

INTRODUCING COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES INTO THE MARKETING CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

Community service has the potential to fulfill a myriad of social responsibility goals in the business curriculum. In Phase 1 of this study, student data was collected following the introduction of a community engagement (CE) project in an experimental group 1, and a combination of CE and service learning (CE+SL) in experimental group 2. As compared to CE+SL and Control groups, CE respondents reported higher levels of perceived benefits (e.g., helping the community, self improvement, and job search advantage) post participation. Phase 2 and 3 studies will explore additional benefits, knowledge/commitment measures, and student reported and instructor evaluated learning outcomes (e.g., grades).

INTRODUCTION

Typically, community service requires students to work on a specific service project to benefit a nonprofit organization while using the pedagogy of service-learning (CE+SL). However, the idea of providing a single course project as a form of community engagement (CE) is seldom discussed in the literature. In so doing we addressed the recommendation of Petkus (2000) to focus research in this domain on empirical studies. We sought to support and extend McCarthy and Tucker's (1999) scenario-based study by utilizing a field experiment and modifying their conceptualization of perceived benefits and other attitudes business students hold about community service and service-learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We posit that junior undergraduates are more open to a reciprocal – doing things with others rather than for others (Klink & Athaide, 2004) – or co-created learning experiences than senior students who are more conditioned to accept received knowledge.

H1: Students enrolled in introductory level marketing courses will report a higher level of perceived benefits of doing community service than those enrolled in advanced level marketing courses.

McCarthy and Tucker (1999) report that student involvement in community service results in positive

perceived benefits; however, they suggest that students are less positive about having college courses incorporated with service-learning.

H2: Students who participate in community engagement (CE Only) activities will report a higher level of perceived benefits of doing community service than those who do not.

It is also important to understand if environmental constraints mediated the relationship between awareness and perceived benefits.

H3: Students who report higher levels of environmental constraints will report a lower level of perceived benefits of participating in community service.

METHOD

We used experimental and control groups sharing common attributes to determine which of 3 specific community service activities (e.g., CE Only; CE&SL; Control) result in higher levels of perceived benefits as a result of participating. We collected survey data from 334 business students at a major U.S. 4-year public university who actually participated (or not) in community service activities.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Findings affirm the use of community service projects in the marketing curriculum as a tool for enhancing student benefits from CE. Students in the advanced level of the curriculum, but have not been exposed to community service modules (i.e., the control group), are found to be particularly skeptical about the activity. In terms of level of exposure we found that less is more – CE students perceived a higher level of benefit than CE-SL. This is an encouraging guideline for curriculum design: that moderate exposure to community service for students yields the largest gain in their perceived benefits as a result of the experience.

References and Appendices Available on Request