

Highlights

- ?? From the Office Of Service Learning
- ?? Tips on Closure
- ?? Students' Service Learning Experiences

Inside

- 3 Students' Viewpoints
- 2 From the Service Front
- 2 Contact Information

The Inside Track

*The Tulane Service
Learning Newsletter
Volume 1 • Issue 1
November 1999*



Service Learning at Tulane University

New office and staff; Over 200 students engaged in service learning

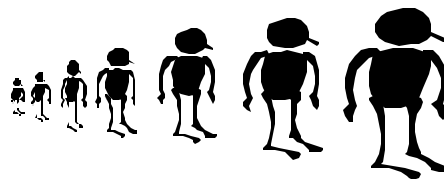
Welcome!

Service learning at Tulane University has gone through some major changes over the past several months. Gone are the days of being flooded out of the basement office and the accidental false fire alarms of Josephine Louise Hall. The university, through Provost Martha Gilliland, made sure of that, with our move to our new office at 1332 Audubon Street. Also, gone are the days of a one-person staff office. With the addition of a full time service program coordinator and a graduate student evaluation coordinator, things at the office are running smoothly.

With 11 service learning course offerings currently underway, the office supports the activities of over 200 Tulane students in various sites. Office staff presented service learning options to all courses at the beginning of the semester and facilitated orientation sessions on site as well as off site. Continuation of service to students is being provided through scheduled rap sessions, through impromptu one-on-one meetings and, of course, through e-mail. Also, a listserv was set up so that students can receive information from the office and communicate with each other.

And if that's not enough, staff at the office are currently working on programming for the spring semester. Thirteen classes will offer a service learning component with an additional four classes still on the planning stages. Staff from the office will be at the University Center to alert students of the course offerings in mid-November. Keep an eye out for this!

This is certainly an exciting time for service learning. New initiatives proposed by President Scott Cowen emphasize service as an integral part of Tulane students' education. As a former student, I applaud this move. And as an administrator of this program, I hope that students and faculty see our program as a vehicle to promote service and as a way of enhancing students' education and promoting new teaching pedagogy. Service learning benefits the university, its faculty and students and the community as a whole as it fosters a "classroom without walls".



I encourage everyone to visit and share their thoughts and questions with us! Line up and be counted!

- Vincent Ilustre is the Assistant Director of the Office of Service Learning. He is a Tulane College alumnus(Class of 1998).



Reminders for Students Currently Engaged in Service Learning:

Some courses require rap session attendance. Please consult your instructor and attend the appropriate number of rap sessions. Rap session schedules are available at the Office of Service Learning.

Make sure that your service hours are completed prior to the start of study days. ALL time sheets should be turned in to your professor at the end of the semester. (In addition, students in Dr. Daly, Dr. Moely and Dr. O'Neal's classes should be turning in bi-monthly time sheets to the Office of Service Learning.)

Reflect on what you have learned from your service and how this can help you gain a better understanding of the content of your course.

Think about closure. How will you mark the end of your service? (For more information, check out Sterett's advice column on page 3, below.)

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Amanda's Space

It's mid-term and service learners are settled at twelve different sites throughout the New Orleans community. Hoffman Elementary School and Woodson Middle School students receive reading, writing, and math instruction from service learners in Prof. O'Neal's Honors Introduction to Psychology, Prof. Moely's Growing Up In the City and Prof. Daly's Child Psychology. Service learner Brooke Lerman is working with two seventh grade students on writing and reading comprehension through Shannon Hebert's Positive Talk Mentoring Program. She has her students writing science fiction and reading poetry with materials from a poetry workshop developed by recent Newcomb graduate and service learner Rachel Bruenlin. Brooke also has her students thinking about their futures by having them write about setting and achieving goals. She points out that "because the students' lives are so radically different from mine, I am learning as much from them as they are learning from me."

Service learning activities in local schools began smoothly this semester with the help of local school teachers and administrators. Yael

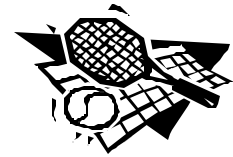
Ezra, who went to Woodson for the first time to do service learning three weeks ago, says that "everybody at Woodson is extremely helpful to Tulane students." Many service learners were introduced to Woodson and the C.J. Peete community on Saturday, September 25th, when they and other volunteers went to the school to paint and landscape in an event called,



"The Rally for New Orleans Public Schools". Organized through VIGOR, the volunteers in government headquarters in City Hall, the event brought out over 1200 volunteers to improve the physical condition of four local public schools. Of the total number of volunteers, 713 worked at Woodson Middle School! As a result, Woodson looks a lot brighter! Service learners, students, and teachers enjoyed themselves at the event as well as at the after-party at the Howlin' Wolf.

Service learners also serve at area hospitals, including Touro, Charity/ University, and Children's Hospitals and at Bridge House, a drug rehabilitation facility. Comparing her service at Touro to that at Augustine Middle School, Heather German explains that it is "hard to work there. Many of the patients are our own age. One tragic moment in their history has changed their lives forever." With full access to patients' records at Touro, service learners from Prof. Wee's Brain and Behavior class have been able to see for themselves how different areas of the brain are affected in accidents. Prof. Morse's Sociology of Medicine student Amanda Roberts notices that when she does her service at Children's Hospital, "kids don't seem to think about being sick while playing." Serving in the hospital environment gives Tulane students a chance to understand the reality of illness and injury.

Five students from Prof. Gotham's Urban Sociology course are getting a crash course in urban planning. They are bringing fresh ideas to the in-progress Recreation Element of New Orleans Master Plan at City Planning, located in City Hall.



The other students in the class are working on a variety of projects at Peete Works, located in the C.J. Peete Housing Development. Peete Works "has been able to foster a relationship between Peete residents and the rest of the New Orleans community to the benefit of everyone involved," says service learner Lori Sublet. "It has helped to change the way other New Orleans citizens (including Tulane service learners) view public housing and its residents." At these sites, service learners communicate with and learn from community residents and social work professionals.

Students from Max Kintner's Introduction to Latin America course have been working in two different offices at the World Trade Center. At Louisiana's International Trade Center: Small Business Development Center, two students are working on seminar development, researching Latin American markets and learning about international trade through the Internet. In the Mayor's Office of International Relations and Trade Development, three service learners and an intern are assisting in preparation for the Inter-American Development Bank Convention, which is coming to New Orleans in March. Service learner Travis Torrence, who hopes to continue his service with the IDB Convention next semester, "strive(s) to make the most of every moment (of his time at the World Trade Center) by diligently engaging in research and conversations with individuals who work daily in the field of international relations."

As Service Program Coordinator, I am glad to see that this semester's service learning program is rolling along without any major problems. The sites are interesting, the community partners are a pleasure to work with, and things are getting accomplished. But, I have to admit I'm kind of jealous- I want to be a service learner again!

Greg's Corner

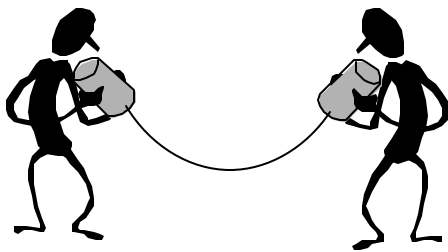
We are almost half way through the Fall semester and things seem to be going very well at my sites. I have had a chance to speak with every participating teacher at Hoffman Elementary, Augustine Middle School, and Fortier Senior High. They are all very excited to have service learners in their classrooms. In fact, the only real complaints I've heard from teachers this semester is that they would like to have more Tulane students participate and they wish that their service learners could be at the schools more often.

Students from Dr. Overstreet's Psychology course, Childhood Behavioral Disorders, are working in special education classrooms at all 3 schools as teacher assistants, individual one-on-one tutors, or special project developers.

Students in Dr. O'Neal's Honors Psychology class, Introduction to Psychology, are working on reading intervention with students at Hoffman Elementary. O'Neal's service learners work with the same 2 children every week, outside of the classroom. Many students see their time with the service learners as the greatest part of the school day and ask their teacher, days in advance, "When is _____ coming from Tulane?"

Overall, Service Learning at these sites are going very well. I know both students and teachers appreciate the assistance and I hope that service learners continue to have positive learning experiences.

Sterrett's Advice on Closure



Service learning and any other activity that places you in repeated contact with individuals on a short-term basis often raises the question of how to say goodbye when the experience ends. The following are ways in which you may foster a sense of closure or the ending of an experience:

1. Inform people at your site that your service learning period is

coming to an end. Letting people know that you will only be returning a few more times will alert site members to the loss of your assistance and allow time to say goodbye.

2. Create a moment to signify the experience. Particularly when working with children, a collection of writings, drawings, or pictures be helpful in fostering a sense of accomplishment and ending.
3. Write a letter to the site or those being served. Express your perceptions of your experience there. Also, if working with children, you may ask them to write a letter to you.

When saying goodbye, remember not to make promises that cannot be kept. I hope that these activities will help you create a stable, meaningful end to your activities both for you and the people with whom you have been working.

Additional information on closure is available at the Office of Service Learning.

From My View . . .

Friday, October 1st. Today is my first official day at Bridge House, a treatment program for substance abuse. I introduced myself to the entire group of over 100 alcoholics and addicts at their weekly House Meeting. Initially, the size of the group intimidated me. However, everyone welcomed me and many even came up to me and introduced themselves. Interestingly enough, the rest of the evening became a moment of self-reflection. Here I was, sitting in a room with over 100 strangers, yet I felt an instant connection. I thought about my own daily challenges and struggles with myself. What are my addictions? While they were talking about their lives, I thought about my own. What is it that makes me a part of this so-called web of life and not just an individual entity? I'm not really sure I fully answered myself, but I don't think it is really that important to have answers anyway.

Thursday, October 7th. I'm really glad I decided to go today, instead of my usual Friday afternoons. I sat through Medications Hour and introduced myself to the clients who take medications in the afternoons.



The clients were very cooperative and expressed interest in learning more about their medications. But most extraordinary for me was a new friend I met during dinner time. We had a very long conversation about everything - football, basketball, wrestling, the degradation of the younger generations, the 12 steps of AA, and more. We "clicked," as if we've known each other for years. Our conversation ended with a most comforting compliment. He said that I have another talent, that I should be a counselor. His comment put me at ease. I came into Bridge House afraid that people would not trust me or want to talk to me. I figure they have enough counselors "talking" to them already. But my experience so far has been just the contrary. Everyone I walk past greets me. Some will even introduce themselves to me. They call me the intern that was at the House Meeting. I do look forward to next week.

- *Lieuiko Nguyen* is a service learning student at Bridge House for her Brain and Behavior course. E-mail *Lieuiko* at *nguyenl@mailhost.ts.tulane.edu*

From My View . . .

It is Tuesday morning, 9:07 a.m. I hop out of the white van on Third Street and look around. Carter G. Woodson Middle School looms in front of a gray sky. I walk through the gate, pass through the office and sign in on my way to Room 213—Ms. Miles' sixth grade class. I pass by a few students on my way up the stairs. Although I am not here to tutor them, their faces are familiar. We exchange a "what's up?" and slap each other five.

Despite the many class discussions Dr. Moely has led in my psychology class—Growing up in the City—about



why we are here and what we should be doing, I still feel a little awkward. It doesn't seem to matter that I have tutored in schools around New Orleans before. It doesn't seem to matter that I have learned about the various developmental stages of children or the learning strategies they employ. I still feel awkward, almost out of place. It is a huge step to travel seven minutes in a van from an environment where my knowledge and preparation allows me to understand and interact comfortably to a place where I am the person without any experience, who knows nothing. Every time is a new experience. I have begun to grow accustomed to that feeling of awkwardness. It kind of makes me feel like a child whose head has not yet been crammed full of facts and right answers. It tells me I am growing and learning. I am gaining a valuable perspective that forces me to apply what I have learned in sixteen years of sitting in classrooms.

My anxiety subsides a little when I step into Ms. Miles' class and find one of the two students with whom I have been working. Alfred's face lights up. Immediately he tosses his papers in his

bag. He is ready for tutoring. As we walk down to Room 222, we talk about what we did this weekend. The conversation leads into more academic activities as we get situated around a table in the tutoring room. He hesitates to show me what he wrote in his notebook. I had asked him to write a rhyme of his own last week—a poem of sorts—as homework, so that he could begin to express himself. I wonder whether he wrote anything. He did. But he wonders what spelling mistakes he might have made and how I will react. I tell him that I still have trouble with my spelling, but we will work on it together.

He shares his story with me. It is about football and his neighborhood. I help him sound out words and begin to see his own mistakes. Then we talk about why he wrote what he wrote and he writes a few more lines. As the end of our hour nears, I encourage him to write more. He smiles and nods as we meander back down the hall. We knock on the door of Room 213, so he can get back into the classroom. I talk with Ms. Miles for a minute about Alfred's progress and what else she might want us to do during our tutoring sessions. Then I walk downstairs, sign out at the office and grab a seat on the curb to wait for Cedric. As I watch the occasional car pass, I wonder if I could arrange my schedule so that I could come to Woodson more often.

- Hamilton Simons-Jones is a service learning student at Woodson Middle School for his Growing Up In The City course. E-mail Hamilton at hsimons@mailhost.ts.tulane.edu

From My View . . .

As a volunteer at Touro Hospital, I have been fortunate enough to gain some hands-on experience in the medical field through close patient contact. I assist with music, speech, physical, and occupational therapies three days a week. When I'm not helping the therapists, I talk with the patients in their rooms or in the dining area. Most of the people I visit have suffered from a stroke or have been victims of car accidents. They enjoy having company during the day, a time when family and friends are at work. Initiating a conversation with patients requires a certain amount of self-motivation. I find it helpful to ask patients questions about their favorite music or food. I also try to get them to think about all the positive characteristics about themselves and about that particular day. If a volunteer is having trouble thinking of a topic of conversation, he or she can turn on the patient's television and discuss a tv. show.

Another enjoyable activity for the patients is laughter. Although some of the patients are unable to speak, I am able to reach them with jokes and the like. Smiling can be as an effective healing exercise as any other. Overall, my experience at Touro has helped me associate classroom information with real world situations, as well as to encompass a greater appreciation for life.

- Heather Cross is a service learning student at Touro Infirmary for her Brain and Behavior course. E-mail Heather at hcross@mailhost.ts.tulane.edu

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