

Evaluation of Service Learning and Outreach Courses at the University of Colorado: Developing Best Practices

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within many university programs, service learning and outreach courses are the exception rather than the norm, though this may be shifting. For students, these courses can provide a wonderful opportunity to work directly with “real” community groups, develop communication and facilitation skills, and build meaningful relationships with people they might not have known otherwise. These courses can also provide students the opportunity to work within a defined set of “real” constraints that often do not exist within hypothetical projects. For community partners, these courses can provide tangible services not otherwise accessible, as well as unique social and organizational connections.

Although many instructors, students, and community partners see the value of these courses, and believe they should be an integral part of university education, these courses also provide a new set of challenges and demands. Considerable time and energy is often required to establish and maintain working relationships with community partners prior to, during, and beyond the completion of a course. It can be difficult to coordinate schedules, facilitate meetings and ensure the needs of both the community partners and university students are met. Moreover, the “real world” nature of service learning courses that make them unique and impactful may also lead to their eventual demise if instructors and administrators do not overcome these challenges. This study and report are intended to assist in delivering successful service learning and outreach courses.

This study utilizes surveys with open-ended and Likert-style questions, and focus group interviews conducted with service learning instructors and students to develop a set of best practices aimed at improving course structure, content, and pedagogical techniques specific to these unique courses. The full set of recommendations is included within a later section of the report.

Selected Recommendations:

- Ensure the number of credits reflects the actual number of hours the students will work.
- Be realistic about what is possible within a semester time-frame.
- Make sure the goals of the community partner are directly aligned with the goals of the course instructors.
- Course content should be directly aligned with the outreach component of a service learning course.
- Organization is critical to a successful experience for the students, instructors and community partners.
- Course advertisements and initial class meetings should convey the unique nature of service learning courses versus standard college courses.
- Remember that it takes time and space to develop the necessary interpersonal relationships with community partners.
- Develop and maintain a clear focus for the entire course, even if it is going to be decided along the way.
- Ensure students have the necessary skills to interact with the community partner.

- Help students be very organized and prepared for the work they intend to carry out with their community partners.
- Plan and create time for genuine verbal and/or written reflection as a class, or individually.
- Provide regular and consistent academic and moral support to enhance student work with community partners.
- Develop course evaluation strategies that help students reflect on their experiences and offer suggestions to improve future courses.
- Use the unique aspects of service learning and outreach courses to make it fun!

The feasibility of implementing the recommendations in this study depends largely upon instructor knowledge, and willingness to adopt the recommendations. Administrative support, flexibility and a belief in the underlying goals of service learning and outreach courses will also make inclusion of these unique and vital courses more successful. This report should assist instructors and administrators in providing meaningful, impactful and durable courses for their students and their communities.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project represents collaboration between the College of Architecture and Planning (CAP), the Institute for Ethical and Civic Engagement (IECE), and the Service Learning Office (SLO) at the University of Colorado, Boulder. The goal of this research effort is to assist the CAP, the IECE, and the SLO, as well as the University and others like it in improving undergraduate courses that include significant interaction with, and work for, the community. This study evaluates existing service learning and outreach courses within the College of Architecture and Planning and across the UC Boulder campus. The result is a set of best practice recommendations to be applied by instructors and administrators. The report also includes reflection on our research process, providing a discussion on the appropriateness of the methods in relation to the study purposes, listed below.

Study Purpose:

The overarching purpose of this study is to gain insight into the dynamics of service learning courses at the undergraduate level so that the University of Colorado and similar institutions can improve service learning courses and strengthen learning outcomes for students while maximizing efforts of service learning instructors.

Specific purpose 1: Determine whether service learning courses are serving the intended purposes of instructors, and aligning with the goals and purposes of service learning, outreach and civic engagement proponents more broadly.

Specific purpose 2: Identify courses and pedagogical techniques that lead to effective service learning outcomes for students, in order to inform and improve current and potential service learning courses.

Specific purpose 3: Identify organizational arrangements and pedagogical techniques that are barriers to success for service learning instructors and students, in order to provide a springboard for problem solving and course improvements.

Our study includes a variety of evaluation methods to help triangulate results, and to provide insight into the use of the particular methods that lead to the most valuable results. In addition to our findings about the courses, and our answers to the research questions listed above, we also provide an informal evaluation of our research methods as effective assessment tools. Finally, we provide recommendations for future assessment and a list of best practices and recommendations for improvement of service learning and outreach courses at UC Boulder.

During the summer of 2009, we will be writing an article based on this research to publish in an academic journal. During the fall semester 2009, we will present these findings at the outreach event on the UC Boulder campus.

METHODS

We chose to employ a variety of complementary research methods to understand the operation of service learning and outreach courses in a comprehensive way. The methods were also designed to triangulate our findings by exploring the same themes and questions using different media, and from different perspectives. Over the course of two semesters, we completed the following:

- A **pilot survey** implemented during the spring semester of 2008 to determine the appropriateness of an existing, validated questionnaire in a pre- and post-design to measure the opinions and beliefs of the CU students. These questionnaires were obtained from the UC-Berkeley website at <http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/research/slc/evaluation.html>. We administered the pre- and post-questionnaires to three CU courses. Two were service learning courses (Sustainable Planning and Design taught in the Environmental Design Program - ENVD and a Grant writing course in the Program for Writing and Rhetoric) and one was a control/non-service learning course (Environment and Behavior also taught in the ENVD Program).
- Based on the results of the pilot survey, we **revised the survey instrument** by removing several questions from the general section of the questionnaire.
- We **added several sections to the questionnaire**, including course-specific questions and open-ended questions based on instructor input.
- We **administered the revised questionnaire in a pre/post format to a total of eight undergraduate courses** at UC Boulder during the fall of 2008. Four of the courses included a service learning component, four did not. The service learning courses included: Immigrant Integration through Community Planning cross listed between the ENVD Program and the School of Education; Sustainable Planning and Design in the ENVD Program; and Learning Landscapes Seminar also in the ENVD Program; and Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the Writing and Rhetoric Program. The non-service learning courses included: two architecture studios in the ENVD program; Environmental Aesthetics in the ENVD program; and Education and Society in the School of Education.
- We **created a focus group protocol** based on personal experience, and service learning literature, and **conducted three focus group** sessions with students from three service learning courses at the end of the fall semester, 2008, and **three focus group sessions** at the end of the spring semester, 2009.
- We **conducted one focus group session with 7 instructors** of service learning courses from different departments after the end of the fall 2008 semester. In most cases, the instructors who participated in the focus group had taught the courses that were given the pre/post questionnaire.
- We **analyzed the results of the questionnaires** using descriptive statistics, and matched pair t-tests for the course-specific questions.
- We performed a simplified **thematic analysis of the focus groups** using transcripts produced from the original audio and video files, and notes taken during the sessions.

SAMPLE

Following is a brief description of the service learning courses included in this study. Please note that we do not use the actual course name in order to protect the privacy of the instructors and students involved in the study.

CC Course, Fall 2008

One hour and 15 minutes, two times per week - Seminar-style course with lectures/discussions during class and individual community-based engagement outside of class focused on the political election process.

II Course, Fall 2008

Two hours, two times per week, 3 credits - Seminar-style course focused on the topics of immigrant integration, community planning, education, and civic engagement for youth. CU students worked in teams of 6 or more with two different groups of youth in Lafayette to facilitate dialogues and activities.

SPD Course, Fall 2008

Two hours, two times per week, 3 credits – Seminar-style course with a few lectures, three written reflection papers in addition to other assignments, students planned and taught lessons to Casey Middle School students focused on sustainable planning and design topics.

LLS Course, Fall 2008

Four hours, two times per week, 6 credits – Studio-style course in which students worked individually or in teams of two with one BVSD elementary school, working mostly with the Design Advisory Teams (DAT) at their respective schools to design a new playground.

SPD Course, Spring 2009

Two hours, two times per week, 3 credits – Seminar-style course with a few lectures, three written reflection papers in addition to other assignments, students worked with Casey Middle School students to help them become ambassadors of their new LEED certified school and to gain ideas for a portable school classroom design competition.

DMY Course, Spring 2009

Two hours, two times per week, 3 credits – Seminar-style course with discussion one day a week and outreach work one day per week. Students worked with one of three high schools, mentoring multicultural youth in the creation of digital stories about their experiences in their communities.

LLM Course, Spring 2009

Three hours, once a week, 3 credits – Studio-style course with a few content-focused lectures and hands-on studio work time focused on creating master plans.

ANALYSIS

Pre- and Post-Questionnaires

(See Appendix I for complete versions of the questionnaires)

The pre-tests were administered in the second or third week of the semester in eight different courses across three different programs/departments: Environmental Design, Education, and Writing & Rhetoric. Six of the courses overall were in the Environmental Design (ENVD) program, largely because all three researchers are affiliated with this program and it was easier to obtain agreement from the instructors to participate in the study and gain access to the students. The class sizes varied from 11 to 27 students, with an average class size of 15.5.

The post-test was administered during the last two weeks of the semester, using basically the same instrument as the pre-test for the control courses, and the addition of reflection questions for the service learning courses. In one case, the course instructor wanted to change the course-specific questions slightly to make the results more useful for course improvement. In all of the courses, a few of the students who took the pre-questionnaire did not take the post-questionnaire and vice versa. This was due to the fact that the add/drop period for courses is three weeks long, and the course rosters shifted between the pre and post questionnaires. Student absences on the days that we administered the questionnaires also determined the total number of pre- and post-questionnaire sets that we could analyze. Because of the relatively low number of individuals in the courses, we determined that averages with all students included were not as meaningful as using the students who took both the pre- and post-surveys. Therefore, analyses of the main body of general questions, and the course-specific questions were only performed using responses from students who completed both questionnaires. The remaining data (responses from students for which we only had a pre- or a post-questionnaire, but not both) was excluded from analysis.

Likert-Scale General Questions with Control Groups:

The main body of questions was taken from an instrument developed by Diaz, Furco and Yamada at UC Berkeley. We modified the instrument slightly to clarify language following the pilot survey. The main body of the questionnaire included 29 likert-scale items with five response categories; strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, and don't know. (See appendix I for final instrument) The instrument was designed to investigate four constructs related to service learning, and civic engagement. We labeled these constructs, 1) Future/Career Preparedness, 2) Civic Orientation, 3) Service Learning Orientation and, 4) Locus of Control. There were approximately seven questions aimed at each of the constructs, with some variation in the number of questions intended to elucidate each construct. All constructs included several negatively worded items.

The results of the pre-questionnaire were used to determine whether there were preexisting differences between the service learning students and the students who were not taking service learning courses. Mean scores for each item were calculated and grouped by

construct. Comparison between service learning and non service learning courses showed no significant differences on any of the four constructs. Of the four constructs, the scores were lowest for all courses in both categories in the “Future/ Career Preparedness” construct. The other three constructs were relatively similar across all courses.

Following the post-questionnaire, averages were calculated in the same manner, and combined by construct. The averages were compared to the pre-questionnaire scores for each course. Interestingly, very little change occurred in any course, or construct, regardless of course type. This may indicate that neither type of course (service learning or non-service learning) caused a shift in opinions or feelings about any of these constructs over just one semester, or it may indicate that this instrument was not effective at measuring any changes that occurred over the course of the semester. The other sections of the pre/post questionnaire, and the focus groups were designed to give us a better picture of any changes that service learning courses may contribute to.

Course Specific Questions for Service learning Courses:

The course-specific questions were crafted by the researchers with assistance from the instructors of the service learning courses to help understand whether the service learning components were effective at meeting the specific course objectives. The questions were included in both the pre- and post-questionnaires to gain an understanding of the changes that may occur for the students during the semester. The responses for these course-specific questions were generally more meaningful than the responses to the general questions already discussed. (See appendix II for course-specific questions)

The preliminary statistical findings were similar between the two, and yet, there were more meaningful results with the course-specific questions. In general, there was movement in the hypothesized direction (matching the course objectives) for nearly all items in the collection of course-specific questions, providing evidence for the general effectiveness of engaged, community-oriented and service-focused college courses.

The initial results allowed us to explore the data using a “matched-pair t-test” analysis strategy. With this analysis method, we found very few items showed a significant change between the beginning and end of the semester. The small number of respondents for any single class virtually ensured the lack of statistical significance, but further analysis of the data is still meaningful and applicable to a wide variety of current social and geographical situations.

CC Course, Fall 2008

The six course-specific questions administered to these students showed mixed results on the constructs addressed by the questions. Four questions centered on political empowerment, e.g., “*I think that my individual vote in a national election won't really have an impact in the whole scheme of things.*” All four questions showed slight differences between the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire. However, the average scores for each of these items indicated a distinct shift away from political empowerment, and towards political disillusionment.

The remaining two questions both dealt with skills necessary for a successful career and future, e.g., *“Being able to write well and communicate my ideas effectible is very important for the career I plan to go into.”* This change seen between pre- and post-questionnaires for this specific question showed that the students valued the ability to write and communicate more following the course, though no indication was given as to their beliefs of their own skills. The final question, dealing with comfort in using technology to communicate, showed no change.

II Course, Fall 2008

The questionnaires administered to the service learning students in the II course included four items about youth empowerment, e.g., *“Young people have a right to voice their opinions in the community, no matter what their views.”* The changes in the pre/post scores for this construct demonstrate that the students believed more in youth empowerment concepts at the end of the course. There were also three items about immigrant integration, e.g., *“Education policy strongly influences the opportunities that immigrants are provided when they come to the United States.”* Two of the items showed very little change over the course of the semester, while the item, *“In general, immigrant integration into a new community is the responsibility of the immigrants themselves,”* decreased relatively significantly. This suggests the students believed that responsibility for immigrant integration is not simply a case of personal responsibility which aligns with the philosophy taught in the course. The last question, *“I feel I have the skills to work effectively with people in order to identify their concerns and needs,”* did not register any change by the end of the semester.

SPD Course, Fall 2008

The majority of the eleven items included in the course-specific section for this course dealt with concepts of participatory design, e.g., *“The design of a space will be much stronger if the design professionals involve all stakeholders during the design process.”* In general, there was a shift toward more support for participatory design concepts and methods by the end of the semester. Three items concerned youth empowerment issues related to the design process, e.g., *“Teaching young people about design and planning is difficult and time-consuming and is not the responsibility of the design professional.”* For all three items, changes indicated that the students increased their belief about the efficacy of involving youth in the design process. The final two items asked about students’ beliefs about their own skill levels regarding participatory process and sustainable design, e.g., *“I feel I have the knowledge and skills to create a more sustainable community.”* Both items demonstrated a positive shift in self efficacy in these two areas.

LLS Course, Fall 2008

This course had the fewest number of students complete both the pre- and post-questionnaires, and are therefore difficult to include in a statistical analysis. However, the findings do show changes in the direction desired by the instructor. Moreover, only five items retained the same form in the pre- and post-questionnaire, and are therefore worth comparing across time. The five comparable items include three items gauging students’ attitudes about

stakeholder participation in design, e.g., *“It is critical to involve the end user group in the design process for both public and private spaces.”* Change in scores for all three items indicate increasing belief in the importance of stakeholder participation in design processes. One item dealt with youth participation in design, e.g., *“It is NOT absolutely necessary to involve young people when changes to their school are proposed because teachers and school administrators know what is best for the young people.”* The shift seen here demonstrates that students rejected this statement even more strongly at the end of the semester as compared to the beginning. The last item related to skills perception; *“It is NOT absolutely necessary to involve young people when changes to their school are proposed because teachers and school administrators know what is best for the young people,”* showed fairly sizable increase in beliefs about this specific skill set.

Open-ended Questions from Post-Questionnaires in Service learning Courses:

(see Appendix II for full course-specific questions and Appendix III for full set of answers)

Open-ended questions included in the post-questionnaire for service learning courses were designed to let the students use their own words to evaluate and elaborate on their experiences and outcomes. The questions used in the questionnaire were also closely aligned with the questions discussed in the corresponding focus group interviews, allowing for meaningful triangulation of findings.

Question: *Did your participation in the service component enhance your understanding of the course material for this class?*

CC Course: 10 out of 16 people answered yes.

Summary: Students stated the service learning component gave them a better understanding of elections and how they can personally make a difference in them.

II Course: 11 out of 12 people answered yes.

Summary: Most students felt that connecting theory to practice was a valuable outcome of their service learning experience.

SPD Course: 6 out of 11 people answered yes.

Summary: In general the students thought that the teaching aspect of the service learning component helped reinforce what they were learning and gave them an opportunity to learn teaching techniques and real life skills.

LLS Course: 7 out of 8 people answered yes.

Summary: In general the students thought the service learning component gave them the chance to see what happens in a real life design situation and gain experience dealing with the issues that come up.

Question: *What have you learned about yourself or others since becoming involved in the service learning component of this course?*

Summary (all courses): Students mentioned that the service learning component gave them additional insight into a topic as well as career choices or career requirements. Some learned that they can personally make a difference in their community and that they want to continue doing so in the future. Some realized that service learning, volunteering, and teaching are a lot of work and require a serious commitment of time and energy and some students learned that it just wasn't for them. Many learned more about what skills and qualities they possess, like leadership and responsibility.

Question: *What suggestions, if any, do you have for improving the service learning program or component of this course?*

Summary (all courses): Students in general wanted more time and more opportunities to participate in the service learning component of the course. Students recommended the service learning component be directly tied to the content of the course, to reinforce what they were learning and to support them as they participate in the service learning. Some wanted more preparation to work in the community, to know how to present themselves and their work, and to have the skills to deal with issues that arise. Students also recommended that the courses be well-organized and the service learning component be well-structured.

Student Focus Groups:

(See Appendix IV for student focus group protocol.)

II Course, Fall 2008

Overall, students thought this course was successful at combining theory and practice – learning and talking about the content in class and then working with youth to facilitate discussions around similar issues.

“We’re not just sitting here and talking about it, we’re sitting here talking about it and then doing things about it and talking with other people about it and being engaged in the community, so that’s one thing I thought was really successful about the class.”

“Working with the youth really helped me get involved personally with the course, just doing something active by going outside the school made me feel more connected with the course.”

Students said the course helped them learn a set of skills they could take with them.

“...I think from this class specifically we’ve all gotten a much better skill set to take with us, in whatever direction our career takes us.”

Students felt that the class structure (seminar style with hands-on activities) worked well and allowed them to build a sense of community in the class.

“I know everybody here, and we have all been able to talk about a lot of different things, and I don’t know anybody in those big lecture classes besides studio, but I got to know everybody in this class, and hear different perspectives, and everybody comes from different places. It’s so helpful; I liked hearing what everyone had to say, because everyone came from different places and had a different point of view. We all came hear kind of interested in some of these things, but then putting it out there and being able to talk about it, it was cool. I really liked the structure of this class. And just like building relationships, you never get to in other classes, and I felt this class was a lot more personal.”

“This is the most refreshing format change I’ve ever had at CU. As far as all the seminar classes I’ve ever taken in the college of arts and sciences. It’s like having the service learning component, reinforced everything we had in class. It’s like in these seminar classes, it’s kind of like, everyone’s going to take their own research direction and no one really cares about keeping it on track; but actually having the service learning component helped to reinforce all the material that we were going through.”

Although the course was generally thought to be successful, the students stated that the time constraints and logistics of the course limited the amount of time and connections made with the participating youth. Also, due to the number of CU students in the course, each student only got to experience facilitating once or twice – not enough to get really good at it. Students recommended that perhaps this could be a two-semester course so they could have more time to work in the community. They also wanted a little more one-on-one time with the youth.

SPD Course, Fall 2008

Overall, students thought that the service learning component of this course (working with students at a local middle school) made this course a success. The students appreciated the chance to work with the middle school students and teach them about sustainability, giving the CU students the opportunity to learn how to teach and also reinforce what they were learning in class.

“It was fun; it was really nice to get off campus.”

“I enjoyed learning how to teach, that was a new experience.”

Students were also given the chance to work in a group with their classmates, and appreciated that everyone really contributed to the group effort.

“The students were all working together which was nice to see, we never gain group working experience.”

“Students in the class really contributed; there was a lot of good communication.”

Organization and coherence of the information taught seemed to be the major issue for this course. Students stated that there were too many topics covered and that having two instructors for the course, who were not always in agreement, made it difficult to know what to do and who to talk to. In addition, the students thought that some of the guest speakers were not very good and caused students to lose interest and didn't offer them information they could then take to the middle school students.

LLS Course, Fall 2008

Overall, students thought this was a great course in which they had the opportunity to experience a “real world” project while working with local elementary schools. In general the students appreciated and recognized the skills and experiences they were getting in this course.

“I think it's awesome that we experienced this all; to see real reactions and know what's ahead of us was awesome.”

“I think it really prepared us, it boosted my confidence, I'm more prepared now and I can go forth.”

However, the students did feel the course needed prerequisites since some of the students felt challenged with the technical aspects as well as the social skills necessary to work in a “real world” setting. Scheduling also became an issue and conflicts occurred between the school's schedule and the student's schedule. Transportation was also a challenge for some students as the schools were often outside of Boulder.

For some of the students, the schools they were working with did not seem to recognize their value and appreciate that they were students who were trying to learn things. However, many of the students thought the experience they were getting was extremely valuable and made up for any negative aspects of the course.

“Even though it was hard for us at times with our school , it prepared me so much for the real world, and this is what I want to do, so maybe it was good that my first experience was a little rough, but I may not have gotten as much out of it if it hadn't been that bad. I got to actually design a real life playground, no other class is like that. It really benefited me.”

The students stated they didn't really have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and thought it would have been greatly beneficial for them. They recommended that students be given a chance to talk about the issues they experience and get feedback on how to handle them, rather than write papers about their experience.

Most students would like to take another service learning course or have the chance to continue with this one. A few also said that they learned so much from their experience with this course, that they would actually like the chance to re-do it and improve on what didn't work so well the first time.

"I think if I took another course like this I would have a lot more confidence and I would know what to do, so I would like to do it again. This is the exact learning style that works for me, and it's the perfect learning environment."

DMY, Spring 2009

Generally, the students enjoyed the course because of the service learning component, internalized concepts and experiences in the way the instructors had intended, and thought the course positively impacted the community partners. Students were often frustrated with the logistical complexities of coordinating with the schools they partnered with, and frustrated with the disorganization and chaos experienced in the service learning part of the course. Most students thought that the course should have a narrower focus, or extended time and increased associated credits.

Organization and Structure

Many students expressed that the service learning component of the course was disorganized and chaotic. Much of the disorganization was attributed to the difficulties of working with high school classrooms as community partners. Scheduling and communication problems contributed to the sense of disorganization.

"And I talked to (instructor) about the scheduling, and it was very frustrating."

Some students expressed that they felt sorry for the course instructors because they recognized how much work they had put into coordinating with community partners, with only limited success.

"... we're students; we can't just change our schedules around to do stuff. That was just frustrating and I just feel bad for our teachers."

The frustration with disorganization was also related to expectations. Those who were frustrated said that knowing up front that the service learning part was going to be disorganized would have helped them cope better with the reality of the situation. Two students seemed to have anticipated the disorganization, because they saw the course as experimental, and were therefore not frustrated with the highly variable and dynamic nature of the service learning experience.

"I didn't think of it as disorganized because it felt kinda experimental, I interpreted it more as experimental than disorganized. Which I liked."

Several students said that despite their difficulty with the disorganization and complexity of working with high school classrooms, they felt they had learned what it was like to work in the real world.

“...to be in the middle of it, working with youth, I felt like it was good, and I learned a lot with just what that all looks like, and really in a practical way.”

SPD Course, Spring 2009

Overall, the students felt the course was worth their time and effort, but they wanted to have accomplished more during the semester. Many felt they had a positive experience working with their community partner (a local middle school) and would take what they learned into future work and continue to do more of it. Many students also preferred the hands-on style of the course over a lecture-style course.

Organization and Structure:

In general students thought the course was disorganized and needed to be better planned out ahead of time. The instructors need to work together better and be on the same page and the students thought the course wasn't as participatory as the instructors said it would be. For example, the students thought they would be able to decide what they would do and get to help construct the class rather than be told what to do and how to do it for each session. There were too many people with different agendas and there wasn't enough focus to the course. The students thought that the middle school had a different agenda and goal for the semester than the CU instructors.

Many students thought the instructors tried to incorporate too many different components into one semester. Although, the students felt that the service learning component and the lecture component of the course complemented each other, some wished there was more content covered during the semester. Also, some students didn't realize this was a service learning course when they signed up and this affected how they felt about the course in a negative way. Some felt they could have learned more about sustainability without the service learning component of the course. However, the students felt the structure of the course allowed them to develop stronger relationships with the instructors than they are typically able to do.

Working in the community:

The students generally enjoyed working with the middle school students and had fun with them, and for some it was the best part of the course. They felt they learned a lot from working with the middle school students and also were able to teach them a lot. However, they sometimes felt like the middle school students didn't have realistic design ideas and it held up their progress on the design competition (a required outcome of the course). The students didn't feel they were taught the skills to work with the middle school students and there wasn't enough time in the course for the middle school students to get really comfortable with them. Some felt like they were babysitting the middle school students at times. However, they all agreed that the middle school students were excited about working on the project with them. Many thought the concept of participatory design and getting input from the middle school students is a good idea in theory but very complicated and hard to do in reality and just ended up slowing down progress on their designs for the design competition.

Workload:

The students didn't feel like the course required an intense amount of work, just extra time because of the travel time to the middle school and the field trips. Assignments and due dates were not made extremely clear. The students didn't feel compelled to go above and beyond for the work they turned in.

LLM, Spring 2009

Overall, the students were quite satisfied with their experience in the course and thought it was a success. They really appreciated the service learning component and felt that it greatly contributed to the overall success of the course and their satisfaction.

"I think I got more out of, I get more out of this type of class than just a regular lecture class because I'm actually doing it, it's more hands-on. I actually feel like I'm doing something that's somewhat important to someone else, it's not just stupid stuff that I have to do for a grade."

Organization and Structure:

The students expressed feeling "lost in the process" sometimes during the semester, not knowing exactly what was coming next.

"I think part of it is that we didn't fully understand what we were doing when we met our schools, like we had the jest of it, so that's all we could relate to them."

They felt they received a good amount of guidance from the instructor. Time was a major issue for the students and they expressed concern that there was not enough time to accomplish their goals or to cover additional content in the course. The class only met once per week and this made it difficult to address everything. Also, the community partner (the school district) pulled out of the project at the last minute which may have added to the issues.

"I felt a little lost in the process. And I think because we ran out of time, and I think because at first, I think the original plan fell through. So, that's circumstantial, you know. But I felt like I didn't know enough about what we were doing going into the project to be- to produce the best results."

Working in the Community:

Overall, the students were pleased with their work with the schools and felt they got a lot out of their experience working with them. The individual experience of each student also depended on the interaction with their school liaisons. One of the schools was on the verge of closing so the interaction the students had with them was not as positive. The students thought that having a key school contact who could make things happen at the school was quite important and made the process more efficient and successful.

Workload:

Students thought the workload was light in the beginning of the semester and heavy at the end, which is true for most of their courses. They thought the class should have an additional meeting day during the week to go over more process/logistical issues. The students also suggested more preparation time for working with their partner school.

“And maybe like if it were to stay the same thing, like three hours in one day a week, something like a month of just preparation and then two months of like direct service would be more balanced, even though you’d still have a lot to do, but at least you’d be prepared and just like really ready to go.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEST PRACTICES

We found that our survey and focus groups consistently pointed to a few dozen best practices and suggestions for improvements across a variety of topics. The vast majority of the information from various sources was complementary. However, there is one overarching conflict that came up repeatedly. This was the struggle between needing to prepare students *more* for the complex task of working in the community, while at the same time *decreasing* the overall time commitment and workload for students. This leads to suggestions such as; increase the number of credits, offer prerequisite courses, offer full-year courses or narrow the focus for the course content. The most important practices for instructors and colleges offering service learning and outreach courses are listed below. We divided the best practices into three categories: **General Course Structure/Format**; **Course Content**; and **Pedagogical Methods/Techniques**. However, the complex nature of teaching service learning allows for some overlap across these categories.

General Course Structure/Format:

- *Ensure that the number of credits reflects the actual number of hours the students will work.* Many service learning courses are seen as, “way more work than the credit given.” Remember that the service learning or outreach components of a course will require a sizable amount of time spent scheduling, coordinating and traveling.
- *Be realistic about what is possible within a semester time-frame.* Courses may require a more narrow content focus than instructors would generally provide. This is balanced by the learning that occurs simply by interacting with the community partners. Remember that the service learning or outreach *process* should be part of the learning goals for the course.
- *Organization is critical to a successful experience for the students, instructors and community partners.* Instructors should be aware that students have busy schedules, many other obligations and time constraints in addition to the service learning course. Every effort should be taken to keep pre-scheduled meetings, deadlines, and assignments so that students can more easily coordinate their schedules.
- *When team teaching, instructors need to work closely together so the information given to the students is the well-coordinated and not contradictory.* Although team-teaching can be beneficial, offering the students a chance to learn from instructors with complementary experience and expertise, it can also add to the already high level of complexity and confusion for students. Good communication between instructors and agreement on logistical aspects of a course can minimize this.
- *Make sure the goals of the community partner(s) are directly aligned with the goals of the course instructor(s).* This should be very clear up-front, and ideally, put in writing with a Memorandum of Understanding, or similar agreement. Work with community partners can

often include some 'mission drift' and a very clear understanding up-front can help minimize this.

- *It is important to advertise the service learning/outreach component on a course.* Students should have a good idea of what to expect regarding the amount of out-of-class time and the type of work that will be required for successfully completing the course. As more service learning courses are taught in colleges or universities, this should become easier.
- *Initial class meetings should convey the experimental and unique nature of service learning courses versus standard college courses.* This includes preparing students for the highly dynamic and potentially disorganized nature of working with community partners. This can be especially true when working with schools and youth organizations. It should be stressed that the unique nature of these courses will most likely be a challenge and a very gratifying experience at the same time.
- *Further develop hybrid-style courses that include seminar-style discussions, lectures, and a service learning component in innovative combinations.* There are many ways to blend the various in-class and in-community components. Experiment with different combinations to see what works for the course content and instructor style.

Course Content:

- *Ensure students have the necessary skills to interact with the community group.* This may include requiring prerequisites, explicitly teaching skills such as communication, facilitation, and conflict resolution techniques early on within the semester course, or offering the course over two semesters to better teach the students the appropriate skills and relevant theory.
- *Help students be very organized and prepared for the work they intend to carry out with their community partner(s).* Instructors should work with their students to make sure they are prepared to go out into the community in a professional manner and know exactly what the goals of the service learning work are, if they are pre-determined. Ideally, instructors should model proper preparation and organization techniques that their students can observe and learn from.
- *Course content should be directly aligned with the outreach component of a service learning course.* Ideally the outreach component is used to directly reinforce the content delivered in the classroom. If there are areas of course content that are not reinforced, or outreach experiences that do not overlap, this should be discussed in the class or at least acknowledged.

Pedagogical Methods/Techniques:

- *Plan and create time for genuine, verbal and/or written reflection as a class, or individually.* This allows the instructor(s) time to offer feedback and address issues that come up for the

students. Students may prefer verbal over written reflection assignments if appropriate. Individual written reflection that is also discussed as a class may be most effective.

- *Reflection exercises should be designed to allow students the time, space, and latitude to explore the realities and meanings of their class experiences in ways that make sense for their programs.* Remember that reflection is an important part of the learning process, so instructors should tailor the reflection opportunities as they would any assignment to align with course goals. Evaluating students on the *process* of reflection, instead of the *content* of the reflection allows students the freedom to explore honestly and without the fear of getting a “bad” grade.
- *Provide regular and consistent academic and moral support to enhance student work with community groups.* This may be especially important if students are working individually. This means finding a balance between staying in the background, positive modeling, and taking charge of situations that seem to be headed towards disaster. It should be remembered that this may be the first time students have experienced this type of in-depth interaction with people outside their social circle.
- *Remember that it takes time and space to develop the necessary interpersonal relationships with community partners.* Initial sessions may be more successful in small groups. It may be useful to work directly with the leaders of the community partner groups to discuss appropriate and effective ways of building relationships with the specific people students will be interacting with. This may be especially true when partnering with schools and youth organizations in which the partner teachers often have a good understanding of their own students’ needs, learning styles, and behaviors.
- *Meet students where they are, rather than assume all students are beginning at the same level.* Instructors need to remain open-minded and not talk down to students. Service learning and outreach draw on different skills than most other courses, so even the “best students” may struggle, whereas “poor students” may unexpectedly excel.
- *Develop and maintain a clear focus for the entire course, even if it is going to be decided along the way.* This will help put students at ease and ensure they know the objectives of their work throughout the semester. If students are helping develop the course focus, make that focus explicit and constant once it is decided.
- *Use the unique aspects of service learning and outreach courses to make it fun!* Service learning and outreach courses include aspects that naturally lend themselves to a fun experience for students and instructors. Novelty, unexpected situations and meaningful interaction with people outside the university setting are all potential sources of enjoyment and positive memories that will stick with students for the rest of their academic and professional careers.

DISCUSSION OF EVALUATION METHODS

Pre/ Post Questionnaire

We obtained Human Subjects Approval from the Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board (COMIRB) in order to administer the pre- and post-questionnaires to students. Based on the COMIRB criteria, our project fell into the exempt category since it is primarily an evaluation of college courses. The exempt category requires only a short processing time and enabled us to administer the pre-questionnaire without obtaining consent from each student. If evaluation is to continue, we recommend obtaining IRB approval for subsequent assessment.

We recommend undertaking a quasi-experimental assessment design and to compare the effectiveness of service learning courses to those without a service learning component. For a quasi-experimental assessment to be meaningful, the course content of the control course needs to be directly aligned with the service learning/outreach course. For example, this design might work if there are multiple sections of the same course, with half of them incorporating a service learning component and half of them relying on lecture/seminar teaching styles. This would allow a better comparison to determine if the service learning course was more effective or not.

Our service learning courses did not adequately align with the control courses in terms of content, instructor, students' pre-existing knowledge, etc. Because of these confounding variables, we do not feel we were able to determine whether the service learning course was more effective than a non-service learning course at teaching the same material.

Students often self-select into outreach/service learning courses so observing significant change over the course of one semester may be difficult.

General and Course Specific Questions:

Based on the results of the pilot survey we decided to customize the questionnaires to fit each course's purpose and goals. We kept most of the general questions used in the pilot survey, and added course-specific questions to fill this perceived gap. We also used open-ended questions to further enhance our understanding of student experiences. This was important so that we could evaluate whether the course content was effectively taught.

The general questions included in the survey, included in the appendix, were not as effective as we had hoped. We found the following limitations of this section as an assessment tool:

- Service learning/outreach courses are usually small in size, and therefore do not present a sample size (n) large enough for powerful statistical analysis.
- The majority of the questions used a Likert scale format for students to agree or disagree with a given statement to varying degrees. For some questions, changes over one semester were hard to interpret without additional information from the student. For example, if a student answers *strongly agree* to "I feel prepared for my future career" on

the pre-questionnaire and answers *don't know* or *disagree* during the post-questionnaire, there are a number of possible explanations. Either the course in question was not effective in preparing the student for his/her future career, the student has changed plans for a future career based on the experience during the course, or the student was able to experience first-hand what is involved in their future career and now feels less prepared than they thought previously. Without additional follow-up, we did not have enough information to interpret the results of a question like this.

- The short time frame of the pre-/post-questionnaire design does not measure any long term effects of the course on the student's beliefs and views on outreach or service learning work.
- We did find a relatively high level of incomplete data and erroneous responses, such as both of the middle response categories circled, or a '5' manually entered past the 'strongly agree' category. This perhaps indicates that the students found the Likert scale constraining, and indicates that future administration of this type of survey may benefit from more explicit instructions to stay within the confines of the evaluation instrument.
- Some of the course specific questions were compound questions. This may lead to lack of clarity for students answering the questions and less certainty about what the results indicate. More thorough vetting of questions prior to administration would help alleviate this uncertainty.

Focus Group Interviews

In general, we felt that the focus group interviews were successful, instructive and yielded meaningful recommendations for best practices and future study. Focus groups also provided an appropriate venue for reflecting on the content and experiences for each course. In many of the focus group sessions, students started off with significant "venting" about the frustrations they experienced during the semester, and moved towards more in-depth analysis and reflection. It should be noted that holding focus group interviews at the end of the semester, during stressful weeks for the students, may have skewed some of the responses negatively. However, we also feel that incorporating focus groups into every service learning and outreach course could yield valuable information for course improvement, as well as provide a culminating group reflection experience.

APPENDICES

- I. Sample of Pre- and Post-Questionnaire**
- II. Course-Specific Questions**
- III. Actual Answers from Post-Questionnaires**
- IV. Student Focus Group Protocol**
- V. Instructor Focus Group Protocol**

Appendix I: Sample of Pre and Post Questionnaire

Student Pre-Survey

This survey is designed to measure general attitudes and perceptions of college students. As part of this study, we would like to know about your experiences and opinions now as well as at a later date. This information will be useful in understanding and later enhancing service learning programs on campus.

Please respond as honestly as possible, relying on your current feelings of the particular issues raised. Your responses will be kept confidential. Your name will not be connected to specific results of the survey. We ask that you complete all sections on the survey. Thanks!

Section I

1. Write your birth date in numbers in the space below:

 _ _ / _ _ / _ _
month day year

2. Write your initials (first and last) in the two spaces below:

First letter of **first** name

First letter of **last** name

3. Your gender: o Male o Female

4. Your ethnicity (please check all those that apply): [Optional]

African American _____
Asian American/Pacific Islander _____
Caucasian (non-Latino/a) _____
Latino/Latina _____
Native American/Alaskan Native _____
Other (Specify) _____

5. Please indicate your current student status (check one):

Undergraduate degree-seeking student _____
Graduate degree-seeking student _____
Non-degree seeking student _____

6. How many semesters have you completed here at CU (not including the current semester)? _____

7. Major(s) _____

8. What is the name of the course in which you are filling out this questionnaire?
9. Are you participating or are you planning to participate in the community service/service-learning component of this course?
- Yes (it is required) _____ Yes (by choice) _____ No _____ Do not know _____
10. Have you taken other service learning or community outreach courses? Yes No
- 10a. If Yes, please list them _____
- _____

Section II

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement at this point in time. Circle the number that best describes your response (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5 = don't know). **Please only circle one choice for each statement.**

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	don't know
1. I find the content in courses at CU intellectually stimulating.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The extent of my achievement is often determined by chance.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have a realistic understanding of the daily responsibilities involved in the jobs (careers) in which I am interested.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Being involved in a program to improve my community is important.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I learn more when courses contain real world experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am concerned about local community issues.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It is important for me to find a career that directly benefits others.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can make a positive difference in my own life.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I like it when I get to make important decisions in my work.	1	2	3	4	5

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	don't know
10. I feel that I have little control over the things that happen to me.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The things I learn in school are useful in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have definite career plans.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It is not necessary to volunteer my time to help people in need.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Courses at CU make me think about real-life in new ways.	1	2	3	4	5
15. What happens to me is my own doing.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I intend to work in a career that will make contributions to society.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I possess the necessary personal qualities (e.g., responsibility, manners, initiative, etc.) to be a successful career person.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Sometimes I am not as reliable as I should be.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I plan to give some of my future income to charity.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I currently give money to charity.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I feel that I can have a positive impact on local social problems.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I enjoy learning at CU when course materials pertain to my own experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I think that people should find time to contribute to their community.	1	2	3	4	5
24. When I am put in charge of a project, I sometimes wonder whether I can succeed at it.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel well-prepared for my future career.	1	2	3	4	5

26. I do not find courses at CU relevant to my life outside of school.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am the person who makes decisions regarding what to do with my life.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I plan to improve my neighborhood in the near future.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I am not sure about what skills are necessary for my career.	1	2	3	4	5
30. It is important that I work toward equal opportunity (e.g., social, political, vocational) for all people.	1	2	3	4	5

Section III: Specific course related questions (See Appendix II for course-specific questions)

Section IV

Where appropriate, please indicate the number of hours. If not applicable, please fill the blank with a "0."

1. I am employed _____ hours per week.
2. I spend _____ hours per week in non-academic, school-related activities (e.g. sports, band, choir, newspaper, clubs, student government, etc.)
3. I am engaged in non-school related, volunteer work _____ hours per week (e.g. religious activities, tutoring, mentoring, big brother, big sister, girls/boys scout leaders, health-care provider, etc.)
4. Please identify your non-school related, volunteer activity(ies) or organization(s).

5. Please rank each of the following possible reasons that you are taking this course from 1 to 3, with 1 being very important and 3 being not important at all.

	Very Important	Semi-Important	Not Important
a. I need the credit/units	1	2	3
b. It is a degree requirement for my major/minor	1	2	3
c. I am interested in the topic	1	2	3
d. I am interested in the service/outreach component	1	2	3

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| e. I want to learn from/work with the Instructor | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| f. It fits within my career/future plans | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| g. Other (Please explain). _____ | | | |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Student Post-Survey

This survey is designed to measure general attitudes and perceptions of college students. As part of this study, we would like to know about your experiences and opinions. This information will be useful in understanding and later enhancing service learning programs on campus.

Please respond as honestly as possible, relying on your current feelings of the particular issues raised. Your responses will be kept confidential. Your name will not be connected to specific results of the survey. We ask that all parts of the survey be completed.

Section I

1. Write your birthdate in numbers in the space below:

__/__/__
month day year

2. Write your initials (first and last) in the two spaces below:

____ ____
First letter First letter
of **first** name of **last** name

3. Your gender (circle one): Male Female

4. Your ethnicity (please check all those that apply): [Optional]

African American ____
Asian American/ Pacific Islander ____
Caucasian (non-Latino/a) ____
Latino/Latina ____
Native American/ Alaskan Native ____
Other (Specify) _____

5. Please indicate your current student status (check one):

Undergraduate degree-seeking student ____
Graduate degree-seeking student ____
Non-degree seeking student ____

6. How many semesters have you completed here at CU (not including the current semester)? _____

7. Major(s) _____

Section II

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement at this point in time. Circle the number that best describes your response (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5=don't know).

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	don't know
1. I find the content of CU courses intellectually stimulating.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The extent of my achievement is often determined by chance.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have a realistic understanding of the daily responsibilities involved in the jobs (careers) in which I am interested.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Being involved in a program to improve my community is important.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I learn more when courses contain real world experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am concerned about local community issues.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It is important for me to find a career that directly benefits others.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can make a positive difference in my own life.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I like it when I get to make important decisions in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel that I have little control over the things that happen to me.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The things I learn in school are useful in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have definite career plans.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It is not necessary to volunteer my time to help people in need.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Courses at CU make me think about real-life in new ways.	1	2	3	4	5
15. What happens to me is my own doing.	1	2	3	4	5

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	don't know
16. I intend to work in a career that will make contributions to society.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I possess the necessary personal qualities (e.g., responsibility, manners, initiative, etc.) to be a successful career person.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Sometimes I am not as reliable as I should be.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I plan to give some of my future income to charity.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I currently give money to charity.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I feel that I can have a positive impact on local social problems.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I enjoy learning in school when course materials pertain to real-life.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I think that people should find time to contribute to their community.	1	2	3	4	5
24. When I am put in charge of a project, I sometimes wonder whether I can succeed at it.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel well-prepared for my future career.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I do not find courses in school relevant to my life outside of school.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am the person who makes decisions regarding what to do with my life.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I plan to improve my neighborhood in the near future.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I am not sure about what skills are necessary for my career.	1	2	3	4	5
30. It is important that I work toward equal opportunity (e.g., social, political, vocational) for all people.	1	2	3	4	5

Section III: Specific course related questions (See Appendix II for course-specific questions)

Section IV

1. What was the name of the community agency in which you served? (Optional)

2. What type of service did you perform?

3. Approximately how many hours per week were you involved in this service? _____

4. Do you plan to continue your service activities with this agency? (circle one) Yes No
Please explain.

5. Do you intend to continue to serve in your community in the future? (circle one) Yes No

6. Did your participation in the service component enhance your understanding of the course material for this class? (circle one) Yes No

6a. If yes, please describe how.

7. Did the service learning component of this course meet your expectations? (circle one) Yes No
Why or why not?

8. What have you learned about yourself or others since becoming involved in the service learning component of this course?

9. What suggestions, if any, do you have for improving the service learning program or component of this course?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Appendix II: Course-Specific Questions

Citizenship and Civic Engagement Course

Section III: Specific course related questions

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement at this point in time. Circle the number that best describes your response (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5 = don't know). **Please only circle one choice for each statement.**

	Strongly Disagree	disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
1. It is critical that everyone who is eligible to vote in elections does so.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Being able to write well and communicate my ideas effectively is very important for the career I plan to go into.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Most politicians are only interested in getting elected, so once that happens, they don't really need to listen to people like me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel comfortable using new technology, such as the Internet, film and voice recordings, to communicate my ideas to others.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I don't think writing to your senator or other elected official really makes an impact.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I think that my individual vote in a national election won't really have an impact in the whole scheme of things.	1	2	3	4	5

Immigrant Integration through Community Planning Course

Section III: Specific course related questions

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement at this point in time. Circle the number that best describes your response (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5 = don't know). **Please only circle one choice for each statement.**

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	Strongly agree	don't know
1. In general, immigrant integration into a new community is the responsibility of the immigrants themselves.	1	2	3	4	5

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	Strongly agree	don't know
2. It is <u>not</u> absolutely necessary to involve young people when changes to their school are proposed because teachers and school administrators know what is best for the young people.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Young people have a right to voice their opinions in the community, no matter what their views are.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is best for young people to learn about community action in school and wait until they are adults to practice it.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel I have the skills to work effectively with people in order to identify their concerns and needs.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Young people don't know what is involved in community planning so it is best to leave that to the experts who've been trained in planning and design.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Education policy strongly influences the opportunities that immigrants are provided when they come to the United States.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Making special accommodations in public schools for immigrant young people is hard to justify since it will take needed resources away from the schooling of non-immigrant students.	1	2	3	4	5

Sustainable Planning and Design Course

Section III: Specific course related questions

*Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement at this point in time. Circle the number that best describes your response (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5 = don't know). **Please only circle one choice for each statement.***

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	Strongly agree	don't know
1. It is critical to involve the end user group in the design process for both public and private spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is <u>not</u> absolutely necessary to involve children when changes to their school site are proposed because teachers and school administrators know	1	2	3	4	5

		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	Strongly agree	don't know
	what is best for the children.					
3.	As long as a building meets the current national standards for green buildings, it should be good for a community.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	For a space with many different stakeholders and user groups, such as a school, it is best for the designer to be hired as the expert and make the decisions about the best configuration and use of that space.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I feel I have the skills to work effectively with people in order to identify their needs and wishes.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I feel I have the knowledge and skills to create a more sustainable community.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Participation by multiple stakeholders in a design process will often dilute the vision and creativity of the trained designer.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Teaching young people about design and planning is difficult and time-consuming and is not the responsibility of a design professional.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The design of a space will be much stronger if the design professionals involve all stakeholders during the design process.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	A critical aspect of a sustainable school is that the students must know about how the building functions.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Sustainable design and planning is really just about using eco-friendly materials to create sustainable spaces.	1	2	3	4	5

Learning Landscapes Course

Section III: Specific course related questions

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement at this point in time. Circle the number that best describes your response (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree, 5 = don't know). **Please only circle one choice for each statement.**

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	don't know
1. It is not absolutely necessary to involve children when changes to their school site are proposed because teachers and school administrators know what is best for the children.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is critical to involve the end user group in the design process for both public and private spaces.	1	2	3	4	5
3. For a space with many different stakeholders and user groups, such as a school, it is best for the designer to be hired as the expert and make the decisions about the best configuration and use of that space.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel I have the skills to work effectively with people in order to identify their needs and wishes.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Participation by multiple stakeholders in a design process can dilute the vision and creativity of the trained designer.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The best designs come about when a talented designer is given authority to make the key decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Involving young people in a design project or decision about a space they use is difficult and time-consuming and is not the responsibility of a designer professional.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Outcomes of the design process will be more successful if all stakeholders have an opportunity to provide their input, regardless of their design expertise.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix III: Actual answers from post-questionnaires

Did your participation in the service component enhance your understanding of the course material for this class?

II Course, Fall 2008:

- Real life examples always help me learn.
- Yes, we need to work to make some actions in our community.
- It gave me the experience of facilitating dialogue rather than just learning about the theory.
- Seeing how you can empower youth and get them interested and involved is eye opening. I didn't think kids would be so interested.
- It explained to me how the process of community outreach is different in theory than in action.
- Being able to practice and observe the skills and techniques learned in class helped to clarify and understand the bigger issues.
- I was exposed first-hand to the thoughts and opinions of the youth we were working with as they pertained to the evidence and research we read about in studies in class.
- We were able to put theory into play. Therefore, hands-on learning really was successful to understanding youth and their ideas.
- Having another group to talk through the issues helps solidify my ideas.
- Took readings and put it into action.
- You cannot understand how youth engagement works without participating in it. I can read all the articles I want about immigration and racism and diversity, but to have a conversation about these issues is invaluable.

CC Course, Fall 2008:

- I saw first hand how much went into an election
- I learned a single person can make a big difference.
- Related some material to real life.
- Just being aware of my surroundings
- It pertained to what we were learning.
- Helped me understand impact of civic engagement.
- While I found the work to be incredibly boring, I did learn a lot about what goes into an election on the processing side.
- It helped me think about civic engagement and politics in general on a different scale.
- It helped me to understand my importance in elections.

SPD Course, Fall 2008:

- It taught me about teaching but as far as the course goes, didn't learn a lot.
- It provided a real life example of how difficult and important it is to involve all stakeholders in the design process.
- There were a lot of new things I learned, not all of them related to design, but all of them were important life skills.

- The children and course made me think more on what the class was doing.
- I was forced to truly understand the information so that I could teach it, in an easily understood and entertaining form, to middle school students.

LLS Course, Fall 2008:

- Yes, because it helped me to take what they were saying and start transcribing it into my design.
- Application to real world design and community and vice versa.
- I learned exactly WHAT goes into a design by being actively involved in it.
- Taught to consider different constituents and overcome obstacles faced in the professional world of landscape architecture.
- Real world experience was really beneficial and will help future school and career chances.
- Because the class involved a built project any form of service helped.
- I learned a lot through the experience, learned by doing the design and by the DATS (Design Advisory Teams).

What have you learned about yourself or others since becoming involved in the service learning component of this course?

II Course, Fall 2008:

- Doing this service with my classmates builds a strong community in the class. I've learned about my classmates and their perspectives on the issues we discuss.
- The course has affected my insight. I have started questioning my environment and how I can make it a better place to live in.
- I have solidified my ideas and beliefs about multiculturalism and can now express those ideas better.
- I learned that I do have specific weaknesses when working with others and in large groups. This class really helped me improve in these areas.
- I have learned that homogeneous communities will not always be open to change, but it can be brought up upon them by teaching youth and socially activating youth to know and accept differences. Also, having the guidance of peers and administrators.
- The service learning project really gave me such great hands on experience that it has influenced my career and major choice.
- I confirmed to myself that I want to be involved in a career that helps others.
- I became far more interested in empowerment of those I am helping- as opposed to just giving certain things to people and hoping they use them.
- I need to be more assertive in group settings.
- Be more open minded
- I learned that I can make differences in my community and I learned to value all people and understand all immigrant issues.

CC Course, Fall 2008:

- That a single person can make a difference, and I now know how to.

- That I don't enjoy community service.
- Many people got involved for this election but I think it was because Bush was so disliked and I feel now that Obama got elected these people will stop being involved.
- Doing volunteer work is a full time job.
- I have learned that some people just don't work well with others, while I feel that I can easily meet a stranger and work with them productively.
- People are lazy, not me.
- Ability to coordinate donations.
- That I cannot take 18 credits, work 40 hours a week and do a service learning project. I miss sleeping.
- I believe a lot of our society does not care about politics and we are uninformed.
- That it is hard to be a sidewalk informer.
- I have learned that lots of people DO care.
- From the specific thing I did very little.
- I can make a difference.

SPD Course, Fall 2008:

- It is a commitment to involve a group.
- I have learned more about teaching to questioning minds (kids and adults). Teaching is the best way to learn.
- It's hard to make everyone happy when putting together lesson plans. Very interesting to learn how others work/learn and to learn a lot about yourself.
- I would like to find a job where I can help people.
- It takes a certain kind of person to get kids engaged in an idea.
- I have come to respect the amount of work that goes into teaching.
- Teaching is really hard.

LLS Course, Fall 2008:

- Some people are hard to deal with but if you act as professional as possible it helps.
- I have learned that most people have not yet fully accepted the emerging field of sustainable landscape (maybe afraid of change?)
- I have more skills than I was aware of. As long as I am prepared, others will listen to me and trust in my abilities.
- That I can be responsible, a leader, and a professional.
- That this is what I want to do with my life.
- I have learned how to better deal with clients.
- I learned a lot about myself through this course, a lot about my potential and work ethic. I learned how to look outside the box more too. During this course, I really stepped it up towards the end and saw how strong I can be in situations.

What suggestions, if any, do you have for improving the service learning program or component of this course?

II Course, Fall 2008:

- If it could be tweaked to spend more time getting to know the students even if we're only one of them or something
- This is a very challenging course because it directly affects the insight. The readings offered were good, but at a point of time, I wasn't able to handle them. I couldn't absorb them because of all the negativity that they transformed. Therefore, if there could be a balance between the readings and time of absorption that would be great.
- If we could get to know the youth better and interact with them more that would be great.
- I would make it mandatory for CU students, because I don't think we're currently really living the Colorado Creed, especially in regards to ACT and community unless we are really out there working with the community.
- More youth involvement (meeting with youth more frequently) and larger youth groups (diverse as well).
- More depth and more meetings.
- Having more time for photovoice, and engaging the youth in it earlier on.
- More planning and design problems that we as a class can work with the youth to solve.
- I'm so happy with this program.
- More focus/preparation for what is done in the diversity club.

CC Course, Fall 2008:

- Maybe tie everything together more, 1 service learning project with essays tied to it.
- Broaden the things that one can choose.
- Pretty well-designed overall
- Maybe asking students to be involved in local campaigns.
- More suggested organizations.
- I think that service learning programs can be great for traditional college students. However, it needs to be made VERY CLEAR that the class requires extensive outside volunteer work. Perhaps service learning based courses can be listed separately in the course catalogue.
- Have more options that would require students to write as a part of this responsibility for their service program.
- Maybe to do more of it!
- Make it more in-depth to what we do in this class.

SPD Course, Fall 2008:

- Better connect the facilitators to the children
- Make Discussion questions due on a class day - They held my grade back, but I'm not really the student who cares that much about grades, I learned a lot.
- Make it a bit more organized and instead of using non-Casey days to review Casey days, we should use them to learn about environmental issues.

- Make it longer
- None, I really liked the class.
- For this class there was little connection between the service learning and the class. In class we discussed teaching but did not really help us with the teaching in class.
- Definitely cut down the syllabus, tried to cover too many topics.
- More structure
- Organization is the key to success.

LLS Course, Fall 2008:

- More time!
- Have more communication between X and X; explain to schools concept of budget and that this is a learning experience.
- Do more with the schools. I want to spend less time behind a desk, and more time interacting with the community.
- Respect for students' time and opinions.
- More structure, prerequisites for course, equal understanding between school and clients.
- Better structure (due dates), more seminars - learn stuff and discuss, and relationships w/ DAT's.

Appendix IV: Student Focus Group Protocol

1. How would you assess your experience in this class?
 - a. If you think it was a success, what factors contributed to the success?
 - b. If you don't think it was a success, why not?
 - c. Did you encounter obstacles? What were they and how did you overcome them?
3. Describe your interaction with your community partner (the group you worked with outside of class). What role did your community partner play in your learning experience?
4. What did you learn about your community partner in this course?
5. Has this course changed your perspective on working in the community after you graduate? Why or why not?
6. How did your learning experience in this service learning course compare to your experiences in lecture or seminar style courses that do not have an outreach or service learning component?
7. Describe your experience facilitating/leading a session with the youth group that you worked with.
8. Were you empowered to take ownership of your lead facilitation session? Why or why not?
9. Do you think you had an impact on the youth that you worked with this semester?
 - a. If yes, please give examples of what types of impact you think you had.
 - b. If no, why not?
10. What did you hope to learn from your community-based (service) learning experience in this course?
 - a. What do you think your teacher wanted you to learn in this class?
 - b. What course learning goals did the service learning experience address?
 - c. Would this course be effective without the service learning component?
11. Did you have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences in this class?
 - a. If yes, were/was it effective?

b. If no, what would have been helpful?

12. Did this community experience leave you with new questions or concerns?

13. Will you take another service learning course? Why or why not?

14. Do you have any other comments you would like to share?

Appendix V: Instructor Focus Group Protocol:

1. Describe the basic aspects of your courses, including content (briefly), why you chose to do service learning, and your community partners.
2. How did the service learning component of your course work for your students?
What was the value added for them?
What were the biggest challenges for your students?
3. Do you feel that the service learning component of your course changed your students' view of the community?
4. Do you feel that the service learning component of your course affected the way your students view their future, their field of study or career?
5. What was the hardest part of the course for you personally as the instructor?
6. How would you compare teaching a service learning course to a "normal" course, either positive or negative?
7. What was the biggest or most important thing you would change to make the service learning course more successful for your students?
8. What would you change to make it easier or better for yourself as an instructor?
9. What would you change to improve the experience for your community partners?
10. If you were to suggest one thing that really helped your course, your students, or you succeed in offering a service learning course, what would it be? What really worked?