

## EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN MARKETING: A TWO-YEAR STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

A number of exploratory research studies have been conducted on the use of service-learning in business courses. Much of the literature develops a rationale for using service-learning by citing the need for civic education and enumerating its benefits for business students. Research conducted in several areas of business, including marketing, reveals an increasing understanding of how service-learning can be applied in different disciplines. However, limited empirical data is available which can be used to emphasize the civic and academic value of service-learning. To speed up the institutionalization of service-learning, studies need to reveal that the concept works in a specific course, over time, with different types of activities, for different professors and even for different majors. This paper presents the results of such a study conducted over a two year period as part of a principles of marketing course at an AACSB accredited business school.

A total of nine faculty and six hundred and fifty five students participated in the study. Two models of service-learning, the Discipline-Based Service-Learning and the Problem-Based Service-Learning models were utilized. Three hundred and seventy three students engaged in team projects, while the remaining students worked on an individual basis. Twenty-three percent were marketing majors, sixty-eight percent were majoring in other business options, and the remaining nine percent were non-business majors. Based on existing research in other academic areas, four general desired outcomes were selected. These outcomes related to civic responsibility, career development, academic learning, and personal development. To measure student reported outcomes, a self-administered questionnaire was developed, utilizing a survey instrument designed for assessing the impact of service-learning.

Results of the study reveal that all student-learning outcomes were achieved to some extent, with the greatest impact on civic responsibility. Students reported that the primary benefit was to show them how they could become more involved in their community and how their efforts impacted community organizations. Whereas they may have originally

thought volunteer work was comprised primarily of mundane tasks, the assignment allowed them to engage in, and become aware of, higher-level activities. Particularly encouraging was the increase in the student's propensity to volunteer.

Students tended to agree that the assignment made them more aware of new career possibilities and that participating in this type of activity would be an asset upon graduation. Results show less success in using the assignment to enhance an understanding of the principles of marketing. However, only twenty percent of the students felt that the technique did not enhance their understanding of course content.

The assignment's impact on personal feelings, biases, and appreciation for diversity had mixed results. Reflective papers revealed that students who were more directly involved with an agency's clients tended to be more personally affected by the experience. On the other hand, when a team or individual worked primarily with an organization's management staff, there was less impact on personal factors.

When results were cross tabulated by type of assignment, those involved in team projects reported a more significant positive impact on several personal factors (e.g. leadership and communication ability) as well as academic learning. A similar analysis based on major revealed a greater impact on the career development dimension for marketing option students.

Core business courses should provide more than just an introduction to a subject matter. They should also be used to help develop personal skills and values, as well as build career awareness. There are many methods of teaching aimed at enhancing knowledge, skills, and values. As this study shows, the value of service-learning lies in its ability to provide not only these outcomes, but also to help create civically responsible individuals.