans, and program manuals. Students, faculty and community groups reflect critically on what they learned during the entire process, and present their reflections in the form of a “lessons learned” memo.

In the Service Opportunities in Leadership program, doing a community-based research project during the summer internship is optional, but for the past two years, half the SOL participants have chosen this option. (The projects are listed below)

3. Capstone Experiences and Leadership Development

Capstone experiences take place after students complete their fieldwork. An essential step in the research service learning sequence, capstone experiences allow students to progress to deeper levels of inquiry about the significance of their research, and to make connections between their community work and their own leadership development.

The typical capstone experience is a full credit course such as a research seminar, an independent study project, or an honors thesis class. In the Service Opportunities in Leadership Program, the capstone experience is the public policy studies course, “Integrating Community and Classroom: Internship Reflection.” Other important capstone experiences can include public forums, publications, exhibitions, and research symposia that allow students to present their work and solicit responses from other students, faculty, and community partners. For the past few years, Hart Fellows have focused on publications and exhibitions, while SOL students have focused on public presentations to other students, faculty, parents, and community partners.

Through capstone experiences students can study academic issues in greater depth, refine their research findings, reflect on lessons learned, and explore the link between their work and the leadership challenges of addressing and solving complex problems in our society. When students study academic issues in greater depth, they have a chance to integrate primary and secondary research materials, allowing them to situate their primary research within a broader scholarly context. After refining their analysis and summarizing their conclusions, students share their work in class presentations. The summary material from their presentations can then be channeled into a series of public forums, symposia, publications, and exhibits.

The research service learning model, with its integration of community service, field-based research, critical reflection, synthesis, and public presentations, forces students to examine the larger systemic issues that underlie their projects. This, in turn, generates a new level of inquiry about leadership and the challenges of creating structural change in complex organizations and social systems.

Research Service Learning Projects in the SOL Program

2001

1. *Hurdles to Gun Control Reform in South Africa's Criminal Justice System: Interviews with Magistrates, Prosecutors, and Police Officers.* Gun Free South Africa. By Tejas Shah

2. *Reclaiming Community: The Pittsburgh Project's First Fifteen Years.* Oral history interviews with neighborhood residents, staff, and student volunteers involved with a north Pittsburgh community development project. By Tiona Guess and John Cheng.

3. *The Charles Street Cafe: Profile of an Innovative Social Enterprise Organization.* The Pittsburgh Project, By John Cheng.

4. *Child Care and Education: Barriers to Self-sufficiency for Participants in the Supportive Housing Program.* The Resurrection Project, Chicago. Examines the child care needs of participants in a transitional housing program in a Latino community. By Laura Thornhill.

5. *In Their Words: A Documentary Collection about the Realities of HIV/AIDS in a South*

African Township. Essays by youth in Cape Town, South Africa. The Amy Biehl Foundation Trust. By Neil Gupta.

6. *New Life: Documentary Project with Teen Mothers*. Inwood House, New York. By Christine Varnado.

7. *Growing Up in the Neighborhood: Interviewing Brooklyn's Children*. East New York Urban Youth Corps. By Andrew Highland.

8. *The Memory Journal of the Family Focus Summer Camp*. Children from Jamaica, Queens explore the themes of summer, community, nature, and family through a special project using art-work and creative writing. Safe Space, New York. By Laura Tobolowsky.

2000

1. *Micro-enterprise Development: Business, Job Creation and Community Building in the New South Africa*. A Case Study of the Buthisizwe Sewing Cooperative, Amy Biehl Foundation Trust, Cape Town, South Africa. Beth Richardson and Carrie Johnson, interns.

2. *Khulani Planning Group: Governance Within a Nongovernmental Organization*. Southern Africa Environmental Project, Cape Town, South Africa. Andrea Mazzarino, intern.

3. *Mathematical and Environmental Applications for Sinethemba Senior Secondary School Students*. Modeling Water Consumption in the Phillipi Township, plans for reducing

consumption and finding alternative sources. Southern Africa Environmental Project, Cape Town, South Africa. Harsha Setty, SOL intern.

4. *The Women's Shelter Catering Business: Feasibility Study and Business Plan*. The Resurrection Project, Chicago. Milyeri Hopkins, intern.

5. *Culinary Arts Job Training Curriculum for the Neighborhood Kitchen*. Design and implementation plan for pilot project that will provide job training to residents of a transitional home. Common Ground Community, New York City. Rob Leonard, intern.

6. *Tradeswomen's Stories, Tradeswomen's Lives*. Oral history project profiling women in blue collar trades, Non-Traditional Employment for Women (NEW), New York City. LaTarsha Pough, intern.

7. *Community-Based Assessment of Housing and Waste Management Needs in Phillipi Township*. A Research/Action Project by the students of the Senethemba Senior Secondary School. Southern Africa Environmental Project, Cape Town, South Africa. Jeff Pierce and Grant Garrison, interns.

8. *Amnesty Campaign: Garment Workers Justice Center*. Research/strategy portfolio. Union of Needletrade, Industrial, and Textile Employees, New York. Alexandra Ledbetter, intern.

9. *Skills, Self-Expression and Self Esteem Through Writing: Experiences Working with the*

English Debating Society of Sinethemba Secondary School, and We are all Poets: A Collection of Poems by the Students of Sinethemba Secondary School. Southern Africa Environmental Project, Cape Town, South Africa. Eva DuBuisson, intern.

10. *Survey and Strategic Plan for Presence, Inc., A Substance Abuse Recovery Program.* East Liberty Family Health Care Center, Pittsburgh. Gen Daftary, intern.

1999

Mapping Refugee Communities: A Project for the Micro-enterprise Loan Fund of the Self-Help Credit Union. Charlotte, North Carolina. Matt Reisman, intern.