Service-Learning and Forensics

Edward A. Hinck and Shelly S. Hinck

Edward Hinck (PhD, U of Kansas, 1988) is professor of speech communication and Shelly Hinck (PhD, U of Kansas, 1988) is associate professor of speech communication and the coordinator for service-learning at Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

A movement throughout American higher education is toward service-learning, a "form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). Currently, this trend exists on the margins of academe but holds much promise for student and community development (Ehrlich, 1996). The call for service-learning has been in response to two concerns regarding higher education: that colleges should "assume a leadership role in addressing society's increasing problems and growing needs," and that colleges become more accountable for the vast social resources devoted to their goal of educating students (Jacoby, 1996, p. 3). This movement toward service-learning represents an opportunity for speech and debate programs to deliver innovative educational experiences and serve community needs within the educational mission of a college or university. To pursue this opportunity, we offer a definition of service-learning, consider four reasons why directors of forensics have hesitated to initiate service-learning projects, offer a rationale for service-learning to convince directors to consider such projects, and propose a pedagogical model for developing service-learning projects in forensics. We establish the connections between service-learning and forensic programs in the hope that forensic directors can utilize service-learning activities as a way to advance the education of students, meet department and university goals in innovative ways, and advance the image of the forensics program, department, and university within the community.
SERVICE-LEARNING DEFINED

Howard (1997) defines service-learning as a pedagogical model that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service. The National and Community Service Act of 1990 describes this pedagogy as a method involving four components: (1) Students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized experiences with either a profit or nonprofit agency or organization that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with that school and community; (2) projects are integrated into the student's academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, and write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity; (3) projects provide students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; (4) projects enhance what is taught in school by extending learning beyond the classroom into the community to develop a sense of caring for others.

Service-learning and forensics are not incompatible. When the Second National Conference on Forensics developed recommendations regarding the future of forensics (Parson, 1984), service-learning had not yet reached the forefront of discussions regarding the mission of higher education. However, at least one resolution, from the section devoted to identifying ways to strengthen educational goals and programs, suggested a relationship between forensic activities and community involvement. Resolution number sixteen stated that "Forensic educators should initiate and encourage participation in ongoing forums of forensic activities that are available to campus and community audiences" (p. 41). Additionally, in the section devoted to promotion and tenure standards, public service was considered to be a relevant criterion for evaluating a forensic director (p. 30). Since that time, the need to connect higher education with community concerns has become more pressing (Jacoby, 1996). Thus, it seems appropriate to assess the role and function of forensic programs to serve community needs
as well as the larger community of which colleges and universities are a part.

**CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING SERVICE-LEARNING IN FORENSICS**

The forensic community has yet to explore fully the opportunities afforded by service-learning activities. Although explanations for the community's limited service-learning activities vary, we offer four reasons why forensic educators have been slow to answer the call for service-learning.

First, we find little discussion of service-learning in relation to the educational mission of forensic programs. Graduate programs designed to train individuals to direct speech programs have focused largely on preparation to train individuals to direct competitive speech programs; therefore, students face limitations in the curriculum offered in graduate programs that specialize in the training of forensic directors (Hanson, 1991; Hunt, 1991). Although highly trained directors and student speakers could easily adapt to noncompetitive audiences and contexts, there has been little discussion of reasons why directors and students should consider service-learning activities to fall within the educational mission of a program.

Second, the concept of service-learning seems closely related to volunteerism, internships, and experiential learning. Given these perceptions, directors might believe that service-learning is something that takes place in an internship, independent study, or in relation to the campus volunteer office. If distinctions between these types of educational experiences are unclear, they might doubt the relevance of service-learning projects to forensic programs and perceive service-learning to be the concern of other offices and course formats. Service-learning might rank as a low priority if it is perceived to be occurring elsewhere on campus.

Third, directors might perceive little available time for such projects. Preparation for competition, tournament travel, program
management, and recruitment efforts might already consume much of a director's resources for coaching and administration. Adding an additional project without a clear rationale for what it returns to the students, the director, the program, the university, and the community would probably dissuade a director from considering service-learning.

Fourth, students might perceive little time available for such projects. Many students manage part time employment, a full load of course work, and forensic activities along with some kind of social life. Adding a service-learning project to the list of priorities would exert additional pressure on students. Additionally, given the limited discussion of service-learning activities in relation to forensics, students might miss the connection between community service and the traditional goal of forensic activities that has been competitive success.

Despite these concerns, service-learning can be integrated with educational objectives for competitive speech programs. Directors can obtain information on how to design and implement service-learning components in their programs. Time for service-learning activities can be built into program activities or substituted for the time involved in attending a tournament. However, these actions will occur only if directors and students are convinced of the benefits. Therefore, we offer the following rationale for service-learning in forensics.

A RATIONALE FOR SERVICE-LEARNING IN FORENSICS

The rationale for service-learning in forensics can be outlined in terms of three claims. First, higher education has historically contributed to the education of individuals for citizenship in a democratic community. Since the forensic community draws on the resources of higher education to teach students how to talk about pressing social issues, forensic educators should have something to say about how forensics might address social problems. Second, positive effects of service-learning has been revealed in research
across disciplines. Given the research regarding the benefits of service-learning, forensic educators should consider service-learning as a viable method to promote educational growth on the part of students. Third, service-learning holds numerous benefits for the forensic community. These benefits are described in terms of educational outcomes for students, enhancing a program's status within a university community, and personal and professional rewards for forensic directors.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Historically, higher education has been linked to developing citizens for a democratic community (Butts, 1980). The earliest goals for higher education were identified by American faculty and administrators as the "preparation of citizens for active involvement in community life" (Smith, 1994, p. 55). Shifting from a pre-revolutionary war focus on individual students to the post-revolutionary war process of creating a nation, for the last century and a half, American higher education has sought to prepare citizens for a national, democratic community. Since this time, the call to community service has been answered with a variety of initiatives in response to changing needs. Even in recent decades, presidents have sought to provide leadership with their visions of community service—from John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps program initiated in 1961, to Lyndon Johnson's Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) in 1965, and most recently through Bill Clinton's Americorps National Service program. In the last decade, the idea of connecting community service to the educational mission of colleges and universities has been revisited (Jacoby, 1996).

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING IDENTIFIED IN RESEARCH

Research suggests that well designed service-learning projects result in many positive effects for students. Markus,
Howard, and King (1993) found that service-learning helped students apply concepts to the real world, increased the likelihood of attending class, and helped them to achieve higher grades. In a sample of 48 faculty from sixteen different disciplines across the nation, Hesser (1995) found that 74% of the faculty interviewed felt that community service-learning projects had very extensively or extensively improved students' critical thinking/analytical skills; over 50% felt that the community service-learning project had extensively or very extensively improved problem solving skills and understanding how communities worked; and 76% felt that service-learning extensively or very extensively contributed to conceptual and course content learning outcomes. Myers-Lipton (1996) found that students who engaged in service-learning showed larger reductions in modern racism than students who participated only in volunteer activities or no service at all. Reporting preliminary results from a major longitudinal study of the effects of service on college students, Astin (1996) found that "participating in volunteer service during the undergraduate year has positive effects on such postcollege outcomes as enrolling in graduate school, being committed to racial understanding, and socializing across racial ethnic lines. It even increases the likelihood that the student will donate money to the college" (p. 131). Scales and Blyth (1997) found that participation in service-learning improves various dimensions of personal development; improves various dimensions of citizenship and personal development; improves various dimensions of intellectual development/academic success; and leads students to feel they had greater autonomy and responsibility for their learning than usual. Eyler, Giles, and Braxton (1997) found similar results. Drawing from the service-learning experiences of 1500 students at 20 colleges and universities, they reported that service-learning programs "appear to have an impact on students' attitudes, values, skills and the way they think about social issues even over the relatively brief period of a semester" (p. 13). Eyler, et al conclude that offering courses that integrate service-learning into the curriculum enhances the educational value of the programs,
may facilitate positive faculty-student relationships, and develop students' commitment to participate effectively as citizens. Finally, Stacey and Langer (1996) identified positive outcomes for students involved in academic service-learning projects in four categories that included personal growth, career development, social development, and academic success/cognitive development. An exhaustive review of the research on the effect of service-learning on students is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the evidence of positive effects from service-learning should compel directors to look more closely at the possibility of initiating service-learning in forensics.

**BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO FORENSIC STUDENTS**

Service-learning activities can challenge students to develop new understanding of self, community, and the value of their disciplinary knowledge since such activities call on students to apply their knowledge of speech communication in real world contexts. First, service-learning activities push students out of their comfort zones. While tournaments are qualitatively different from traditional classroom settings, they still possess a homogeneity that makes them familiar experiences to the veteran competitor. Service-learning activities, especially if they are directed at under-resourced populations or marginalized elements of the community, constitute a rich source of diversity for college students (Rhoads, 1997). These experiences develop students' skills by requiring them to confront and overcome anxiety in applying their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts. In a service-learning project on leadership development, Althaus (1997) identified some questions students asked in reflecting on their experience: "Typical questions they ask are: 'Will I look foolish?' 'How do I learn to talk to strangers?' 'Do I have anything to offer these people?' 'Why am I here?' 'Am I up to the challenge?' 'Can I do this?' 'Will I respect and say the right things to people [at my site]?'" (p. 126). Service-learning calls upon students to apply communication skills
in unfamiliar contexts, to test their ability to adapt to diverse audiences, and communicate appropriately in new situations. Service-learning requires students to extend and refine the kinds of communication skills that others have argued forensics develops: interpersonal skills (Friedley, 1991), small group communication skills (Zeuschner, 1991), organizational communication skills (Swanson, 1991), and possibly, media or public relations skills (Dreibelbis & Gullifor, 1991). Service-learning takes students out of the forensics laboratory and places them in the community, thus forcing them to assess their skills as communicators in real world, nonacademic environments.

Second, service-learning holds out the possibility of developing values of personal and social responsibility in our students. To determine if this is a unique value of service-learning in forensics, it is important to ask how well tournaments address this objective. Only a director knows if a forensic student's participation in competitive activities has reached a point of diminishing educational return on the investment of their time. While competition serves as a necessary mechanism to motivate students to learn how to prepare a performance and how to perform under pressure, at some point, the skills requisite for competitive success are probably obtained and the motivation for participation can become absorbed solely in the desire for competitive success. Focusing on competitive excellence is not inherently problematic for any given student. However, for the director, it is worth considering what aspects of forensic activity might offer a greater return on that student's investment of time. Derryberry (1991) has argued that directors should continually examine the rationale underlying forensic participation. Forensics programs seem uniquely suited to address issues of social responsibility. Debate topics focus on social problems. Individual events, such as extemporaneous speaking, persuasive speaking, and rhetorical criticism, address current events and controversies. One could even argue that many interpretive performances are aimed at increasing awareness of social issues. However, few courses in a university setting are directed
toward teaching social responsibility. It is only through actual practice that students can perceive and develop a concept of personal social responsibility. Often, it is only through a service-learning project that a student comes into close contact with someone who is poor, homeless, of a vastly different social world than the one he grew up in. The possibilities for enhanced understanding of communication concepts and practices through reflection on service activities cannot be overstated. Forensics is the closest activity to actual practice in the communication discipline. Our students are trained intensively in communication skills. Therefore, moving forensics out of the laboratory and into the field promises to activate values of citizenship more than traditional classroom and laboratory settings.

**BENEFITS FOR A PROGRAM**

Service-learning activities are consistent with the objectives of a liberal arts education. Within departments of speech communication, the importance of reaching out to audiences with a message is a central emphasis of many courses. Public speaking classes, argumentation classes, small group decision-making classes, courses in communication and leadership, as well as organizational communication courses examine how messages affect audiences. Forensic activities are no different from speech activities in the classroom. In an important reevaluation of the "forensics as laboratory" metaphor, Aden (1991) has argued that forensic activities are better understood as a "liberal art employing a rhetorical perspective" (p. 106). Citing Bryant, Aden (1991) noted how a liberal arts education, following Isocrates, should serve noble ends. Since forensic students have well-developed communication skills and sophisticated experience in constructing messages, it seems reasonable to expect that they should be provided with an opportunity to connect their educational training with learning experiences outside the university. Service-learning can accomplish noble ends through addressing community needs.
Forensic directors should utilize the prevailing concern for accountability to justify the educational value of their programs. Although university administrators might not always understand the value of competitive forensic activities (Kay, 1990), they are aware of service-learning. Developing closer connections between the university and the community through service-learning is an activity administrators are willing to reward since such projects enhance a university's image in the community. Derryberry (1991) suggests that directors consider ways to involve students in a variety of events, communicate before a variety of audiences, avoid elitism by considering educational opportunities that extend far beyond high school experiences, and continually reexamine the rationale for forensics. Sellnow (1994) has argued for experiential learning as a way to justify forensic programs to administrators. Service-learning is not only consistent with these initiatives but goes beyond experiential learning and service to a commitment for social change.

Service-learning differs from community service and experiential education in the sense that service-learning projects attempt to balance a student's learning with the service provided to the community. This element of service-learning is distinctly different from the approach offered by Preston and Jensen (1995) who approach service activities with the assumption that service must be balanced with "the time spent on pursuing the purpose of the forensic program—namely to spend time training students in the communication skills necessary for success in competition" (p. 1). While forensic programs can provide community service in the way of exhibition debates, speakers bureaus, and showcases (Sellnow, 1994), a key difference between experiential learning, volunteerism, and service-learning is that in service-learning, students learn about the community through addressing some social need. Elements of citizenship and leadership are engaged to bring about a connection between a student's education and community. In short, service-learning attempts to develop social responsibility, an outcome not always evident or intended in more narrowly conceived experiential learning activities.
Service-learning activities can bring much favorable publicity to a program. In fact, Wolff and Gibson (1996) suggest that instructors engaged in service-learning develop a marketing strategy for their program. Their advice is to "keep media relations, alumni, and other key campus offices informed of the program's activities and upcoming events" (p. 45). Preston and Jensen (1995) have argued that community service can bring public relations rewards to programs as well as functioning to recruit students to the program. The result of building a positive public image with the community is that administrators would be more willing to support a program that serves the larger mission of the university in such a publicly acknowledged way than a program serving a more narrowly defined purpose. This can be an important element for programs sustained on small budgets. Although a minimal budget for competitive activities might limit opportunities to win team sweepstakes awards, administrators might be more supportive if service-learning components garnered favorable publicity for the program, department, and university. In a year-end report sent to administrators, forensic directors can not only document the number of students involved in the program, awards won, and season highlights, but also describe the service-learning projects the students engaged in over the season. Such a document communicates the value of a forensics program on at least three levels: as a showcase for a university's talented students, as an educationally sound program that maximizes learning opportunities for those involved, and as a vehicle for connecting the university with the community for desirable social change.

**BENEFITS FOR A DIRECTOR**

Service-learning can be considered an innovative form of teaching. Service-learning activities require directors to justify projects with regard to the educational needs of students. Not every course in a university catalog can be connected to service-learning nor should every student be required to become involved in the
community. Thus, the development of a service-learning project requires some creativity to ensure that it is pedagogically sound. When community needs can be matched with the objectives of a forensic program and its students, directors are required to assume new roles, develop new means of assessing student learning, reach out to new audiences and constituencies, and engage in additional teaching activities in service-learning projects.

By reaching beyond the classroom and traditional competitive activities to engage students in community service, directors can have an impact as educators in the community. Boyer (1990) described service as the "scholarship of application" where scholars use their knowledge for the benefit of society. More recently, Coye (1997) noted Boyer's revised vision of higher education to include institutions that encourage and reward the "scholarship of engagement."

We need not look far to find social problems in our community. And even if we are absorbed in our teaching, coaching, and writing activities, it is difficult to avoid coverage of our many social problems in the media. One statistic that we found especially troubling was provided by Jonathan Kozol in his 1995 book, *Amazing Grace*: In 1990, only 23,000 black men earned degrees from U.S. colleges and universities while 2.3 million black men and juveniles passed through the nation's jail and prison systems. That so few African American males are in college and so many are in the prison system should be disturbing to all of us. Such knowledge prompted us to ask if colleges and universities should have a role in reversing such statistics? what could we as educators do in our local communities? can we fulfill our obligations as teachers and scholars while serving our communities in a process of social change? Service-learning challenges directors to reflect on their role as prospective agents of social change. In these ways, service-learning can regenerate enthusiasm for teaching after intensive careers pursuing competitive success. Thus, service-learning might be one way of avoiding "burnout," a constant risk of broadbased programs with active directors (Gill, 1990; Jensen, 1995; Pettus & Danielson,
1992). While service-learning consumes time like other forensic activities, directors can find reward in fostering social responsibility in their students, in bringing about positive social change through direct action in the community, and through addressing social problems with their knowledge.

**DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS**

Service-learning is an effective pedagogy when projects are well-designed and well-executed. In this section, we discuss the tasks that need to be completed before engaging in service-learning and the tasks that need to be completed after the project to ensure effective design and implementation.

A director must match community needs with the service provided by the academic content of forensics. Directors should initially assess the kinds of resources they could provide to a community. For example, sharing speaking talents with community service agencies would be appropriate. Having students volunteer to serve on the speaker's bureau of the local United Way or other community agencies might be a possibility. Providing basic instruction and training for organizations who need speakers is an option. Organizing a speaker's bureau on community issues can be undertaken. Assisting community agencies in presenting a debate over local issues might be needed. Gifted and talented competitions exist for elementary, middle and high school students (Tallent-Runnels & Candler-Lotven, 1996) but given current demands placed on school instructors, school districts across the country can use volunteers from the community to enhance program offerings for students (Ross, 1993). Sharing interpretive selections with the elderly or with younger children may also be a service worth pursuing. All of these projects are possible but it is up to each individual director to decide what services can be provided. In each case, the director should be able to describe the knowledge and skills students will develop as a result of addressing the community...
need.

Once the director has determined what service resources he has available, the university service-learning coordinator should be contacted to see if needs on the part of the community have already been identified. More importantly, Rubin (1996) advises that a faculty member should find out where compatible efforts already exist on campus for starting a service-learning program. Developing institutional ties across campus can save a director an enormous amount of time by preventing duplication of previous efforts by faculty members who already have initiated service-learning programs.

If a university does not have a service-learning coordinator, the volunteer office should be contacted. In the case where a volunteer office does not exist on campus, one can establish contact with community agencies or community representatives to determine if a need exists in the community that the forensic program can address.

A director must decide whether the project will take curricular or co-curricular form. A curricular project requires students to complete a service-learning project as part of an academic requirement for a class. Following this approach, if a university offers academic credit for participation in forensics, a director may require participation in a service-learning project on the syllabus.

Pursuing service-learning as a co-curricular project assumes students should be able to develop their own skills as agents of social change. If a university does not offer academic credit for participation or if only some members of the team are enrolled, then it may make more sense for the director to bring a service-learning proposal to the team in the form of a co-curricular project for the purpose of securing students' commitment. For those students who are skeptical of the personal payoff, a director's enthusiasm may be necessary to convince them to take a chance with the project. Scheuerman (1996) offers these six steps for the development of a co-curricular service-learning project: (1) develop community sites; (2) assist the student or the organization in choosing a site; (3) get
the student or organization to make a commitment to the site; (4) prepare the student or organization for service; (5) engage the student or organization in reflection; and (6) evaluate outcomes.

Both curricular and co-curricular projects require planning. In a curricular project the director must carefully construct the syllabus and make sure a project is available during the semester. In a co-curricular project, the director must have a clear sense of what he hopes the project will do for his students' personal development and must be able to communicate that vision to his students. In both cases, the director must be able to identify tentative learning objectives for his students and balance them against logistical constraints involving students' classes, tournament schedules, employment schedules, and the director's obligations as a faculty member or administrator. Since the development of learning and project objectives can occur only within the logistical constraints of the team's total time commitments, it is important to set realistic goals, provide a single quality service to the community, and ensure a well-processed experience for the students rather than promising more to the community than the program can deliver.

Service-learning projects must be planned in accordance with a sound theoretical framework. Four elements necessary for balancing service with learning can be derived from the work of Kolb (1984). They include (1) an experience on the part of the students where course material can be applied to real world contexts; (2) an opportunity for reflection that may include formal discussion sessions but at a minimum should provide some opportunity for immediate reflection after the experience; (3) reciprocity, which is defined as the learning the student acquires about the community and the system to whom the service is provided; and (4) assessment of what students have learned, which can be measured in terms of personal growth, knowledge of their community, or increased understanding of how academic course content can be applied in real world contexts. In this section, we discuss the conceptual foundations of service-learning in terms of reciprocity, experience and reflection, assessment, and celebration.
A key component of service-learning is the idea of reciprocity. Reciprocity suggests that "All parties in service-learning are learners and help determine what is to be learned. Both the server and those served each, and both learn" (Kendall, 1990, p. 22). In fact, reciprocity helps to differentiate service-learning from other forms of experiential education. Furco (1996) claims that "service-learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring." Viewing service-learning in this manner suggests that communities are seen as partners in learning, partners that can enhance and increase their abilities to solve social problems. Hence, when considering service-learning projects, directors should consult with service-learning coordinators on campus or community agencies to identify projects where reciprocity is possible.

To be effective, structured opportunities must be provided for students to reflect on their experiences. Experiential educators realize that learning does not occur due to experience itself but in the reflective component of the service experience. Two approaches to reflection are available. Choosing the one most appropriate depends on whether the service-learning project is curricular or co-curricular. If the project is a curricular requirement, reflection occurs most likely after the project is completed. The Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) described the role reflection plays after community service:

Reflection is a crucial component of the community service-learning experience. Reflection should happen immediately after the experience to discuss it—reactions, stories, feelings, and facts about the issues which may dispel any stereotypes or an individual's alienation from service—and, reflection should place the experience into a broader context, (cited by Mintz & Hesser, 1996, p. 31).
If a service-learning project is co-curricular, reflection can occur during the planning phase, during the service, and after the project. Toole and Toole (1995) describe their adaption of Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning as a service-learning cycle. Students are engaged in reflective thinking at all stages of the project. As students begin to develop observations during service, analyze their experience, form new understandings, and later consider new applications of their knowledge about their community and subjects, the process spirals from a single point of experience outward, building on each successive experience to form complexes of understandings about community needs and their academic subject matter. Their cycle is characterized as a spiral for three reasons:

1. Reflection infuses all parts of the process rather than being a stage that follows experience.
2. The cycle is shown as a spiral rather than a circle, illustrating that students bring new competence to each successive experience.
3. Although it is common and appropriate for many experiential activities to start with the experience itself, service-learning activities typically begin by identifying a need, creating a project to meet that need, and then planning and preparing for implementation (p. 104).

While the importance of reflection is acknowledged by all service-learning practitioners, the ways to encourage reflection are varied. Reflection can occur either individually or in a group, it can be done either orally or in a written format, it can be class specific or experience specific, and it can include feedback from all or any of the following: persons being served, peers, and program leaders (Porter-Honnet & Poulsen, 1989). Further, Toole & Toole (1995) suggest that instructors can engage students in reflection in at least three ways: "reflection on the task itself; reflection on the social, political, economic, vocational or other contexts of the task; and reflection on related issues of the human spirit, such as questions of
purpose, meaning, suffering, hope, friendship, justice, care, and responsibility" (p. 105).

ASSESSMENT

If service-learning is integrated into a course offering academic credit for forensic participation, some assessment of learning attributed to the service activity should be undertaken. For forensic programs that do not integrate service-learning into a course, co-curricular methods of assessment are appropriate. Finally, it is important to assess the program's impact in addressing the community need. Below, we discuss strategies for curricular, co-curricular, and project assessment.

Curricular assessment of service-learning projects in forensics can take a number of different forms: journals, class discussions, self-assessment, portfolios, team-based learning, and observations. One of the more popular methods to assess learning is through journals. Journals provide a private and safe context for students when sharing their feelings about the service activity and can also be used to help students connect their forensic experiences with the service experience. Class discussions offer faculty a glimpse of how students are understanding and applying the concepts of the course with the service experience. Listening to how other students are processing the experience may serve as a valuable point of reference for all students. Self-assessment requires students to reflect on how the service-learning experience impacted them, how their own attitudes and skills affected their behavior, and how their relationship with the service recipient challenged prior understanding of the service beneficiary population. Portfolios, team-based learning and learning communities are other ways to assess student learning. Asking students to create a portfolio that reflects their role in the service-learning experience can provide information that students can share with fellow students, administrators, and perhaps, future employment interviewers. However, making sure that the information included in the portfolio does not violate confidentiality
of the service recipient should be a primary concern of the student and the instructor. Observations of presentations as well as interactions with the service recipient provides additional evidence of behavioral and cognitive learning.

If students do not receive academic credit for the service-learning project, journal writing, portfolio development, and reflection essays might not be appropriate for co-curricular service-learning projects. However, team discussions and observation of student service recipient interactions might be a more effective way to assess student learning.

Finally, it is important to evaluate the project's impact on the service recipient. Such evaluation methods can include both quantitative and qualitative assessments of the specific population being served. Questionnaires filled out by the forensic student, the service agency, and the service evaluator will offer valuable data about the overall effectiveness of the service-learning project. It is important to remember that a well-documented and well-evaluated service-learning program will provide data that will serve many purposes: evidence of change in student attitudes and skills, evidence that a community need has been met, and evidence that forensic programs can address community needs.

**CELEBRATION**

An often overlooked yet important element in service-learning is celebrating the project's completion. McKeown claims that "celebration is the recognition not only of participants' successes but also of their vision, effort, and growth" (p. 196). Service-learning contributes to the creation and maintenance of a community spirit. According to McKeown, "in the success of the service all parties join in a recognition of the intrinsic joy or good that results from the service rendered." Recognizing and praising all individuals involved in the service-learning project can be as spontaneous as a pat on the back or as planned as a school or community celebration. Whatever approach to celebrating is chosen,
it is important that all involved appreciate the learning acquired, the friendships made, and the caring that was enacted. Celebrations afford service-learning participants the opportunity to reflect on the past project, celebrate the completion of the project, and motivate others to join in future projects. In these ways, celebration builds community spirit.

CONCLUSION

Hanson (1991) has argued that directors are responsible for setting the educational agenda of a forensic program. If a director decides that educational experiences regarding social responsibility and social change are relevant to educational outcomes, then service-learning activities should be pursued. In some circumstances, service-learning can provide important educational alternatives to competitive experiences. Where service-learning projects can be matched with community needs and program interests, service-learning can provide important benefits for a forensic program. Service-learning can enhance students' understanding of communication concepts, connect students to their communities, engender values of citizenship and social duty, and deliver professional and personal rewards for directors. In these respects, forensic directors should consider service-learning projects to be a part of an educationally sound program.

REFERENCES


### Figure 1
**Positive Outcomes for Students Involved in Academic Service-Learning**

**Personal Growth:**
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Increased personal responsibility
- Increased sense of personal efficacy

**Career Development:**
- Active exploration of career interests
- Understanding and the world of work
- Specific job skills
- Hiring advantage over others
- Greater confidence in career choice

**Social Development:**
- Increased interpersonal skills
- Increased tolerance/support for diversity
- Engagement in other community participation

**Academic Success/Cognitive Development:**
- Belief that service is a positive learning experience
- Better grades
- Persistence to graduate
- Problem solving and critical thinking skills