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Service Learning at Tulane University

A Time to Reflect

What a Team!!!

It has been a great adventure for me to work in the New Orleans community over the past four years, along with my colleagues in Psychology, Stacy Overstreet, Margaret Dempsey, and Mike Cunningham, undergraduate and graduate students, and many community representatives. Our work began with various initiatives in education sponsored by the Tulane-Xavier Campus Affiliates Program, led over these years first by Jim Wright and currently by Larry Powell. Probably the most successful and lasting of CAP efforts in which I have been involved is the service learning program. From a single course offering in the spring of 1997, the program has grown rapidly, so that during the current academic year, there were 17 service learning courses, from a wide range of departments and disciplines. Tulane students are carrying out service in many community sites: health facilities, city government, job training programs, etc., as well as in a number of public schools. We are grateful to members of the University administration, especially Martha Gilliland, Kathy Whiteside, Jack Grubbs, and Scott Cowen, for their support and

encouragement. The growth of service learning at Tulane would not have been possible without the inspired work of the OSL staff, and I want to give them each a big cheer and hugs and kisses for their extraordinary dedication, energy and creativity!



Amanda Buberger, our Program Coordinator, works all hours of the day and night, including a recent 40-hour stint helping prepare the copy for the yearbook of Woodson Middle School. Sterett Mercer, graduate student Program Evaluator, has not only created questionnaires and focus group protocols, carried out data collection, and conducted analyses, but also has compiled a wonderful variety of reading materials for service learners' work with children. Greg Chapuis has monitored service learners' activities at school sites, solved problems with good judgment, and continues to give us regular updates on what is happening at the schools. Rebecca Stevens, who joined the OSL this semester, has worked creatively to develop internships for Psychology and Sociology students so that they can

gain intensive experience in applying knowledge of their field of study. Our van driver, Cedric Allen, has helped students enter the community comfortably and safely, while also contributing willingly to orientations and other OSL activities. And most of all, Vincent Ilustre, our leader and guiding light, who nags us (especially me) to death, until we get the work done by deadline! More than anyone, Vincent is responsible for the way this program has grown and the innovations made each semester to better meet the needs of faculty, students, and sites. So my loving thanks to these excellent OSL staff persons, and thanks also to all the faculty, students, and site representatives who have participated in this new effort at Tulane. We know there are still many ways in which the program can be improved, and we encourage your feedback to keep us on track as we try to make contributions that will have value both to the University and to the New Orleans community.

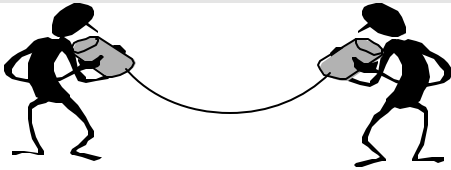
~ Barbara E. Moely, OSL Director
and
Psychology

**Reminders for Students Currently
Engaged in Service Learning:**

REFLECT on what you have learned from your service and how this can help you better understand the content of your course.

CREATE CLOSURE for yourself and your site members. For more information, read Amanda's and Sterett's articles.

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Amanda's Space

"Service Learning is my favorite part of that class" declared a service learner in a recent rap session. "My service learning project has nothing to do with the class I'm taking and I'm pretty bored with it" reported another student. This semester, service learners expressed their thoughts about service learning during rap sessions. Because not all service learning classes require students to regularly attend rap sessions, many times students do not contemplate on their service until they are contacted by a service learning staff member or they voluntarily come to a rap session.

Rap sessions have been giving service learners opportunities to question what they are doing at a community site and how the service course content. However, in order to get the most out of a service learning experience, students must be critical thinkers and actively analyze their service at all times.

The purpose of this article is to encourage service learners to always reflect and question their service learning assignments as well as their involvement in all community-based projects. Participation in service learning is supposed to enhance understanding of class concepts as well as to better understand the network of agencies that serve communities' needs. However, this does not happen unless students think about their participation, discuss issues of concern with their professors and the people with whom they work at the community site. It is very important for students to realize the amount of power they have over the quality of their service learning experiences. In order for students to feel that their service hours are time well spent, students need to actively engage themselves.

Service learning is challenging because it demands that students quickly take control of a role in a new environment with confidence and determination. It demands that students manage their time so that they remain accountable and consistent in their service throughout the entirety of the semester. Finally, it demands that students think critically about their studies and their work, so that their participation is meaningful and productive.

The most successful service learning projects have resulted from the work of students who think critically about their role as a service learner, contemplate the purpose of their participation (from the class perspective and from

the community agency's perspective) and realize their time limitations. Community partners, professors and the Office of Service Learning have been impressed with the service learners this semester. We hope that students continue to serve the local community while enriching their own academic interests.

Students who are involved in service learning often inquire about summertime opportunities. Students who are looking for summer internships that relate to their studies and/or past service learning experience, please contact *Tulane's Career Services* at 865-5107 for available opportunities.

~ Amanda Buberger, Service Program Coordinator

Greg's Corner

The semester is rapidly approaching an end and service learners are finishing up at their respective sites. Over the last few weeks I've talked to many students who were very excited about their experience and what they've accomplished.

Upward Bound service learners tutor high school students and still cannot get over how motivated, intelligent, and determined their students are. Service learners at Upward Bound tutor one student 2 hours per week. They work on homework from school, PSAT practice tests, note taking, and study skills. Aaron Stark, Upward Bound's Assistant Director, mentioned that it's encouraging to see how excited the high school students are to meet with their tutors each week.

At Hoffman elementary school, service learners who work with Kindergarten through 2nd grade students outside of the classroom have enjoyed their experience as well. After some frustration, service learners have realized that the learning process is a slow one. However, after 8 weeks at Hoffman many students are beginning to see some improvements. One

Tulane service learner told me, "The girl I tutor got so excited when she was finally able to do the math problems we were working on by herself."



Students in Dr. Overstreet's psychology course who tutor at one of two local schools, Hoffman Elementary or Augustine Middle, have had the opportunity to work in a special education classroom all semester. Throughout the semester service learners have been able to assist teachers, many of whom have 25 or more students. One special education teacher at Augustine commented, "I have 28 students in my class. It really helps me out when my service learner comes in each week."

Service learners at Booker T. Washington work in Mr. Jones's beginning Spanish class. Mr. Jones said that the Tulane students who help out in his class are "very helpful." Students seem to enjoy the experience as well. Several service learners who help out at Booker T. plan to be Spanish teachers themselves and feel that this experience is extremely valuable.

Finally, students at the Agency for Environmental Health are wrapping up their work. Students have done a wide variety of things at AEH from computer research to grant writing to preparing case studies. Kathy

Dickerson, Director of AEH, said students have been a great help to her organization and have accomplished a lot. Students I've talked to have enjoyed their experience and say that the work they do ties in well with their coursework.

Many students have had a really positive experience at their sites this semester and intend to do service learning again next year.

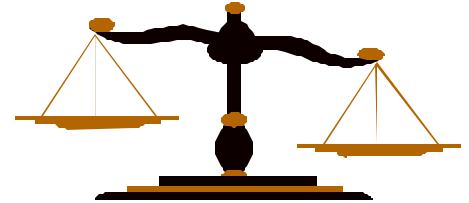
~ Greg Chapuis, Site Monitor

Internships

The Undergraduate Internship Program in the Psychology and Sociology Departments had an exciting first semester. Students have had an opportunity to take an in depth look at numerous agencies throughout the city. Students are gaining invaluable experiences they will carry with them throughout their lives.

The Psychology interns are learning about the applications of Psychology in varied New Orleans community settings. Interns spend 9 hours each week at their sites and attend a weekly seminar course to discuss issues (conceptual models and research, ethics, good practices and community organizing) that arise in their work. Ashley Vigil is enjoying her semester at the Children's Bureau working with Project LAST, a program focusing on children who have lost family members to violent death and children who have been victims of violence. Ashley goes on home visits and works in schools with both individuals and groups. Brad Silva, Brian Chasnoff, Nicole Ladia, Tim Sawhney, Brooke Harrel, and Jamie Callahan are working with students on social skill development at Tulane's Upward Bound Program. These social skills include the development of both positive peer relationships and positive feelings about oneself. Adam Cohen is interning at the Tulane Immigration

Law Clinic.



Adam is researching psychological principles associated with torture and helping to educate the law students at the clinic with his research. Adam has also had the opportunity to attend trials and interviews with clients of the clinic. Chaneve Jeanniton is spending her semester at Tulane-DePaul Behavioral Health Center working with adolescents in an inpatient treatment program. Chaneve also has the opportunity to attend seminars intended for medical school residents. Chris Pencikowski is working at the Chartwell Program in St. Stephen's School. The Chartwell Program focuses on children with sensory integration difficulties such as autism. Manisha Shah is interning at the S.T.A.I.R. Program. She is tutoring children and helping to design questionnaires for teachers, parents and tutors to evaluate the S.T.A.I.R. program. The Psychology students will receive four credits for these semester-long internships.

The sociology interns also had an interesting semester working in the community. Michelle Albonzio is interning this semester at the Tulane-Xavier National Center for the Urban Community. Michelle is gathering information to guide the development of a school reform project. Kate Balangee, Justin Robinson and Genarrio Reshard are working with the CAP Program in the C.J. Peete Housing Development.



These students are focusing on housing difficulties encountered by residents

and youth activities. Erin Miller also is also interning in the C.J. Peete community at the Resident Employment Center. Erin is assisting with client contacts, intake, and file updates for the REC. Melissa Vernon is helping to design a website for the Gulf Restoration Network while Shannon Mickey is working with the Mayor's Office of Small and Emerging Business Development. Hannah Carmalt and Ingrid Heide are helping City Planning design community surveys in addition to working with the Geographical Information System. Alison Goldman is enjoying work in the "Zoo to Do" office at the Audubon Institute. Alison is assisting in preparations for the Institute's annual black tie fundraiser. Abbe Vernick has spent her semester at the League of Women Voters of New Orleans attending various League functions and assisting with election updates. These students have had the opportunity to take concepts in their major and relate them to work in the community.

We would like to thank all of the community partners who have hosted and taught Tulane undergraduate interns this fall. The site supervisors have been wonderful mentors to our undergraduates throughout the semester.

~ Rebecca Stevens, Internship Coordinator

Closure

Service learning and any other activity that places you in contact with individuals on a short-term basis often makes you question how to say goodbye to those with whom you work when the session 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 the site to the loss of your assistance and allow time to say goodbye.

2. Create a memento to signify the experience. Particularly when working with children, a collection of writings, drawings, or pictures may 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. Hopefully, these activities will help you create a stable, meaningful end to your activities both for you and others at your site.

~ Sterett Mercer, Evaluation Coordinator

From My View . . .

This semester I have been working at Carter G. Woodson Middle School for my independent study in neuroscience. Whereas most independent studies in science require students to work at a professor's lab, I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to work as an in-class assistant to a seventh grade science class. Usually I arrive when the students are finishing up math assignments and I stay through their entire science period. Since this form of service-learning is my independent study, I am required to give a presentation to the students and to participate in one special project with them in addition to my hours that I spend there.



It just so happens that National Brain Awareness Week fell right in the middle of this spring semester. Therefore, I decided that for my special project I would take some of my students to "Brain Day" at the Louisiana Children's Museum, which was Saturday, March 18. The event was sponsored by the Greater New Orleans Society for Neuroscience (GNOSN) and many Tulanians participated in special presentations which provided hands-on models, interactive games and cutting-edge information about the central nervous system.

After calling the right people, making reservations, filling out tons of forms, budget proposals, and permission slips, the week of the field trip was here. I made a special presentation about the brain to the students the day before the trip in order to prepare them. All of the children seemed very excited and interested; but on that Saturday morning only seven of the thirty kids who were supposed to come showed up. The schedule preceded as planned although with a few extra unforeseen events, such as our bus breaking down in the rain. So, I was worried that these problems were ruining the kids' day. But to my surprise, the kids had a fantastic time at the museum! We took pictures of them playing on the exhibits and participating in the presentations, which we later

mounted on poster boards around their classroom.



And that following Monday, when I came to visit the class, all of the kids who had come on the trip were telling me what a great time they had. They could not stop showing their pictures to the other kids in their class. I realized how proud they were and how special they felt. Most of them had never been to the museum before, and their class had not taken a field trip this year.



So, I was grateful that Tulane had the means to give these kids such a treat. And finally, what impressed me the most about the whole event was that afterwards, when we were making the posters and talking about what they had seen, one of the boys excitedly told me all about the neuron and the cell body and its dendrites--so they had

learned something! This rewarding experience showed me in the midst of all their playing, these kids truly had absorbed some of the information--and even thought it was cool!

~ *Chatrain Reynolds is an independent study student for Dr. Jeffrey Tasker. You can reach Chatrain at creynol@mailhost.tcs.tulane.edu*

Born Out of Service . . .

(The work presented here was created by Shanara Jenkins, a Woodson Middle School 7th grader. Shanara wrote this poem with the assistance of her Tulane service learning partner, Kirsten Ebby (Psychology380 Growing Up in the City).

My True Color

my true color
is not Black
my true color is
black, *white*, purple, brown, *light*
because the God up Above is
all the color in the world,
my true color is black
but only because I stand up
For what I Know
not what I don't know,
I write what I feel
not what I look like
the R&B Sings for you,
not me,
my butterfly is my Song

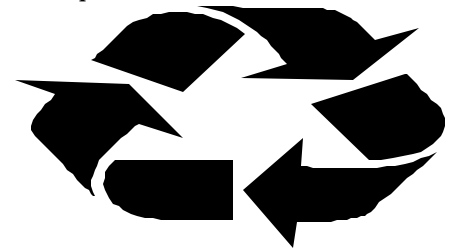


not Drugs
not any bad things
Do you know what it Brings.
my color is
that color of that plaque
when I graduate or
that color of Blood
when I Become a doctor
I hope

Your Color stays true.

From My View . . .

To bring environmental awareness into the local community, educators and leaders must branch out and teach people about many aspects of the environment. As a service learner at the Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs, I have learned about the importance of community outreach. My project at the Mayor's Office, is to update "Recycle New Orleans", a booklet that contains information about what local citizens should to do with recyclable items and tips on how to help the environment.



It will be passed out at the Earth Day celebration, another project I've been involved in. Earth Day, Saturday, April 22nd, is a day for environmental awareness, a gathering where people focus on how to prevent the destruction of our environment. Through my involvement with Earth Day, from sending out applications to attending meetings with Earth Day organizers, I have learned that reaching out to members of the community helps them to understand how their participation in recycling and conservation contributes to the health of our environment. Also, I found this to be true through my work with children and adults at Earthfest, another environmental awareness event that takes place in New Orleans. Many people who attended Earthfest were intrigued to learn tips about preserving our Earth. Through these experiences, I have received hands-on work and I have seen how my contributions have made New Orleans a more educated and environmentally aware community.

- Katherine Malczewskij is a service learning student at the Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs for her International Environmental Politics course. E-mail Katherine at kmalcz@mailhost.tulane.edu

Pictures from Woodson Middle School



From My View . . .

This semester I've had the remarkable opportunity to do an internship at the DePaul-Tulane Behavioral Health Center. I have been placed on the acute adolescent unit under the supervision of Lee Hoffman, the unit's social worker. The exposure I've gotten at DePaul has taught me an invaluable amount about the field of psychiatry and therapeutic practices.

The unit serves adolescents who are unable to maintain their daily routines because they are experiencing intense difficulties. The average inpatient length of stay is about a week. This time is used to stabilize the patients and equip them with strategies to use after being discharged so they're better able to cope with stressors. While in the program, the adolescents participate in varied types of treatment,

including group, creative arts, and family therapy.

Not only have I been able to sit in on these treatment sessions, but I also get to attend a weekly class on current topics of research in psychology provided for medical students doing their rotations at DePaul. The facility hosts students from Tulane Medical School and DePaul has an atmosphere that strongly reflects such an affiliation. I have found all of the staff to be extremely helpful and always happy to answer any questions I might have.

I have learned far more in my internship at DePaul than I could have in any single psychology class. It is so different to read about a theory than it is to actually see how it applies outside the textbook. It's also incredible to get to witness the vast improvement the adolescents achieve by the end of their stays at DePaul. It makes it all so worthwhile. I recommend that anyone considering an internship take advantage of this amazing opportunity.

- Chanve Jeanniton is an intern at the DePaul-Tulane Behavioral Health Center. E-mail Chanve at Cjeanni@mailhost.tulane.edu.

From My View . . .

On Saturday, April 1st, I went with fifteen volunteers from Tulane to Woodson Middle School to paint a mural with some Woodson students. I was surprised and impressed with the size of the mural; it covered an entire wall of the Woodson cafeteria--ceiling to floor. The week before the students had drawn the mural with charcoal and pencil, and we were there to help them paint it. The mural had four different panels, all designed by different sixth grade classes. Each panel had a different theme: the first was a picture of the school, Woodson, and the windows looking into the school show the teachers and students working hard. The second depicted "community" as its theme, showing a chief of a Native American tribe surrounded by a sidewalk--with the Magnolia (C.J. Peete) housing development as the background. The third panel demonstrates unity of all people, by showing people of all ages, colors, sizes, etc. holding hands under the

same roof. The final scene of the mural encourages students to "Walk the Woodson Way"; it boasts the school's mascot, a tiger bearing resemblance to Hobbes, walking along an orange and black "tiger" sidewalk with a positive message in each sidewalk square--corresponding to each grade at Woodson. The air in the cafeteria was full of energy that Saturday--as I imagine it is each school day--and the Woodson students reflected their pride in the mural by painting cheerfully and diligently all day. They were well rewarded by their efforts--the mural is brilliant and brightens the entire cafeteria.

Saturday was April Fool's Day, and both Tulane and Woodson students got into the spirit. You might have felt a handprint or a brushstroke being "painted" on your back, but as you turned around, the grinning artist would run away yelling "April Fool!!" Everyone had a fun time at Woodson! It was a great way to spend a Saturday!

- Morgan Lange is a service learning student at Woodson Middle School for her Child Psychology course. E-mail Morgan at mlange@mailhost.tulane.edu.

Faculty Members:

Staff members at the Office of Service Learning are eager to work with you as you develop or add to a service learning course. We have placed students in a wide variety of community sites (e.g., hospitals, public schools, drug treatment centers, job development and training, city government offices, non-profit organizations). We can provide the following services:

- consult on the development of service learning courses;
- create partnerships with community agencies in order to match academic interests with the needs of the community;
- facilitate discussion sessions to allow students from various courses to reflect on their service experiences;
- assist faculty in developing proposals for service learning grants;
- provide materials on service learning related to specific courses and needs;

- facilitate workshops and training for faculty and students
- evaluate the service learning component of your course.

Faculty interested in learning more about service learning should contact Vincent Ilustre at vilustr@mailhost.tcs.tulane.edu or at X3358.

We look forward to working with you!

Office of Service Learning
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out our Website at: **<http://www.tulane.edu/~ServLrng/main.htm>**

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