ED 394 612   JC 960 349

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TITLE   Service Learning and Community Colleges: Where We
                Are. AACC Survey Report.
INSTITUTION   American Association of Community Colleges,
                Washington, DC.
REPORT NO   AACC-SR-96-1
PUB DATE   May 96
NOTE   14p.
PUB TYPE   Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Citizen Participation; Community Colleges; Community
                Development; *Community Education; Community
                Programs; *Community Services; National Surveys;
                *School Community Programs; *School Community
                Relationship; School Involvement; *Service Learning;
                Student Participation; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS   *American Association of Community Colleges

ABSTRACT
                To determine the level of involvement in service
learning among community colleges, the American Association of
Community Colleges (AACC) conducted a national survey of over 1,100
colleges in spring 1995. The following institutional and program
profile, based on responses from 773 institutions, emerged from the
survey: (1) four out of five community colleges indicated. that they
were interested in service learning; (2) 75% of the respondents
considered community service as part of their institutional mission;
(3) rural colleges were more likely to have service learning programs
than urban institutions; (4) most colleges relied heavily on
institutional funds to implement service learning programs; (5)
curricular areas varied, but social science and humanities courses
were most likely to incorporate service activities; (6) 85% of
colleges providing service learning activities offered up to 10
courses with a service option; (7) the most important reason cited by
respondents for success with service learning programs was faculty
support, followed by administrative support and community support;
(8) insufficient funding and the absence of faculty release time were
the two most significant impediments to success cited by respondents;
and (9) service experiences were evaluated most frequently by
examining agency evaluation forms or student activity logs. Contains
13 references. (Author/TGI)

Service Learning and Community Colleges: Where We Are.
AACC Survey Report

By
Gail Robinson and Lynn Barnett
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
Washington, DC

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SURVEY REPORT

Service Learning and Community Colleges: Where We Are

by Gail Robinson and Lynn Barnett

Executive Summary

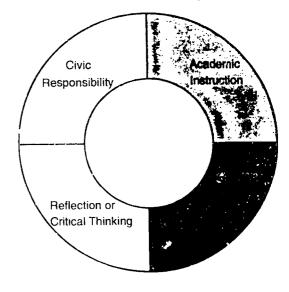To determine the level of involvement in service learning among community colleges, AACC conducted a national survey in spring 1995. This report summarizes the findings from that survey and from follow-up information obtained through May 1996. The following institutional and program profile emerged from AACC's survey:

- Four out of five community colleges are interested in service learning, either by actively using the methodology or wanting to do so.

- Seventy percent of community college respondents consider community service as part of their institutional mission.

- Rural colleges are currently more likely to have service learning programs than are urban or suburban institutions.

- Most colleges rely heavily on institutional funds to implement service learning programs, but some receive outside funding from government, community organizations, and foundations.

- Curricular areas vary but social science and humanities courses are the most likely to incorporate service.

- Eighty-five percent of service learning colleges offer up to ten courses with a service option.

- Service is mandatory in many courses, but very few institutions view community service as a graduation requirement.

- Faculty support is the most important reason service learning programs succeed, followed by community and administrative support. Insufficient funding and faculty release time are the two most significant impediments.

- Service learning programs are most often administered by student services personnel or individual faculty members in different disciplines.

- Most service learning colleges have five or fewer faculty teaching courses with service learning components.

- Classroom tools for reflection are most often class discussion and student journals. Service experiences are evaluated most frequently by agency evaluation forms or student activity logs.

Service Learning

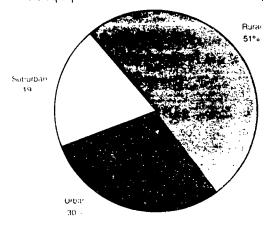Civic Responsibility · Academic Instruction · Reflection or Critical Thinking

SERVICE LEARNING *has been called a part of a revolution in American education (Rifkin, 1996a) and a focus point for rethinking the whole mission of education. A teaching method, service learning combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service learning programs involve students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community. According to one economist, "the antidote to simulation and cyberspace is deep re-participation in community [i.e., service learning]"* (Rifkin, 1996b).
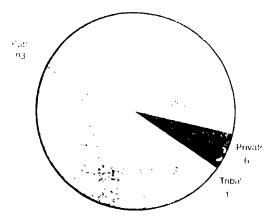
Methodology

The extent to which community colleges offered community service and service learning programs and resources was investigated in a 1995 national survey conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges as part of a *Learn and Serve America* grant from the Corporation for National Service. Service learning is defined as a pedagogy combining community service with academic instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. AACC's goal was to establish a baseline and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the role that community colleges play in this aspect of community service. Surveys were sent to more than 1,100 community colleges in the United States, and 719 colleges responded to the initial mailing. Respondents included college presidents, administrative and academic deans, faculty members, and student services staff. Follow-up activities through early 1996 brought the total to 773 institutions, representing more than 71 percent of AACC's member colleges.
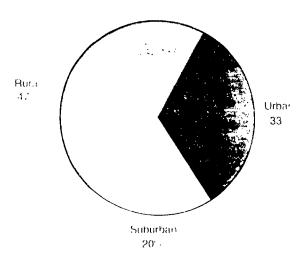
Institutional Profile

Most respondents were from public colleges, about half of which are located in rural areas. Institutional size (credit headcount) ranged from 400 to more than 20,000 students.

Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

Rural 51%
Suburban 19
Urban 30

Institutional Control of Respondent

Public 93
Private 6
Tribal 1

Geographic Distribution of Community Colleges Offering Service Learning
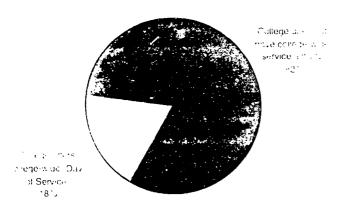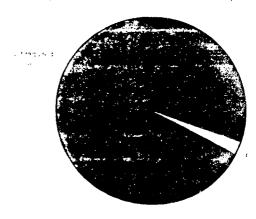

Rural 47
Urban 33
Suburban 20

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VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Nearly half of all colleges house an office or group that places students in community service opportunities, but only one in five promotes college-wide service projects. Few colleges require students to perform community service to graduate, but comments from the field suggest that an increasing number are considering such requirements.

College-Wide Community Service Activity for Large Numbers of Students and Faculty

College does not promote community service activity ~2%

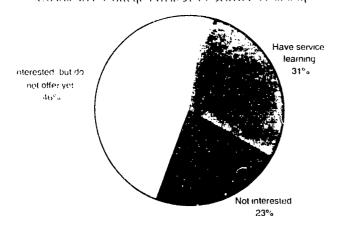Promotes Students and/or Service 18%
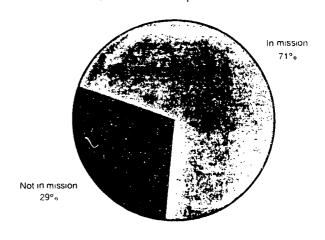
Community Service as a Graduation Requirement

SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

According to the 1995 survey and follow-up information gathered through early 1996, 236 community colleges in 41 states—31 percent of respondents—offer service learning in a variety of courses. An additional 46 percent want service learning and are receptive to technical assistance. Many colleges in their first year of service learning also want technical
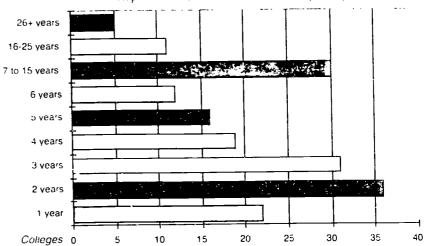
SERVICE IN COLLEGE MISSION

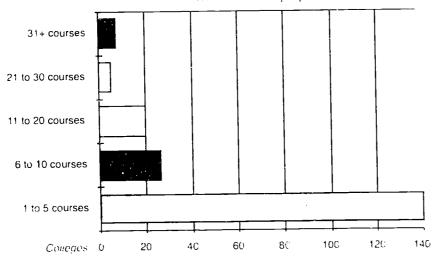
In mission 71%

Not in mission 29%

assistance. Surprisingly, about one-third of all respondents reported that service was not part of their institutional mission, and one-fifth of all respondents indicated no interest in service learning. Twenty-five percent of all responding technical colleges offer service learning opportunities.

Community College Interest in Service Learning

Interested but do not offer yet 46%

Have service learning 31%

Not interested 23%

Reported Age of Service Learning Programs

Most service learning programs are quite new, with 75 percent getting underway since 1990. However, 16 colleges reported beginning their programs in the 1960s and 1970s.
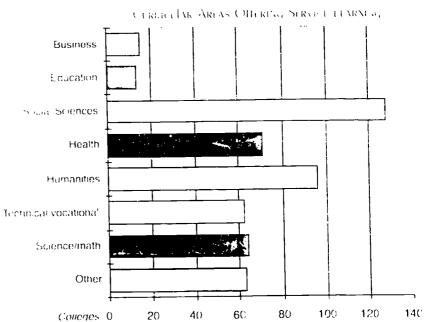

Bar chart: Reported Age of Service Learning Programs (x-axis: Colleges, 0 to 40)
- 26+ years
- 16-25 years
- 7 to 15 years
- 6 years
- 5 years
- 4 years
- 3 years
- 2 years
- 1 year

Number of Courses Per College with Service Learning Option

Bar chart: Number of Courses Per College with Service Learning Option (x-axis: Colleges, 0 to 140)
- 31+ courses
- 21 to 30 courses
- 11 to 20 courses
- 6 to 10 courses
- 1 to 5 courses

Thirty-seven percent of community colleges with service learning offer specific, stand-alone courses in community service; overall, 85 percent of colleges list up to 10 courses with service learning components.
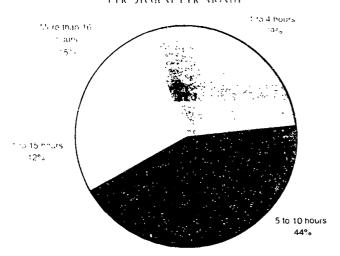
Many colleges offer service learning in two or more courses. Curricular areas vary across the board, with social science and humanities courses the most likely to incorporate service.

Curricular Areas Offering Service Learning

Bar chart: Curricular Areas Offering Service Learning (x-axis: Colleges, 0 to 140)
- Business
- Education
- Social Sciences
- Health
- Humanities
- Technical/vocational
- Science/math
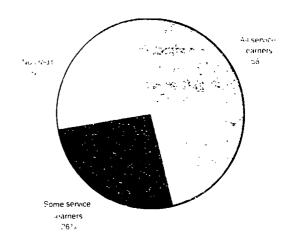- Other

Student Participation

The number of students involved in service learning varies widely, often depending on the age or breadth of a given college's program. Overall, the average student performs fewer than 10 hours of community service per month. Some practitioners report that service learning's best promoters are its own students, who attract other students by word-of-mouth.

Academic Credit for Service Learning

All service earners

Some service earners 26%

Typical Hours of Service Per Student Per Month

More than 16 hours 5%

1 to 4 hours 9%

10 15 hours 12%

5 to 10 hours 44%

Service Requirements in Service Learning Classes

Mandatory in all courses 19%

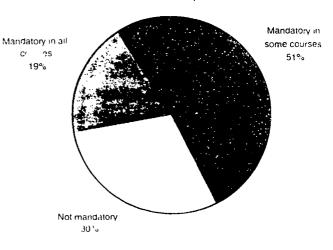Mandatory in some courses 51%

Not mandatory 30%

Service is mandatory in many courses, and students generally receive academic credit for service. Currently, few colleges include participation in service learning on student transcripts, but anecdotal evidence suggests this idea is increasing in popularity.
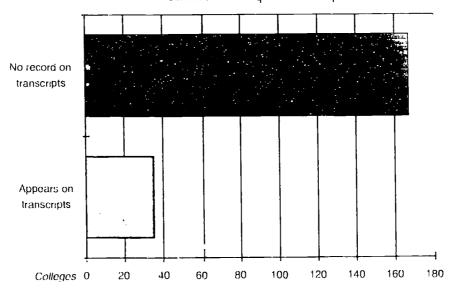
Service Learning on Transcripts

No record on transcripts

Appears on transcripts

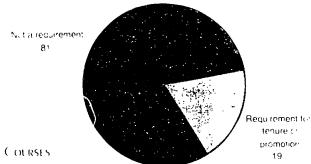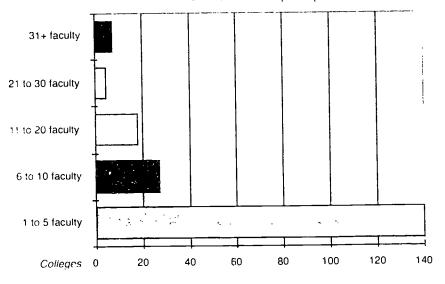Colleges 0   20   40   60   80   100   120   140   160   180

Faculty/Staff Participation

The majority of community colleges relies on only a few faculty to integrate service learning into the classroom: 71 percent of respondents reported that five or fewer faculty teach courses with service learning components. Few staff or administrators engage in service learning, with most institutions having less than five involved.
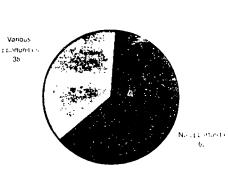
Community Service as a Requirement for Faculty Tenure or Promotion

Not a requirement
81

Requirement for tenure or promotion
19

Number of Faculty Per College Teaching Courses with Service Learning Components

Colleges	0	20	40	60	80	100	120	140

- 31+ faculty
- 21 to 30 faculty
- 11 to 20 faculty
- 6 to 10 faculty
- 1 to 5 faculty

Opportunities for Faculty Development in Service Learning

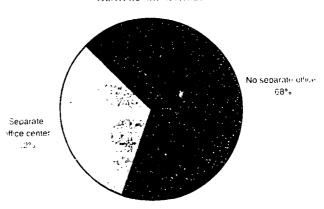Various opportunities
35

No opportunities
6.

Most faculty are encouraged to participate in service learning through praise, recognition, and peer influence. The least effective factor for participation is a mandatory requirement. More than one-third of all institutions offer faculty development opportunities, but community service does not tend to be a requirement for tenure or promotion.

Incentives for Faculty Involvement

- Outside leaders
- Mandatory
- No encouragement
- Praise-recognition
- Peer influence
- Stipends
- Release time
- Mini-grants
- Other

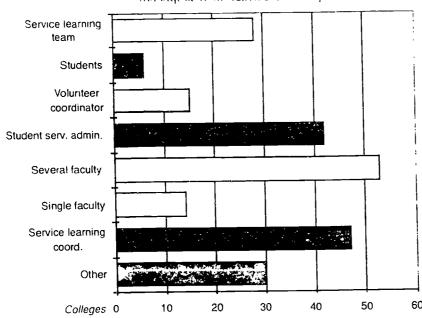| Colleges	0	20	40	60	80	100

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Program Administration

The primary people responsible for organizing service learning on campus are most likely to be student services or student life staff or individual faculty members in different disciplines. Thirty-two percent of colleges with service learning programs have a separate service learning center or office, which relieves the pressure on faculty to combine teaching and program administration. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a service learning team comprising faculty and designated staff may be the most effective way to integrate and institutionalize service learning over the long term.
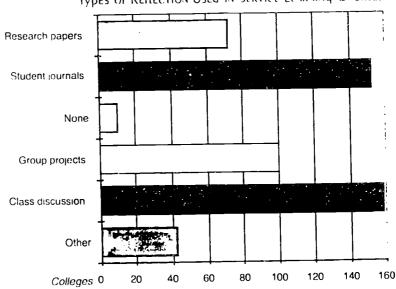
College Service Learning Centers or Offices

No separate office 68%

Separate office center 32%

Management of Service Learning Activities

	Colleges
Service learning team	
Students	
Volunteer coordinator	
Student serv. admin.	
Several faculty	
Single faculty	
Service learning coord.	
Other	

Colleges 0 10 20 30 40 50 60

Types of Reflection Used in Service Learning Courses

Research papers	
Student journals	
None	
Group projects	
Class discussion	
Other	

Colleges 0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160
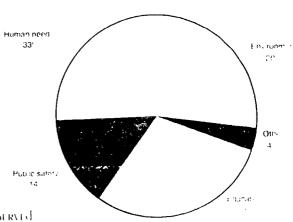
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In the classroom, the most common tools used for reflection are class discussion and student-written journals, both of which are used by three-quarters of responding colleges. Evaluation forms (completed by community agencies) and accomplishment or activity logs (completed by students) are the methods utilized most often to evaluate students' service learning experiences.
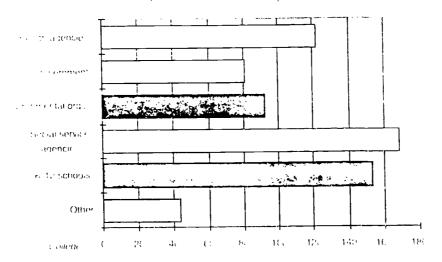

Outside Organizations

Community colleges' service learning activities address community needs primarily in the general categories of human needs and education, followed by environmental needs and public safety. To meet those needs, students work with K-12 schools, social service organizations, and health agencies, as selected by a college's service learning coordinator or team.

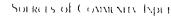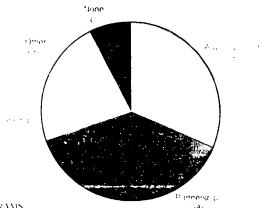Areas of Community Service

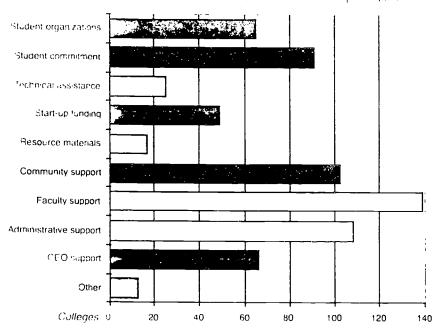Types of Community Organizations Served

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Program Development

Community colleges receive assistance in planning and feedback on activities underway in a variety of ways, most often through partnerships and advisory boards, but also through other means such as personal contacts and direct agency requests.
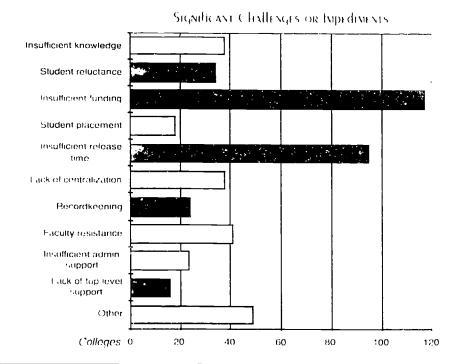

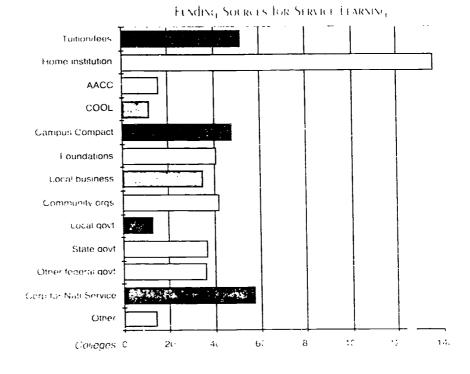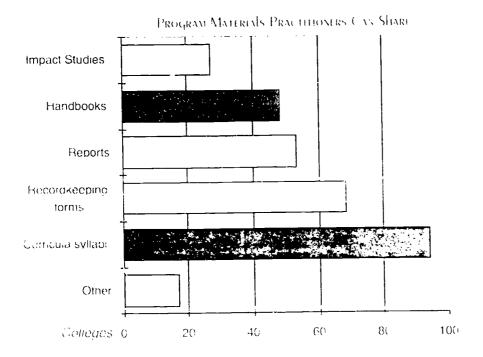Factors in Success of Service Learning Programs

Faculty, administrative, and community support are the most important factors that make a service learning program successful; resource materials, the least important. While faculty support is seen as the most significant factor contributing to the success of service learning programs, insufficient release time is the second most significant impediment to service learning activities. The highest-ranked impediment is insufficient funding to initiate and sustain service learning activities.

Comments from the field suggest that community colleges would benefit from making more time available, even to a single faculty member on a given campus, to help a service learning program to get underway. Once a program is established, the biggest hurdles are behind, and the need for release time may be lessened.

Significant Challenges or Impediments

11

Although insufficient funding is cited as the number one challenge for service learning programs, a variety of outside sources for financial assistance are available, including governmental sources, community organizations, and foundations. The college itself is the most frequent source of support for service learning.

Funding Sources for Service Learning

Program Materials Practitioners Can Share

Community colleges traditionally are receptive to networking and sharing information, and this tendency appears to hold true in the service learning field. When asked about materials they would be willing to share, service learning faculty and administrators most often referred to curricula/syllabi and recordkeeping forms, as well as reports and handbooks. Some institutions are producing student, faculty, and agency handbooks; some also have videos that describe their service learning programs.

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AACC Service Learning Colleges

The AACC Service Learning Colleges, selected as grantees in AACC's *Learn and Serve America* program, experienced tremendous growth in faculty and student involvement in service learning in their first full year. Starting from virtually no service learning activities in 1994, the eleven colleges reported in December 1995 the involvement of 79 faculty, 1,129 students, and 339 community service agencies. The students provided more than 24,000 hours of direct community service. Estimates for the first quarter of 1996 indicate involvement at a level approaching three times that of the first quarter of 1995. The AACC Service Learning Colleges receive technical assistance through a mentor team, conferences, and an Internet listserv.

AACC Learn and Serve America Colleges Trends.
January 1995–May 1996

- ☐ Est. Jan-May 96
- ▨ Sep-Dec 95
- ■ Jan-Aug 95

Conclusions

Given the increasing public interest in service learning as evidenced by the emergence of grant-making from the Corporation for National Service and philosophical support from leading thinkers such as Jeremy Rifkin and Robert Coles, it will be important to assess service learning program implementation again in two or three years. Preliminary evidence suggests that start-up funding and, more importantly, early technical assistance can have a significant impact on program development. In many cases personal contacts through networking opportunities will be sufficient, but they, too, will take a little more time to be more widely identifiable. Several of the community colleges that had expressed an interest in service learning in the spring 1995 survey have succeeded in integrating it into coursework in the past year. And even more colleges that were previously unaware of or uninterested in service learning now want to incorporate it into their academic offerings.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

AACC Service Learning Clearinghouse
http://www.aacc.nche.edu/spcproj/service/service.htm

Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges
http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/academic/compact

Campus Outreach Opportunity League
http://www.cool2serve.org/homcotc/home.html

Corporation for National Service
http://www.cns.gov

Maricopa Community College District
http://www.mch.dist.maricopa.edu/sl/

National Service-Learning Cooperative Clearinghouse
http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu

Partnership for Service Learning
http://www.studyabroad.com/psl/pslhome.html

The Service Learning Files
http://csf.colorado.edu/sl/

For further information on the AACC survey results or for sample service learning materials, contact:

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