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P-16 Service Learning Outcomes: Charting New Paths to Partner and Assess Innovative Collaborations

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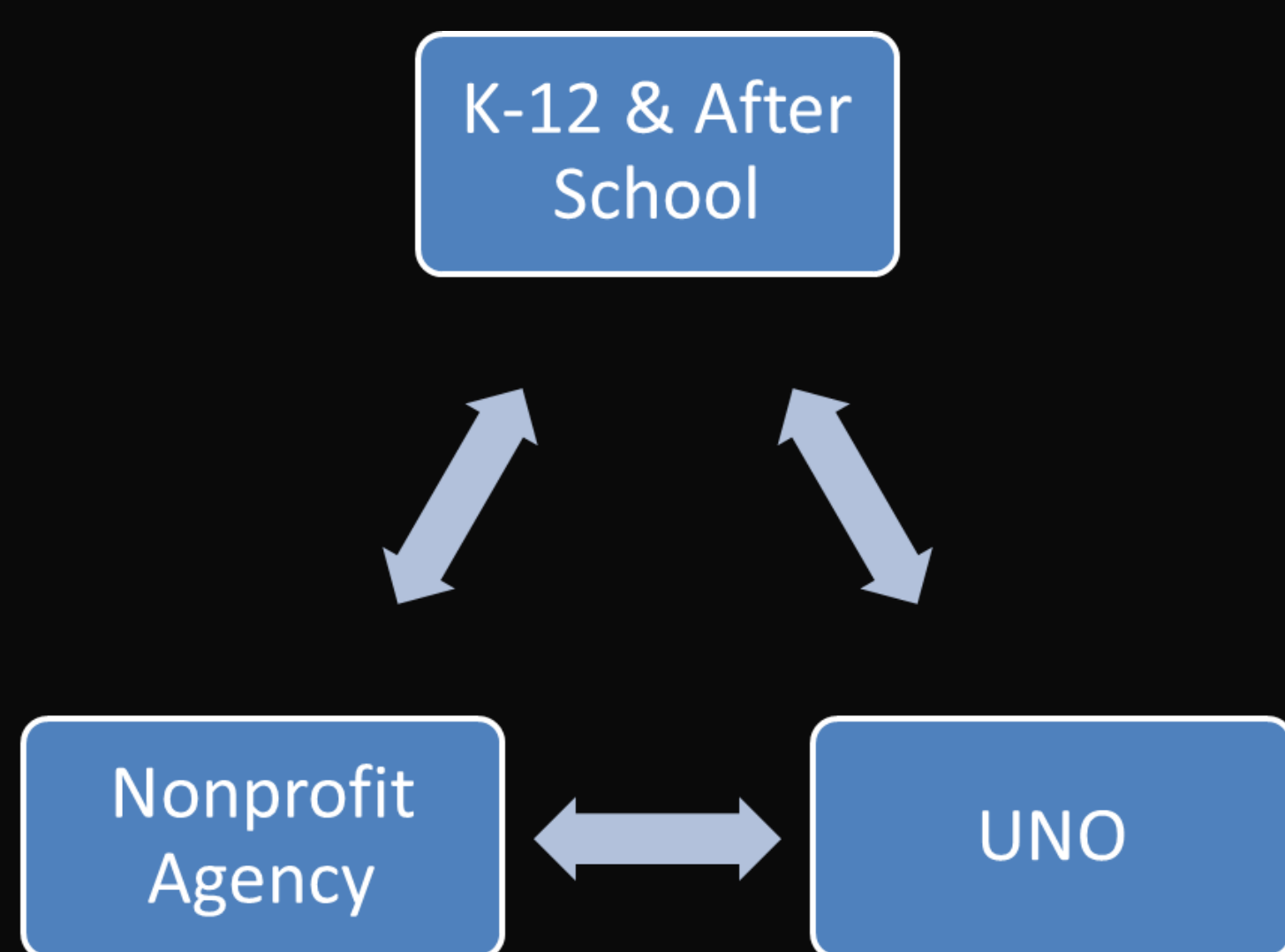


P-16 service learning outcomes: Charting new paths to assess innovative collaborations

Julie Dierberger, M.A. and Libby Ferris, B.A.

UNO P-16 Model

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) had been teaching service learning courses since the late 1990s and in the 2000s had a collaborative P-16 service learning project: one in which college students were not providing service with P-12 students, but instead partnering with a local P-12 classroom to meet their learning goals and a local nonprofit partner's need simultaneously. This "three-legged stool" or "triangle" model is indicated below; all three partners are equal and college students work side by side P-12 students to meet community-identified needs.



Background of P-16

The University of Nebraska at Omaha joined local nonprofit organizations to create a collective impact model for creating change to address low P-12 school engagement, attendance and graduation rates. A study completed by SRI, International in 2007 indicated 1,900 of 9,687 students who were ninth graders in Omaha in 2005-6 would drop out of school early and that an average of 6,582 students were absent each day in Omaha in 2005. Even worse: 4,561 students dropped out of public school between 2003-2006 (SRI International, 2007; Dierberger, 2015). The P-16 Initiative became a piece of six other programs; the primary goals of the project were:

1. Train P-12 and UNO faculty members with local nonprofit partners in quality service learning instruction (using the National Youth Leadership Council K-12 Quality Service-Learning Standards, 2008)
2. Support implementation of quality P-16 service learning courses
3. Provide P-12 students an opportunity to "see" themselves on a college campus through campus visits working on their collaborative projects
4. Evaluate success related to student engagement, self-efficacy, community engagement and community impact

UNO is a metropolitan institution with a long history of community engagement. P-16 service learning projects make up approximately 1/3 of service learning courses at UNO. Access to higher education is essential to UNO's mission; during the 2015-16 academic year P-12 schools took 101 visits to UNO. Service learning courses are taught in all colleges and at all course levels.

Protocol and procedures

Pre and post assessments were developed to examine student perceptions of: 1) Civic Engagement, 2) School Engagement/Learning, 3) Interpersonal Skills/Problem Solving and 4) Service Learning Specific experiences. After obtaining IRB and Omaha Public School research approval, passive consents were distributed to collaborating teachers and sent home to parents for P-12 audiences. Two weeks later, if not returned, the students took the pre-tests. UNO students in service learning courses were able to take their assessments online through links shared from the faculty member.

Response rates for the surveys were 24% (146 surveys completed) for Elementary (K-5)*, 22% (336 surveys completed) for Secondary (6-12)*, and 11% (381 surveys completed) for UNO (Undergraduate & Graduate).

*Note: Surveys were completed by Omaha Public Schools students only, which represent approximately 80% of the P-16 service learning partnerships with UNO

Survey Results

Question	School Level	T-Test (One Sample or Paired)	P-Value	N
I felt like the problem I worked on was important	UNO	One Sample: 25.96	.000	380
	Secondary	One Sample: 13.31	.000	223
	Elementary	One Sample: 22.524	<.01	120
I felt like I had real responsibilities/important jobs on the project	UNO	One Sample: 27.56	.000	380
	Secondary	One Sample: 12.33	.000	222
	Elementary	One Sample: 10.093	<.01	115
My professor helped me to understand the connections between the course's learning goals and the service learning project	UNO	One Sample: 20.91	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 12.17	.000	224
I met with or worked with people or organizations in the community in order to learn more about the problem	UNO	One Sample: 15.86	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 10.56	.000	221
I had a chance to discuss or research the problem or issue before I took action	UNO	One Sample: 19.33	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 9.87	.000	222
I put more effort into this course compared to others	UNO	One Sample: 19.65	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 6.719	.000	217
I was more challenged by this course compared to others	UNO	One Sample: 12.23	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 14.203	.000	215
I presented and/or discussed the results or experience of the project with one or more members of the community	UNO	One Sample: 21.72	.000	379
	Secondary	One Sample: 9.76	.000	224
Being involved in this service learning project helped me better understand the course material	UNO	One Sample: 20.74	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 9.588433	.000	224
Being involved in this service learning project helped me to define my personal strengths and weaknesses	UNO	One Sample: 20.36	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 7.072246	.000	223
Being involved in this service learning project helped me take responsibility for my own learning	UNO	One Sample: 23.71	.000	381
	Secondary	One Sample: 12.15	.000	223
I had a say in choosing the problem or issue that I worked on	UNO	One Sample: 10.08	.000	380
	Secondary	One Sample: 5.786017	.000	222
It is my responsibility to be actively involved in community issues	UNO	Paired: 3.203	.002	268
	Secondary	Paired: 5.062	.000	94
I understand which organizations are working to address the community's needs	UNO	Paired: 6.502	.000	268
	Secondary	Paired: 2.186	.031	96

Service-Learning Specific
Civic Engagement

4 categories of student affective outcomes:

1. Civic Engagement
2. School engagement/learning
3. Interpersonal skills/problem solving
4. Service learning specific

Total questions from each school level for 2015-2016 surveys:
UNO—65; Secondary—44; Elementary—30

Total questions by question category:
Civic Engagement: UNO 21, Secondary 12, Elementary 9
School engagement/learning: UNO 12, Secondary 8, Elementary 6
Interpersonal skills/problem solving: UNO 8, Secondary 0, Elementary 7
Service Learning Specific: UNO 24, Secondary 16, Elementary 8

Number of questions with significance by question category:
Civic Engagement: UNO 16, Secondary 5, Elementary 7
School engagement/learning: UNO 5, Secondary 0, Elementary 6
Interpersonal skills/problem solving: UNO 7, Secondary 0, Elementary 0
Service Learning Specific: UNO 21, Secondary 11, Elementary 6

Total number of matched questions between school levels:
14

Number of matched questions by question category and school levels:
Civic Engagement: 2
UNO & Secondary
Service Learning Specific: 12
UNO, Secondary & Elementary: 2, UNO & Secondary: 10

Implications

- Survey administration across P-16 is difficult, making it hard to get cohesive and consistent data
- Civic engagement and Service-learning specific questions came back with the most significance out of the four question categories
- Format future questions consistently across the P-16 spectrum while remaining age appropriate
- While not significant, other themed questions (school engagement/learning and interpersonal skills/problem solving) remained at high levels between pre and post tests
- Future research should include qualitative approaches to understanding the personal experiences and motivations behind quantitative results

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