

Adding a Community University Educational Summit (CUES) to enhance service learning in management education

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Abstract

For this study, one hundred and twenty student reflection papers (undergraduate and graduate) from a service learning extracurricular event titled, “Community University Educational Summit” (CUES) was analyzed. Over a two-year period, this event was held on one Saturday during the month of October at California State University San Bernardino’s Palm Desert Campus. Reflection papers used for this study determined the value associated with adding extracurricular service learning education to required campus management courses. Results show that this service learning event increased five specific learning objectives for management students; (A) practical application of course concepts, (B) enhanced knowledge of course concepts, (C) commitment to support nonprofit organizations, (D) motivation to participate in volunteerism and, (E) the opportunity to participate in an internship.

Keywords: Service-learning, experiential-learning, management, extracurricular

SERVICE LEARNING INTRODUCTION

Service learning links classrooms with the community; service learning is a fast growing instructional pedagogy. Although, when reviewing literature on the concepts associated with service learning, practitioners and researchers alike never seem to share an “all-encompassing” universal definition for what is deemed “service learning.” Most commonly noted service learning is viewed as a form of experiential learning in which students provide discipline specific knowledge and skills to help fulfill community identified needs while concurrently learning more about the practical application of specific course concepts and theories than they might otherwise. Ways in which educational practitioners can enhance classroom education by means of service learning projects and assignments are many and varied.

At California State University San Bernardino and its satellite Palm Desert Campus, and for the purposes of this paper, service learning is defined as, “a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that [increases their knowledge of civic responsibility] and meets a community identified needs” (CSUSB, 2008). According to Zlotkowski (1998), it has been the experience of campus practitioners that service learning provides a ground of coherence and seems to be a key for moving education forward. Thomas Ehrilck, a senior California State University Scholar states:

Service learning connects thought and feeling in a deliberate way, creating a context in which students can explore how they feel about what they are thinking and what they think about how they feel; through guided reflection, it offers students opportunities to explore the relationship between their academic learning and their civic values and commitments (2000).

Service learning is represented in any structure that utilizes service-based processes to enhance the learning processes (Kezar, 1998). For this paper, the service-based processes enhance education with a pioneering structure—this research examines service learning presented as an extracurricular activity titled, “Community University Educational Summit” (CUES).

CUES OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

At California State University San Bernardino’s Palm Desert Campus, service learning was implemented into management courses through the development of CUES. The extracurricular event offers service-based education to multiple management courses at once. Thus, the event changes the traditional single-course service learning format into a pedagogy that implements service learning into multiple courses at once. To the researcher’s knowledge, no other similar event has been researched to examine student learning outcomes. Thus, the information in this document is valuable to service learning field practitioners.

The event’s origination and coordination was developed by the Palm Desert Campus Service Learning Coordinator with the support of California State University San Bernardino’s, Community University Partnership Program. Worthy of mention, the professor of the management classes in attendance at CUES and the Campus Service Learning Coordinator is one in the same. CUES links classrooms with the community by providing students a free day of educational, management topic specific seminars, delivered by volunteer nonprofit agency representatives, who are experts in their fields. These seminars are designed to enhance the students’ comprehension about the “real-world” “hands-on” applications of management models, concepts, and theories, while simultaneously communicating knowledge on community issues, assistance, and needs.

In addition, CUES presenters volunteer their services to share information about the internal and external workings of their organizations focusing attention on the company's interests, goals, objectives, purpose, mission and vision while including, overviews of community services and professional opportunities. In exchange for the industry expertise and knowledge obtained, students offer their services back to participating nonprofit organizations in the form of volunteerism and/or internships. Volunteerism and internships help fill voids in nonprofit organizations' operational needs and improve the students' social growth and responsibility; while allowing the students to gain work experience.

Developing service learning activities and events moves students to consider others as part of their educational experience. When the educational experience is focused solely on the student, and provides just classroom related exercises, the students may tend to practice his or her knowledge with a false sense of entitlement, forgetting that higher education in State systems especially, is subsidized to provide benefits to not only the students but society. "By placing the student in the community, corrects . . . self-centeredness." (Soukup, p.8). Beyond community, service learning is especially useful to management study because it is a pragmatic way to address course content and build numerous competencies such as: municipal, social, self, and career. That said, the structure of CUES proves to combine many positive aspects of learning into one day of community-university benefits.

The development of CUES was initiated as a "think out of the box" way to build relationships with the community and university. Scheduled each year on the second Saturday in October, seminar presentations run all day, one, each hour on the hour. Each year's event theme changes and the presenter line-ups are aligned to match the yearly theme. To exemplify, the first year's event theme honored nationally recognized topics celebrated in the month of October: National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, National Crime Prevention Month, National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and National Arts and Humanities Month.

In correlation to these themes, speakers included representatives from the areas' domestic violence shelters, police departments, American Cancer Society, and museums. The presenters taught students "how" management concepts correlate with nonprofit administrative processes, public service, civic responsibility, human relations, and national recognition. The second year's event was themed with a focus on health and disease prevention. Speakers discussed such topics as nutrition, stroke prevention, cardiovascular health, alcohol and drug addiction, and stress management. This knowledge armored management students with reinforcement mechanisms that support the importance of organizational employee health and wellness programs as key organizational success factors.

Important, but not included in the data for this paper, due to the success of past CUES events, the Third Annual CUES is being developed and scheduled at the Palm Desert Campus for Saturday, the 17th of October, 2009. The theme for this year's event is Workforce Development with a speaker line-up designed to enrich the student's knowledge on financial management, career development, and job search techniques. Once again, students will discover many local nonprofit organizations and be introduced to their hardworking, assistance providing representatives. For instance, speakers will be participating from community colleges, State employment agencies, and university career centers.

The CUES event is a "win-win" situation for all (nonprofits, university, and community) and therefore, merits professional review. More information on this event or service learning at California State University San Bernardino and Palm Desert campuses can be obtained by readers by at: <http://www.cuespdc.com> .

SERVICE AND REFLECTION

Just as Kezar (1998) defines service education, this scholar also promotes four reoccurring principles in service based learning environments; (1) the establishment of clear academic goals; (2) the participation in the intended service, (3) the completion of reflective activities about the service experience and, (4) the evaluation of the service learning process. All Kezar's stated principles are met within the CUES structure. Establishment of clear academic goals for CUES participation is accomplished by discussing the importance of civic responsibility to business in classrooms prior to the event (principles 1 & 2). Students are informed CUES will place many course relationships, models, concepts, and theories, into a practical perspective. These practices in turn; entice the students to set academic goals while participating in CUES. Meeting the two remaining Kezar principles (3&4), students who attend CUES are assigned a universal reflection essay that requires evaluation of their service learning experience and documents any volunteerism and/or internships placements that result. The reflective essay requirement for all participating management courses is due 10 days following the event. Reflection activities are imperative to the service-based educational processes as these activities assess student leaning outcomes (1998).

Reflection accompanies the students' service-based activities to draw connections between what they learn with the community involvement and their coursework. Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996) also support Kezar's statements and concur that reflection is a central role in service learning and a valid learning assessment measures. So valid, that reflection activity has prompted much of the literature available on service learning research and "how much" service experiences add to classroom knowledge. Therefore, the research and methodology for this paper has been established based on past contributions made to service learning by analyzing reflection activities.

RESEARCH AND METHOD

Subsequent to their attendance at CUES, Management students' written reflection papers were analyzed to determine the amount and/or forms of added educational value obtained from this service-leaning extracurricular event. Two-years of data consolidation are examined. Outcomes and mean scores are provided for the following research themes; (A) practical application of course concepts, (B) enhanced knowledge of course concepts, (C) commitment to support nonprofit organizations, (D) motivation to participate in volunteerism and, (E) the opportunity to participate in an internship.

The data is obtained from four management courses each taught once during the fall quarters at California State University San Bernardino and its Palm Desert Campuses (2007 and 2008). Thus, a total of eight classes were reviewed for this paper. For the past five years these management courses have been taught on this campus by the same instructor during the same quarters. (The instructor and the campus Service Learning Coordinator are one in the same.) After teaching these courses for five years, the instructor is confident in her ability to accurately analyze and report the outcomes of student learning. To further validate the instructor's confidence, she illustrates concurrence with Hesser's famed research. Hesser (1995) believes that "faculty is in a position to access the learning that has taken place when a service learning component is included in a course [or extra-curricular event]" (p.34). Due to her experience in

the role of Service Learning Coordinator, the instructor has also evaluated years of reflection activities in many campus-wide multi-discipline classes in addition to her own courses.

Reflection content analysis is used and has been routinely documented as one of the most common tools utilized for the assessment of service learning outcomes. Review of these assignments (Self-evaluation Essay) for this study involves qualitative content analysis which implements a standard social science methodology and is informal in nature. The critical components document the level of learning that took place during two fall quarters where students attended CUES within the five themes mentioned previously (A-E). For this study, enrolled management students that participated in CUES consist of both, undergraduate and graduate learners. It should be noted that undergraduate students maintain approximately 85 percent of this study's research participants and stated course enrollees. It must also be noted that for this study, papers were not coded differently for undergraduate and graduate students. The following is a formal description of the management classes that contributed student reflection papers for this research study and participated in CUES for two academic quarters during the fall terms:

Organizations Behavior (Management 302)

- Introduction to management as it affects operations and the behavior of people in relation to the functional fields of administration. Selected behavioral concepts analyzed with respect to applications in management. (Also offered as PSYC 302.) Students may not receive credit for both.) (4 units) (CSUSB Bulletin of Courses, 2008)

Expository Writing for Administration (Management 306)

- Writing related to business and public administration including documented research reports, summaries, and analytical papers. Revision and rewriting will be required. Course fulfills the graduation requirements in writing proficiency. May not be counted for fulfilling concentration requirements for any degree program offered by the College of Business and Public Administration. No more than one of the expository writing courses (EDU 306, ENG 306, HUM 306, MGMT 306, NSCI 306, SSCI 306) may be taken for credit. Students who receive a grade of no credit in any combination of the expository writing courses two or more times must meet with the 306 coordinator or designee to design a developmental writing plan as a condition of enrolling for a third quarter. All students must obtain junior standing at the time of registration or their course request will be canceled. Formerly MGMT 495. Graded A, B, C/no credit. Prerequisites: ENG 101 and a minimum of 90-quarter (60 semester) units of college credit. (GE=F.1) (4 units) (CSUSB Bulletin of Courses, 2008)

Internship in Management (Management 575)

- Supervised work and study in private organizations. May be repeated once for credit. Graded credit/no credit. Consent of instructor or department. (4 units) (CSUSB Bulletin of Courses, 2008)

Independent Study in Management (Management 595)

- Special topics involving library and/or field research. A total of 10 units in any College of Business and Public Administration 595 may be applied toward graduation. Prerequisites: a minimum overall grade point average of 3.0, consent of the instructor and approval by the department with a written project/proposal submitted to the department in the College of Business and Public Administration on a standard application filed in advance of the quarter in which the course is to be taken. (Credit to be arranged 2 or 4 units) (CSUSB Bulletin of Courses, 2008)

After the instructor collected and gave students credit for completing the reflection assignment, the papers were separated by term and by class. Papers were labeled by year (2007 or 2008) and each paper for each class was numbered with a standard Arabic format (1,2. . .10,11. . etc.). Names of students were blacked out from the papers. Data consolidated was completed 1 year and 10 months after the 2007 CUES event and 10 months after the 2008 CUES event. Due to this consolidation time lapse, it was next to impossible for the instructor to remember which student had submitted which paper. Student anonymity was therefore established.

Students were also informed by the instructor after they submitted their essay assignments and before the instructor graded their documents that their essay comments may be used in a research project. Students were provided an informed consent form from the instructor and had the option of either granting or denying permission for their essay responses to be used for research purposes. All but four students enrolled in these classes over a two year cycle gave the instructor written permission to use their essays for research purposes. Data for this study does not include every student enrolled in these four stated management classes, it includes only data received from students that attended CUES.

Typical enrollment for each management class varies by term and classroom caps. The following table provides enrollment estimates for class sizes and CUES participation during the fall quarters of 2007-2008:

Table 1

MGMT 302, 306, 575 & 595: Total Fall (2007-08) Enrolled Students

	MGMT 302	MGMT 306	MGMT 575	MGMT 595	CUES Partici- pants	Percent- age of Partici- pants
Fall 2007	40	23	10	2	58	77.3
Fall 2008	42	25	5	0	66	91.6
Total	82	48	15	2	124	84.3

In the year 2007, the total attendance at CUES was 117 students with management students representing 49.5 percent of the event attendees. For 2008, the total attendance at CUES was 153 students with management students representing 43 percent of attendees. The remaining students in attendance for the event represent those enrolled in various other academic disciplines at the Palm Desert Campus.

Reviewing literature for this project it was found that in 1996, Eyler, Giles and Schmiede used a research process that would be appropriate and accommodate this project. Also revealed, Eyler, Giles and Schmiede’s process was used many times with other service-based research endeavors that focused on reflection activities. The researcher felt there was no need to “reinvent the wheel” and therefore, their process was replicated to identify overarching student themes and project outcomes. However, Eyler, Giles and Schmiede’s processes were altered slightly to fit

this project’s design. Alterations are that the researcher did not use specific themes of Elyer, Giles and Schmiede’s original research study, she used her own five themes:

- A. Knowledge of practical application of course concepts;
- B. Enhanced knowledge of course concepts;
- C. Commitment to support nonprofit organizations;
- D. Motivation to participate in volunteerism and;
- E. Opportunity to participate in an internship.

The above theme list (A-E) also provided the coding system for the data. A theme search provided the data calculation method; for example, reading reflection essays, paragraphs, and lines, comments, and thoughts, these units of analysis were gained. Due to the fact that the same assignment guidelines were given to students enrolled in all four management courses (302, 306, 575, and 595) over the quarters examined, study themes were easy to establish and code. The units of analysis were defined with coding procedures that made listed themes easily recognizable. Dominant outcomes in accordance to the study themes were identified (see Table 2).

RESEARCH RESULTS

In accordance to stated study themes, during the fall quarters of 2007 and 2008, seeking to determine the mean classifications of educational value adding a Community University Educational Summit (CUES) to students extracurricular activities within four management course sections at California State University San Bernardino’s Palm Desert Campus would achieve, were the study objectives. The following table represents these findings:

Table 2

MGMT 302, 306 & 575 & 595: Total Mean Responses for All Enrolled Students

	Category A	Category B	Category C	Category D	Category E
Fall 2007	49.2%	54.6%	63.0%	38.9%	19.0%
Fall 2008	57.3%	47.2%	54.9%	38.3%	21.2%
(Mean)	53.2%	50.9%	58.95%	38.6%	20.1%
	(1)*	(3)*	(2)*	(5)*	(4)*

*Number in parentheses represents order of response frequency

The above classifications encompass the previously stated five themed research categories A, B, C, D, and E. Category A (Knowledge of practical application of course concepts) presents an outcome of 53.2 percent. Management students that participated in CUES commented that the event helped them put into perspective practical applications of course concepts. Students reported leaning about how they could use classroom related models, concepts, and theories to assist with business processes in society. For example, one Organization Management (Management 302) student conveyed in her essay during the fall quarter of 2008 that:

The speaker used the behavioral sciences that make up the field study of organizational behavior in a very well thought and natural process . . . In the psychology field, she showed how motivation trains her employees as well as assists her patients. In social psychology, the speaker demonstrates the needs to communicate with patients and their family members; she needs to implement decision making processes that create solid outcomes for the organization. As a sociologist, she deals with various types of conflicts and enforces that conflict resolution practices are important organizational strategies. Her knowledge of anthropology exemplifies the importance of using humans to create and analyze data.

Category B (Enhanced knowledge of course concepts) scored a mean of 50.9 percent and is supported by reviewing the following student comments (fall 2007 Expository Writing for Administration: Management 306):

The speaker is able to share her research through the use of administrative writing. By preparing a well organized outline and collecting legitimate research data to support the material on her outline and working to develop polished oral presentation skills, this speaker not only is a good representation of her organization, she ensures knowledge is communicated accurately and at a level the audience can understand. My goal would be to someday have the ability to create effective PowerPoint slides and deliver an oral presentation with a high level of expertise, just as she did.

Mentoring is important. Practical applications of administrative writing are of the utmost value to students. Examples that go above and beyond textbook and classroom vignettes take learning to a higher level while better preparing students to prepare for their careers and better assist in public services.

Category C (Commitment to support nonprofit organizations) shows another significant outcome--one that scored the highest percentage total in this study—it presents an average rating of 58.95 percent. This category calculated increased motivation from students attending CUES to support causes and services maintained by local nonprofit organizations. Here, students find intrinsic rewards a valuable part of their educational experience and feel privileged to be given a chance to help support worthy causes that improve the lives of people—many of which—reside in the same neighborhoods as they live. One student noted, “These presentations gave me the opportunity to realize how many trained professionals it takes to run an organization that helps to fight cancer. I can only hope that when I graduate, my career path will lead me into a helping profession similar to or with, the American Cancer Society.”

The next benefit recognized by the students is the importance of becoming an engaged citizen, one that is motivated to participate in volunteer services (Category D). For students, volunteering can be a personally enriching experience but can also be an experience that puts educational skills into action. Overall, students reported admiring those individuals that set an example by volunteering their time, skills, and knowledge to assist others. Good examples entice others to tag-along. Excitement prevails as students learn to use their education to “pay-forward” into society. The following example is from a management internship student (Management 575):

All during the CUES seminars I kept thinking about all the possibilities my education will provide me to make a difference in the community. Prior to this event, I never realized how important it is volunteer your time. I always associated the gratification of obtaining a college degree with just high paying employment opportunities and the materialistic things I can purchase with a large salary.

The final thematic research area, Category E (Opportunity to participate in an internship) speaks to initiating an environment where students can be recruited (face-to-face) by organizational representatives that allow them probe for organizational information and at the same time request to set up an internship placement interview. The mean score in this category was recorded at 20.1 percent. This percentage total is substantial. For management students in attendance at CUES statistically speaking, 12-13 students per year successfully gained an internship form attending the event.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Descriptive statistics like those reported in this study help to spark ideas for better practices in service learning. However, a great deal more knowledge is needed on how the pedagogies of service learning can be presented to students in the form of extracurricular activities that take place outside of the walls of a single classroom. Reflection activities continue to be an important part of gauging the learning outcomes student achieve by participating in experiential practices. However important, for this study, it is not known how the outcomes of this study have been affected by the confines of the assignment. For example, does the writing assignment hinder many students' objectives?

Previous studies find differences between students who voluntarily select to participate in service pedagogy and those students that are required to do so. How would the study's results differ if all enrolled management students were required to attend CUES? It would be further beneficial to know if the effectiveness of these pedagogical practices would change between required and voluntary service learners. Moreover, gender differences and age are perceived to make a difference in service learning activities Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, (1997). In this study, gender and age differences remain unknown.

Self-reports and comments by the students are the assessment measures for this research. Future studies could use more specific means of evaluation such as surveys with nominal and/or Lykert scale ratings to accompany pre-developed structured questionnaires. It would also be useful to know which of the specific CUES topics contribute most to the socialization of students, critical thinking skills, and field knowledge. Since the CUES seminar topics change themes each year it is hard to recognize whether students' attraction is to the leaning process itself, topic, or individual presenter?

Previously noted, in 2007, 50.5 percent of CUES attendees, and in 2008, 57 percent of CUES attendees, were students within majors outside of the field of management. It would also be beneficial to know "how" this study's themes scored in relationship to students participating from interdisciplinary majors. In section closing, themes scored for this study, were not the only themes found in the reflection essay reviews. Use of time, service learning innovation, changes in educational pedagogies, and overall event qualify, emerged as undocumented themes in reviewed student reflection assignments. Future research should probe these undocumented themes along with the later stated research variables.

The primary focus of this study was to determine if an extracurricular service learning event would provide enhanced learning for participating management students. With confidence, it can be claimed that the event did just that.

CONCLUSION

The field of management trains future leaders and public servants; therefore, quality educational practices play a vital role in preparing students for these professional roles. Implementing experiential learning pedagogies (specifically service learning) into university management education increases student learning outcomes. These practices move the basic knowledge and skills obtained through management courses to a higher level. Extracurricular service-learning contributes to management education fostering business graduates that include in their professional mission, roles of active citizenship. Service learning components can be implemented in multiple classrooms at once.

Many important contributions to service learning in management education were obtained by the CUES event. Represented in this study, service learning concepts can enhance learning out of the classroom and be an effective format for nontraditional, innovative, extracurricular activity. Service learning is still effective when presented to students in a nontraditional, innovative format. Community University Educational Summit (CUES) did indeed link classrooms with the community and provide valuable documented learning outcomes for students who participated in the event. The results of associated research for this event are typical of learning outcomes commonly reported through past research on service learning, its teachings, assignments, and projects. Reflection remains a valuable tool in assessing student learning outcomes for service learning and can provide a means to further the field's research.

The study enforces the effectiveness of Eyler, Giles and Schmiede (1996) coding systems, research methods, and supports some of their study findings. The five themes used in this study differed slightly from Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996) themes but they still provided a strong analysis of content. Results represented strong statistical data percentages for identified learning categories; (A) practical application of course concepts, (B) enhanced knowledge of course concepts, (C) commitment to support nonprofit organizations, (D) motivation to participate in volunteerism and, (E) the opportunity to participate in an internship.

Emphasis in higher education today is to develop curriculum standards that not only educate students in the basics but reach out to the communities in which they reside to better prepare students to add value to society (Lerner & Simon, 1998a, 1998b). California State University, San Bernardino-Palm Desert Campus and its management program have been better preparing students for "real-world" community roles by implementing into its disciplines, service learning extracurricular activities. It is probable that other universities and service learning practitioners may want to do the same.

In summary, this study's data suggest that all management students in attendance for the 2007 and 2008 CUES seminars benefited from their participation. These benefits were observed for both undergraduate and graduate management students. It is the hope of the researcher to elaborate on these finding with additional data after the 2009 CUES event. She also hopes that many other service learning practitioners will find that experiential learning concepts benefit students outside a classroom as an extracurricular activity. Past research on service learning has had a substantial influence on the practice; in accordance, future research will continue to add value to the field.

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