

Service Learning: You Can Get There From Here

Al Williams
University of New Hampshire

Sam Lankford
University of Northern Iowa

Abstract

Service learning is experiential education engaged in by students. These experiential activities address human and community needs and are accompanied by structured opportunities specifically designed to promote student learning and development. This paper explores the increasing use of service learning methodology in higher education and in leisure studies curricula. The components of service learning methodology will be examined, along with a model that helps explain the process. Additionally, concerns and benefits associated with the use of service learning will be addressed. Finally, implications for adopting service learning methodology into leisure studies curricula will be explored. Suggestions will be offered that will aid in transforming existing learning experiences into true service learning opportunities.

Keywords: service learning, experiential education, curriculum design, social capital, community development

Biographical Information

Al Williams is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Recreation Management and Policy at the University of New Hampshire, 108 Hewitt Hall, Durham, NH 03824. Sam Lankford is an Associate Professor and Division Coordinator in the division of Leisure, Youth, and Human Services, School of HPELS, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA 50614.

Introduction

A group of university students enrolled in a leisure studies curriculum organize a Halloween Dance at a local church for adults with disabilities. Another group plans and conducts a successful first time special event in conjunction with the town park, the recreation department, and a local business. A fourth group holds a Harvest Ball, complete with disc jockey, dancing, decorations, and dinner for senior citizens in a community care facility. Still another group works with a neighboring park and recreation department to provide programs for a wide cross section of the local community. The common link here appears obvious; leisure studies students participating in field experi-

ences which involve the planning, implementation, and evaluation of recreation programs and events for the local community. What might not appear so obvious is the underlying educational rationale at work in these programs.

The rationale is Community Service Learning (CSL) theory, also termed Service Learning (SL), which provides a strong basis for effective experiential learning. This paper explores the increasing use of service learning in higher education. The components of service learning will be examined along with a model that helps explain the process, concerns, and benefits. Finally, implications for adopting service learning into the leisure studies curricula will be explored. Suggestions will be offered that will aid in transforming existing learning experiences into true service learning opportunities.

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is an approach that is grounded in common sense and educational theory. It suggests young people should become involved in their communities in an effort to both understand their rights as citizens and to have the positive self reinforcing experience of meeting their responsibilities as citizens (Kinsley, 1994). Although service learning may be defined differently by those who use it in various types of settings, the prime consideration is one of experiential learning through structured service opportunities.

The service learning approach, although popularized within the last ten to fifteen years, is an idea that dates as far back as Aristotle and is representative of the philosophy embraced by John Dewey (1938). Dewey supported an educational philosophy that closely aligned experience and education. Kinsley (1994) suggested that the underlying principle of service learning is that learning occurs through the active behavior of the student. This idea has been reinforced in a number of studies and also through the work of educators like Piaget, Coleman, and Kolb. Ralston and Ellis (1997) suggested that Service Learning is experiential education engaged in by students. These experiential activities address human and community needs and are accompanied by structured opportunities specifically designed to promote student learning and development.

Serow, Calleson, Parker, and Morgan (1996) have suggested that the roots of service learning can be traced to three distinct educational and / or social traditions. These include (a) the concept of experiential education as championed by Dewey, (b) the service mission of public and private colleges and universities, and (c) the civilian youth service programs which began in the 1930s. These youth service initiatives were reinforced in the 1960s through the efforts of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson which resulted in programs such as the Peace Corps, VISTA, and the Teacher Corps. This tradition has been carried forward into the 1990s with the adoption of national service projects proposed by the Clinton administration as part of educational reform. In 1993, the enactment by congress of the National and Community Service Trust Act (NCSTA) fostered the integration of youth service into the nationwide educational reform movement.

The goal of NCSTA was to promote civic education among college bound students by offering them tuition vouchers, living allowances and health insurance in exchange for one year of locally based national service. These three educational / social traditions can be seen as a diverse collection of ideas and practices which served the purpose of balancing the needs of young people with those of the larger community. For an in-depth treatment on the roots of service learning the reader is directed to Carver's (1997) discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of service learning.

From a pedagogical perspective, service learning can be viewed as an experiential inductive approach to education which emphasizes direct personal experience. This approach can be sharply contrasted with the more traditional and formalized educational approach of information assimilation which typifies most classroom instruction. As Markus, Howard, and King (1993) have noted, both methods have their advantages and disadvantages and in fact probably complement one another. The more typical information assimilation model uses a top down approach to learning where principles and facts are presented through books, lectures, or videotapes. Learning primarily occurs through deductive reasoning in the form of "thought experiments" rather than from direct real world experience. The benefit of this approach is that a lot of information can be transmitted relatively quickly in an organized and logical manner. The disadvantage to this approach is that a students' ability to absorb information and retain it long term can be problematical. In contrast, service learning or experiential learning, can be viewed as a bottom up approach to learning where lessons and principles are derived inductively from direct personal experience and observation. Although this method may be seen as less efficient than reading and lectures in transmitting information, the benefit of this approach is that the abstractness of classroom instruction is transcended. The end result is that concrete examples of facts and theories are experienced first hand which allows connections to be made between real world problems and academic subject matter.

As noted previously, service learning is also grounded in experiential learning. Ralston and Ellis (1997), and Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, and Colby (1996) suggested that service learning is representative of Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning. In this model experiential learning is seen as a process that links education, work, and personal development. The process can be conceptualized as beginning with a concrete experience, which proceeds to a reflective process, and then leads to a phase of reasoning that attempts to make sense of the new experience. According to Kolb, learning occurs because this process creates knowledge through the transformation of experience.

Definitions of Service Learning

Definitions of service learning vary in form and complexity. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) defined service learning;

as a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect

on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 222)

Ehrlich (1996) viewed service learning as follows;

Service learning is the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study so that each strengthens the other. The basic theory of service learning is Dewey's: the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning. Students learn best not by reading great books in a closed room but by opening the doors and windows of experience. Learning starts with a problem and continues with the application of increasingly complex ideas and increasingly sophisticated skills to increasingly complicated problems. (p. xi - xii)

Kinsley (1994) defined service learning as;

an educational process that involves students in service experiences with two firm anchors. First their service experience is directly related to academic subject matter. Second it involves them in making positive contributions to individuals and community institutions. (p. 41)

Berson (1993) defined service learning from a community college perspective in this way;

Service learning expands on previous internship programs by combining the traditional educational goals of intellectual and personal growth with the social values of community service. (p. 30)

It should be noted that these definitions, despite differences in form and complexity, do contain common threads that provide linkage from one to another. These common links include the notion that "service experiences" are related to academic subject matter, and that these experiences meet or address a real community need.

Growth of Service Learning

Service learning is a growing trend in higher education. Berson (1994) noted that 64% of college and university students participate in service activities. As of 1994, nearly 500 institutions, from community colleges to research universities, were part of Campus Compact. This organization was founded in 1985 with the mission of promoting community service as part of the educational process (Serow, Calleson, Parker, & Morgan, 1996). According to Ralston and Ellis (1997), in 1995, 70 American universities offered Service Learning courses. On average these universities offered 15 Service Learning courses per campus. In October of 1998, The Service Learning Home Page (<http://csf.colorado.edu/sl/index.html>), developed and maintained by the University of

Colorado at Boulder, listed 92 colleges and universities that were involved with service learning.

The Components of Service Learning

Service learning is an educational process that uses three principles to guide student interaction in structured learning experiences. First, the service experience is directly related to the students academic subject matter. For example, the group that held the Halloween Dance for adults with disabilities consisted entirely of therapeutic recreation students enrolled in a recreation program design course. In order for this group to accomplish their assignment they had to follow a structured format, based on sound programming principles (Rossman, 1995), that guided them in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the event. Berson (1994) noted that service learning opportunities can be integrated into academic courses in several ways. These can range from (a) extra credit options; (b) as a substitute for a requirement such as a paper, exam, or project; or (c) as an integral part of the course. Ralston and Ellis (1997) detailed how a service learning approach was operationalized in a recreation leadership course. In that example, students had the opportunity to practice leadership skills, choose appropriate leadership styles, and use behavior management techniques learned in the leadership course while engaged in service learning projects.

The second principle to be considered is that a service learning approach allows students to make positive contributions to individuals and organizations in their community. This principle represents the concept of civic responsibility. The Haunted Hayride, previously noted, brought a financial return from the collection of user fees to the town park and recreation department and to the business that helped sponsor the event. However, the greatest benefits were not simply monetary. Benefits were noted as well in terms of public relations and community support for increased program offerings. In the year following the first event, the Park and Recreation Director received positive comments from local citizens about the event. This show of resident satisfaction was translated into demand and successive events have been held since. This notion of providing needed community service can be manifested in numerous ways. Examples taken from the literature reviewed for this paper included the following: (a) students involved in helping new immigrants pass their citizenship tests (Kinsley, 1994); (b) students involved with local food banks, homeless shelters, and women's shelters (Jarosz & Johnson-Bogart, 1996); (c) students involved with providing assistance for people living with AIDS (Kolenko, et al., 1996); (d) architectural students involved in redesigning a town hall (Berson, 1994); and (e) students involved in recreational leadership activities for at risk youth, latch key children, and children living in homeless shelters (Ralston & Ellis, 1997).

The third principal, and according to many authors the most important aspect of service learning, is the reflection process. According to Kinsley (1994), what makes service learning educationally distinct and pedagogically rich is that students reflect on: (a) what they are doing, (b) on what happens, (c) on what that means, and (d) on its

importance. Lott, Michelmore, Sullivan-Cosetti, and Wister (1997) suggested that "reflection is the characteristic which distinguishes service learning from volunteering. Within the service learning paradigm, reflection is the key to enhancing student learning because it makes connections between individual experience and theoretical understanding" (p. 42). These authors also note that the reflective process enhances learning in the following manner. In this application students think about the particular service learning project they were involved in, who they worked with, and who they served. This allows students to try to integrate their new experiences into what they already know. If the new experiences create dissonance between what is already known this may move students to think critically and question their basic assumptions and ideals. For example, some of the students involved in the Harvest Ball for senior citizens noted in their journals that the assumptions they held toward the elderly were entirely inaccurate. They had expected to encounter the "stereotypical" older adult but instead found very "real" people with many individual differences and characteristics. This process helped these students to redefine what they "knew."

The reflection process is accomplished by requiring students to engage in some type of structured reflective methodology. Methods might include any of the following; presentations, essays, journals, role playing, small group discussions, and problem solving. The reflective process should be viewed as a faculty facilitated process that provides appropriate feedback to the student. This last principle ensures that students undergo introspective thinking with regard to their educational experience. It has been suggested that reflection is the process that converts service experiences into learning experiences. According to Conrad and Hedin (1991), a nationwide survey of over 4,000 high school students reported that 75 percent of respondents felt they learned "more" or "much more" in service learning experiences than in regular classes.

A Service Learning Model

A Service Learning Model as utilized in the recreational programming class examples discussed earlier, is depicted in Figure 1. This model consists of five distinct stages which are hierarchal in nature, suggesting that lower stages provide a base for upper stages. Stage one addresses the need for institutional support and faculty adoption of service learning methodology. According to Bringle and Hatcher (1996) these conditions are needed for any service learning effort to be successful. Institutional support is characterized as a cyclical process that includes awareness, planning, prototype, support, expansion, and evaluation of the service learning experience.

An example of this process was undertaken at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis which resulted in the development of a Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning (CAPSL) (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Although widespread institutional support in the form of an Office of Service Learning, grant support, or in service training opportunities is highly desirable, it should be noted that service learning experiences can be implemented without such support. Interested faculty may still be able to

develop course components that address the service learning experience. For any service learning initiative to be successful, it has to be embraced by faculty. This is very important because the most common form of service learning experience is structured through the curriculum. Important considerations here are that faculty understand what constitutes service learning, and that they recognize the benefits associated with developing those type of learning experiences for students enrolled in their courses.

Stage two is comprised of the course instructor's ability to integrate service learning theory into course content. As noted earlier, this may be accomplished by structuring assignments in a number of ways. The important consideration in this stage of the model is that the instructor must design the course, or course components, so that the upper stages of the model are supported by the lower stages in terms of course and / or assignment content. Implied here is the notion that (a) the instructor guide students into appropriate structured service learning experiences, (b) that those experiences directly relate to aspects of course content, (c) that students provide needed services, and (d) that students involvement with some type of reflective methodology is facilitated. These steps in effect set the stage for the success of the service learning experience.

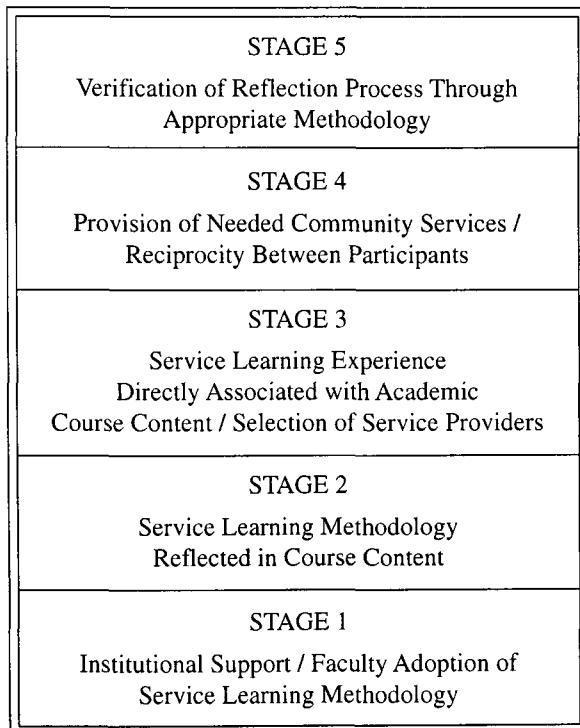


Figure 1. A Service Learning Model

Stage three of the service learning model addresses the principle of associating the students' service learning experiences with their academic course work and with outside agencies that provide services related to that course work. An application of this principle in a recreational programming course involved encouraging students to select program experiences directly related to their course work and anticipated future employment. Students were strongly urged to seek out service learning experiences that reflected their area of emphasis in the undergraduate curriculum (therapeutic recreation, management, programming, etc.). One way of offering students a wide variety of potential service learning experiences is to develop a network of alumni and local service providers. This network will provide a stable base from which students may choose learning opportunities. It is also likely that this network will grow as increasing numbers of successful service learning programs are completed. The success of these programs is often relayed in an informal manner to other service providers. This word of mouth promotion has great potential to increase service learning opportunities for students. As active agents in their own learning process, students should also be encouraged to seek out service learning opportunities. Although instructor discretion may be needed on occasion, it has been the experience of these authors that students are quite capable of selecting appropriate service learning sites.

Stage four of the service learning model involves students providing needed services to the local community through the auspices of local service providers. These service providers may range from public / private partnerships to non-profit community-based organizations. This can be viewed as an extremely important stage. This stage is representative of what Ralston and Ellis (1997) term "reciprocity." Reciprocity refers to the notion that all parties participating in service learning experiences play a learning and guiding role. This suggests that learning occurring in these experiences is not limited to the students. Rather, the service provider and service recipients also are afforded an opportunity to learn and grow. This is related to the symbolic interaction concept of "minded" self reflexive behavior (Denzin, 1978; Rossman, 1997) which suggests that individuals are able to shape and guide their own behaviors. Rossman has suggested that the meaning one attaches to a particular event or situation evolves out of the interaction one has with other "objects" in that setting. In service learning settings these may include physical objects (items used to facilitate the service learning experience), social objects (other people involved in the service learning experience), and abstract objects (agency philosophy, rules, etc. reflected in the service learning experience). The service learning experience then affords an opportunity for individuals to come together and focus their efforts towards a common goal. These individuals are capable of guiding their own behavior and of coordinating their behavior with the behavior of others. The meaning that results from these interactions is ultimately reflected in this notion of "reciprocity" or joint learning.

Stage five of the service learning model is perhaps the most important one. It is in this reflective stage that the service is transferred into learning through introspection. It is in this stage where students are able to reflect on their experience and have that reflec-

tive process impact their value development. Regardless of the reflective methodology chosen, a key consideration is that it allow for feedback from other students as well as the instructor. One method used by these authors to structure the reflective process is to have students keep an individual journal and develop a group notebook / journal for their service learning experience. In the individual journals, students are required to develop a logical entry system which allows for weekly entries. Students are encouraged to make journal entries regularly about any aspect of the service learning experience, including problems with group dynamics, interactions with outside agencies, and personal apprehensions or concerns. The time frame for individual journal entries is inclusive of the planning, implementation, and evaluation phase of the service learning experience. For students this means that journals are recorded through most of the semester. From an instructional perspective it is necessary to collect the journals periodically during the semester to give students feedback on their entries and overall journal development. The second component included in this stage was the development of a group notebook / journal which reflected the groups aggregate experience with the service learning project. This document uses Rossman's (1995) Program Development Cycle as an organizational framework for chapter development. The resulting document parallels the overall planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project. Once completed, this document is kept for archival purposes where it serves as a model and source of reference for future classes.

As discussed earlier and noted by others (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Ralston & Ellis, 1997) the reflective portion of the service learning experience may be accomplished through a number of methods. These include, but are not limited to (a) directed writings, (b) small group discussions, (c) class presentations, (d) role playing, (e) photo essays, and (d) other appropriate activities that allow for reflection and sharing of information. According to Kolenko, et al. (1996), responsibility for helping the student maximize the value of the reflective process lies with the instructor.

Service Learning: Pros and Cons

Service learning has become increasingly popular as an instructional methodology due to its perceived benefits. Much of the literature written on service learning goes to great length in expounding the benefits that may accrue to students, faculty, educational institutions, and local communities through its adoption. There is however, a portion of the literature that addresses the potential downside of adopting such an approach. These perspectives have been primarily addressed as barriers to the adoption of service learning methodology. Discussion of these barriers has centered on the resistance to the adoption of service learning methodology by faculty, and on issues of public perception. Both benefits and barriers of service learning are discussed in the following sections.

Benefits of Service Learning

The primary benefit of adopting service learning methodology is the effectiveness of its experiential approach, as previously discussed. This approach expands the range

of learning opportunities beyond the “safe zone” of the classroom. Interaction with organizations and individuals in the community allows students to challenge their existing beliefs and values, which then affords them an opportunity to construct new concepts of reality. The reflective process allows them to make adjustments to ineffective personal paradigms they may have held in the past. This component, the essence of the service learning approach, is the key which fosters the potential for genuine learning to occur.

Other benefits have also been associated with service learning. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) noted that research has supported claims that have been made relative to the value of service learning in higher education:

Markus, Howard, and King (1993), using procedures that closely approximated a randomized control group design, found that students in service learning sections had more positive course evaluations, more positive beliefs and values towards service and community, and higher academic achievement as measured on mid-term and final evaluations. Other research supports the contention that service learning has a positive impact on personal, attitudinal, moral, social, and cognitive outcomes. (p. 223)

These educational benefits are similar to findings reported by other authors cited in this paper (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Ralston & Ellis, 1997). Service learning also has the potential to make students who achieve at different academic levels more equal contributors in the classroom setting. Good, average, and even weak students become more actively engaged in generating course content through the service learning format and are therefore able to bring relevant experiences and knowledge to class discussions. Through this process students realize that they are more engaged in the learning process and that their knowledge becomes important to others (Lott, Michelmore, Sullivan-Cosetti, & Wister, 1997). In terms of a student’s personal development, Mettetal and Bryant (1996) reported that service learning involvement may result in (a) higher self esteem, (b) less depression, (c) increased social competence, and (d) moral development.

Faculty may also benefit from the inclusion of service learning into their courses. The nature of using the service learning approach means that faculty will have to continually rethink course content and structure. This process leads to improvements in an instructor’s knowledge base and often leads to new research paths. This primarily results from the dynamic nature of service learning and the diverse nature of service learning sites (Jarosz & Johnson-Bogart, 1996). Adoption of service learning methodology may also result in enhanced opportunities for applied research projects. Mettetal and Bryant (1996) outline a process that seems especially suitable for applied social science research. They suggest that combining service learning projects with a research agenda allows faculty a unique opportunity to gather data, train students in research methods, and conduct labor intensive research on a limited budget.

Another major benefit associated with the use of service learning is the contribution it can make to the service mission of a university. Although many universities have

had a strong commitment to service, the ability to fulfill this role has declined in recent years (Boyer, 1990). Subsequently there have been calls to have colleges and universities connect theory to practice in an attempt to address social problems. This renewed emphasis on service has the potential to enrich learning and enhance the community. It may also give new dignity to the scholarship of service (Boyer, 1994). Bringle and Hatcher (1996), noted that universities have many valuable resources that they can share with the community. These resources are comprised of faculty, students, staff, technology, and research expertise that can be utilized to serve the community. These resources may be used, for example, to strengthen economic development, address education and health needs, and contribute to the cultural life of a community. In a study that examined service learning programs at two community colleges, Serow et al. (1996), concluded that service learning can be part of both the educational and service missions of colleges and universities.

In terms of community benefit, service learning outcomes can be related to the concepts of social capital, economic growth, and community development. From a theoretical perspective the benefits of service learning are indicative of the concept of social capital described by Putnam (1993). Social capital is a condition representative of a society where systems are in place that allow individual members to become involved in efforts to help others. Analogous to the notions of physical capital and human capital, which can be viewed as tools and training that enhance an individual's productivity, social capital refers to features of social organization like norms, trust, and networks that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These features can be seen as mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness produce better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government. These forms of social capital tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. Successful collaboration in one endeavor often leads to success in future tasks. Putnam suggests that working together is easier in communities blessed with social capital. Social capital supports economic growth and community development by fostering positive norms of generalized reciprocity. In essence, the expectation is that if you help others they will then help you at some later date. A system of this type is efficient and also communicates the trustworthiness of others. Social capital is also productive. By working cooperatively, more can be accomplished with less. Service learning is one method of acquiring and developing social capital in communities.

Barriers to Service Learning

Any effort to develop service learning initiatives on campus must take into consideration the existence of potential barriers. These barriers generally revolve around issues of faculty resistance, lack of funding and institutional support, liability, and public perception (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Kolenko et al., 1996). The involvement of faculty in the development of service learning initiatives is seen as a critical component to the success of such efforts. This is because most service learning projects on campus are

manifested in course curriculum. Faculty resistance to the adoption of service learning methodology occurs on a number of levels. One concern is related to the time constraints imposed on faculty who decide to develop service learning assignments. Utilizing a service learning project in a course generally requires more time and effort on the part of the instructor than do other learning approaches. The service learning approach may then be viewed as being more burdensome and as potentially taking time away from more accepted efforts (e.g., scholarship, research) that will contribute to promotion and tenure. One conclusion reached by many authors cited in this paper was that the adoption of service learning methodology will initially require extra time and commitment on the part of the instructor. This consideration of extra time and effort is seen as necessary to ensure the success and effectiveness of the service learning experience. In a manner similar to conventional course preparation, the greatest effort always occurs at the beginning. Once a service learning course has been designed and implemented, future course offerings will be less time consuming. This is due to the fact that a course structure will be in place, community contacts will have been established, and instructors will have made changes based on evaluations of what worked and what did not.

Another barrier to the adoption of service learning initiatives is related to faculty perceptions of inadequate funding and institutional support. Depending on the nature and scope of planned service learning projects, funding and support may be seen as critical issues. For interested faculty who envision incorporating a service learning assignment as part of a course, funding may not be a crucial issue. However, some initiatives, like those noted by Kolenko et al. (1996), were developed in business schools at various colleges and universities at a cost of up to \$200,000. It was noted that funding is often available through state, federal, and private foundation grants. A more immediate concern for most faculty interested in developing service learning efforts is related to institutional support. Increasing numbers of colleges and universities are developing service learning initiatives. Often this is done through the establishment of some type of "office of service learning" on campus. Such an entity can help remove barriers by providing the following: (a) creating a common understanding of what constitutes service learning, (b) facilitating course development, (c) offering faculty development programs, and (d) providing feedback in terms of evaluation and resources (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

Issues surrounding a student's potential liability are also viewed as barriers to the adoption of service learning methodology. Kolenko et al. (1996) noted that such concerns "center on insuring the students safety and the potential liability of the school" (p. 138). Concerns of this sort may be used by opponents of service learning to help block implementation of service learning programs. The concern with safety and liability is a valid one. Due to the wide range of service learning opportunities that may exist in a given community, students may be engaged in relatively "low risk" or "higher risk" service activities. Low risk activities would be similar to the programming examples used earlier, higher risk activities, although not inherently dangerous, may potentially put students at greater risk. Kolenko et al. describes these examples of higher risk ser-

vices: (a) working with the homeless in inner cities, (b) helping convicted felons gain employment, (c) assisting with a victim / witness program, and (d) working with inner city youth. Despite the obvious liability issues that might arise in certain service learning settings, there is little discussion of liability in the service learning literature. One approach that faculty might use to address liability issues is the one recommended by the Bennion Center at the University of Utah (Bonar, Buchanan, Fisher, & Wechsler, 1996). Their approach consists of a risk management plan developed in conjunction with the university's risk manager or legal counsel. Such a plan might include items such as liability waivers, evidence of insurance, and providing orientation sessions from participating community agencies so that staff can explain the characteristics of the clients they serve. Bonar et al. maintain that risks can be successfully managed and should not present barriers to the development of service learning course on campus.

The final barrier to be discussed relates to public perceptions of the service learning experience. This notion of public perception can be representative of the views of students, parents, and agencies involved in service learning programs. Students may demonstrate resistance to the service learning process through objections to volunteering time outside of class. Students and parents impacted by tuition charges may also question if volunteering service to needy groups in the community is a proper use of their time and money. According to Gardner (1997), some parents and educators feel that service learning is another educational fad that draws time away from academics. Students and parents have also reacted to service learning as a form of indentured servitude. Participating agencies, particularly those that use other volunteers, may experience conflict between those volunteers and students who come to participate in service learning projects. For example volunteers may view the service learning students as a threat to their positions within an agency. This often results from the inability of participating agencies to effectively use the increased help that students bring to the site.

Implications for Service Learning in the Leisure Studies Curriculum

In 1997 the Board of Directors of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Service Learning. This committee was charged with examining service learning as it was currently being used in higher education and in leisure studies curricula. The committee's two year effort produced a number of outcomes, many of which parallel information presented in this paper. One outcome noted by the committee was that many existing learning experiences in leisure studies curricula may already address some of the service learning principles discussed earlier.

One area where this was most evident were the opportunities provided through programming and / or leadership courses. These types of experiences, similar to the ones described at the beginning of this paper, occur to varying degrees in most park and recreation curricula. These programs often provide a needed service to the local community while affording students "hands on" programming or leadership experience. However these experiences may not be adequately structured to ensure that students are ex-

posed to a true service learning experience. Ralston and Ellis (1997) have suggested that the main criteria which sets service learning experiences apart from more traditional fieldwork or practicum types of experiences are reflection and reciprocity. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) note that professional schools often create a variety of experiential learning opportunities for students. These would include activities like internships, clinicals, and co-op programs. They go on to suggest that such learning opportunities do not necessarily emphasize the importance of service in the community, but are more generally focused on improving a students professional skills. Consider the following example. A student completes an internship in a commercial recreation setting which focuses on learning marketing skills. The student then turns in a journal as part of their course assignments. Is this a service learning experience? The literature would suggest that this is not a service learning experience because the second principle of service learning, providing needed services to the community, has not been met. Although service learning experiences need to relate to academic course work, the main focus should be on the learning through service rather than simply on improving professional skills. Conversely, if an internship or practicum meets all the service learning criteria outlined earlier, then it would be safe to assume that it is indeed a service learning experience.

How Do I Start Using a Service Learning Approach?

Many courses offered in a typical leisure studies curriculum offer opportunities for the adoption of a service learning approach. The best advice may be to start small. Prepare to spend a bit more time in course and / or assignment development than what might be expected for more traditional courses and assignments. Find out what other faculty are doing with respect to service learning. Find out if your college or university offers support services for service learning initiatives. Revisit the service learning model for an overview of the process involved in implementing service learning efforts.

Chances are that existing assignments may already reflect some aspects of service learning. In order to turn these experiences into service learning experiences the instructor has to determine which principles of service learning are being addressed and which are not. For example, course work in leisure studies curricula often requires students to interact with the local community in terms of providing some form of service. These types of experiences are representative of the second principle of service learning which dictates that students perform needed community service. Generally this service experience also reflects academic course work. As previously discussed, programming and leadership courses may require that students engage in applied experiences to develop skills related to those areas. This is related to the first principle of service learning where the service provided by students reflects their academic course work.

It has been the experience of these authors that the component of service learning that is generally lacking and therefore needs to be emphasized in existing courses is that of reflection. This component, discussed in detail earlier, is indicative of stage five of the Service Learning Model (see Figure 1, pg 43). These findings are similar to those of

Lozada (1998) who suggested that the “reflection piece” is the component most often missing in experiential based course assignments. Subsequently, it is in this area that faculty will have to direct most of their efforts. Incorporating reflection methods into existing courses and course assignments will lead to the development of an effective service learning experience.

Faculty that use service learning methodology are aware of the benefits it brings into the classroom. They are also aware that these benefits extend beyond academic learning. The experiential approach that is emphasized in service learning develops the students sense of self. Students not only become more competent by participating in service learning experiences, they also become better connected to their communities and are more cognizant of how their efforts can make a difference. By carefully fostering an emphasis on service within the community, and by creating effective reflective methodology, faculty in leisure studies curricula can begin to explore the benefits associated with service learning.

Implications for Future Research

Service learning is a growing trend in higher education. All indications are that it will be part of most higher education curricula in the future. Faculty in leisure studies curricula are encouraged to explore the benefits that a service learning approach will bring to their classes. Although these benefits have been outlined earlier, it should be noted that the spirit of service learning has a long and cherished tradition in the field of leisure services. From a historical perspective it would be easy to associate the efforts of Jane Addams, Luther Gulick, and Joseph Lee with the service learning movement of today. The social welfare perspective held by these pioneers is reflected in the community service aspects of service learning.

The ideals of the early leaders in the parks and recreation movement are also found in other fields and endeavors. Bonar et al. (1996) have noted:

the concepts and ideals of the charity approach to service run long and deep in our culture, and most people enter into service with the idea of helping others....Another conceptual framework views community service as a way to enable those with the problems to be involved in identifying needs, planning solutions, and cooperating in the implementation of those solutions. (p. 44)

Given the notion that the ideals represented by service learning remain well established in our society, what are the future directions for service learning research? Bonar et al. have identified a number of potential areas for research. One area is related to needs assessment. A basic tenet in most needs assessment efforts is the desirability of incorporating input from the individuals who will be impacted by the assessment process. This suggests that service learning initiatives cannot simply be designed and applied to settings by well meaning academics. Implied is the need to involve those who

will be part of the service learning initiative in the planning process. This represents an ideal opportunity for faculty and students to be involved in the research process. This assessment phase lends itself to the use of both survey (quantitative) and interview methods (qualitative) of needs assessment. For example, how will potential service learning providers (e.g., university, faculty, students) be sure that all community needs are being addressed?

A comprehensive needs assessment process will allow service learning providers to identify which needs are being met and which are not. This process also re-inforces the notion that academic departments considering the use of service learning will have to work at developing partnerships with community service agencies. This collaboration may ultimately lead to potential research topics. For example, collaborating with outside agencies that address social welfare issues may open up opportunities for faculty research which addresses the efficacy of recreation-based intervention programs.

Closely related to this notion of collaboration is the concept of cross-disciplinary research. In many colleges and universities cross-disciplinary research is encouraged. For example, faculty from Leisure Services, Social Work, and Family Studies may work collaboratively to research issues surrounding youth at risk initiatives. Conventional wisdom suggests the youth at risk problem is best addressed holistically and includes the use of free time, family dynamics, and school environment. This type of effort may open new opportunities for funding and resulting scholarship endeavors.

Another area for potential faculty research relates to the improvements in student's academic achievement as noted earlier. Many authors have reported that adoption of a service learning approach leads to increases in academic achievement. Faculty that consider adopting the service learning approach may want to explore it these claims are true. Research designs might be implemented that address pre/post tests and/or control groups. Further documentation of these benefits in leisure services curricula may encourage more faculty to adopt service learning components in their courses. If the benefits associated with service learning can be further quantified, then faculty resistance as noted earlier will be lessened.

One final challenge with respect to future service learning research is related to NRPA/AALR Accreditation Standards. As noted earlier, the Board of Directors of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Service Learning in 1997. One charge of this committee was to explore the idea of incorporating service learning into the accreditation standards. It was then consensus of the committee that this would be a good idea. This was due to the fact that many existing field experiences already approximate a high percentage of service learning criteria and would not require substantial change. It was also felt that the benefits associated with service learning were a strong criteria for inclusion. If service learning is adopted as part of the accreditation standards, then research opportunities outlined here would become more widely available to all faculty in leisure studies curricula. Such a move would enhance the educational experience for students and faculty in the leisure services field.

References

- Berson, J. S. (1993). Win / win / win with a service learning program. Journal of Career Planning and employment, 53(4), 30 - 35.
- Berson, J. S. (1994). A marriage made in heaven: Community colleges and service learning. Community College Journal, 64(6), 14 - 19.
- Bonar, L., Buchanan, R., Fisher, I., & Wechsler, A. (1996). Service Learning in the Curriculum: A Faculty Guide to Course Development. Lowell Bennion Community Service Center. Salt Lake City: University of Utah.
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorate. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Princeton, NJ.
- Boyer, E. L. (1994, March 9). Creating the new American college. Chronicle of Higher Education, p. A48.
- Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1996). Implementing service learning in higher education. Journal of Higher Education, 67(2), 221 - 239.
- Carver, R. L. (1997). Theoretical underpinnings of service learning. Theory into Practice, 36(3), 143 - 150.
- Conrad, D., & Hedin, D. (1991). School based community service: What we know from research and theory. Phi Delta Kappan, 72, 761 - 764.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). The Research Act. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dewey, J. (1938) Experience and Education. New York: Collier.
- Ehrlich, T. (1996). Service Learning in Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gardner, B. (1997). The controversy over service learning. NEA Today, 16(2), 17.
- Jarosz, L., & Johnson-Bogart, K. (1996). New concepts of the relationship between college and community: The potential of service learning. College Teaching, 44(3), 83 - 88.
- Kinsley, C. W. (1994). What is community service learning? Vital Speeches of the Day, 61, 40 - 43.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kolenko, T. A., Porter, G., Wheatley, W., & Colby, M. (1996). A critique of service learning projects in management education: Pedagogical foundations, barriers, and guidelines. Journal of Business Ethics, 15(1), 133 - 142.

Lott, C. E., Michelmore, C. W., Sullivan-Cosetti, M., & Wister, J. A. (1997). Learning through service: A faculty perspective. Liberal Education, 83(1), 40 - 45.

Lozada, M. (1998). Old hat, new name? Techniques: Making Education and Career Connections, 73(1), 29 - 31.

Markus, G. B., Howard, J. P. F., & King, D. C. (1993). Integrating community service and classroom instruction enhances learning: Results from an experiment. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15(4), 410 - 419.

Mettetal, G., & Bryant, D. (1996). Service learning research projects: Empowerment in students, faculty, and communities. College Teaching, 44(1), 24 - 28.

Putnam, R. D. (1993). The prosperous community: Social capital and economic growth. Current, 356, 4 - 9

Ralston, L., & Ellis, G. (1997). Service learning: Connecting practical experience with classroom instruction. Scholar: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education, 12. 13 - 22.

Rossman, R. J. (1995). Recreation Programming: Designing Leisure Experiences.

Champaign, IL: Sagamore.

Serow, R. C., Calleson, D. C., Parker, L., & Morgan, L. (1996). Service learning and the institutional mission of community colleges. Community College Review, 23(4), 3 - 14.

University of Colorado at Boulder. (1998, October 28). The service learning home page. Retrieved October 28, 1998 from the World Wide Web: <http://csf.colorado.edu/sl/index.html>.