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

Julie Dierberger

University of Nebraska at Omaha, [jdierberger@unomaha.edu](mailto:jdierberger@unomaha.edu)

Libby Ferris

University of Nebraska at Omaha, [eferris@unomaha.edu](mailto:eferris@unomaha.edu)

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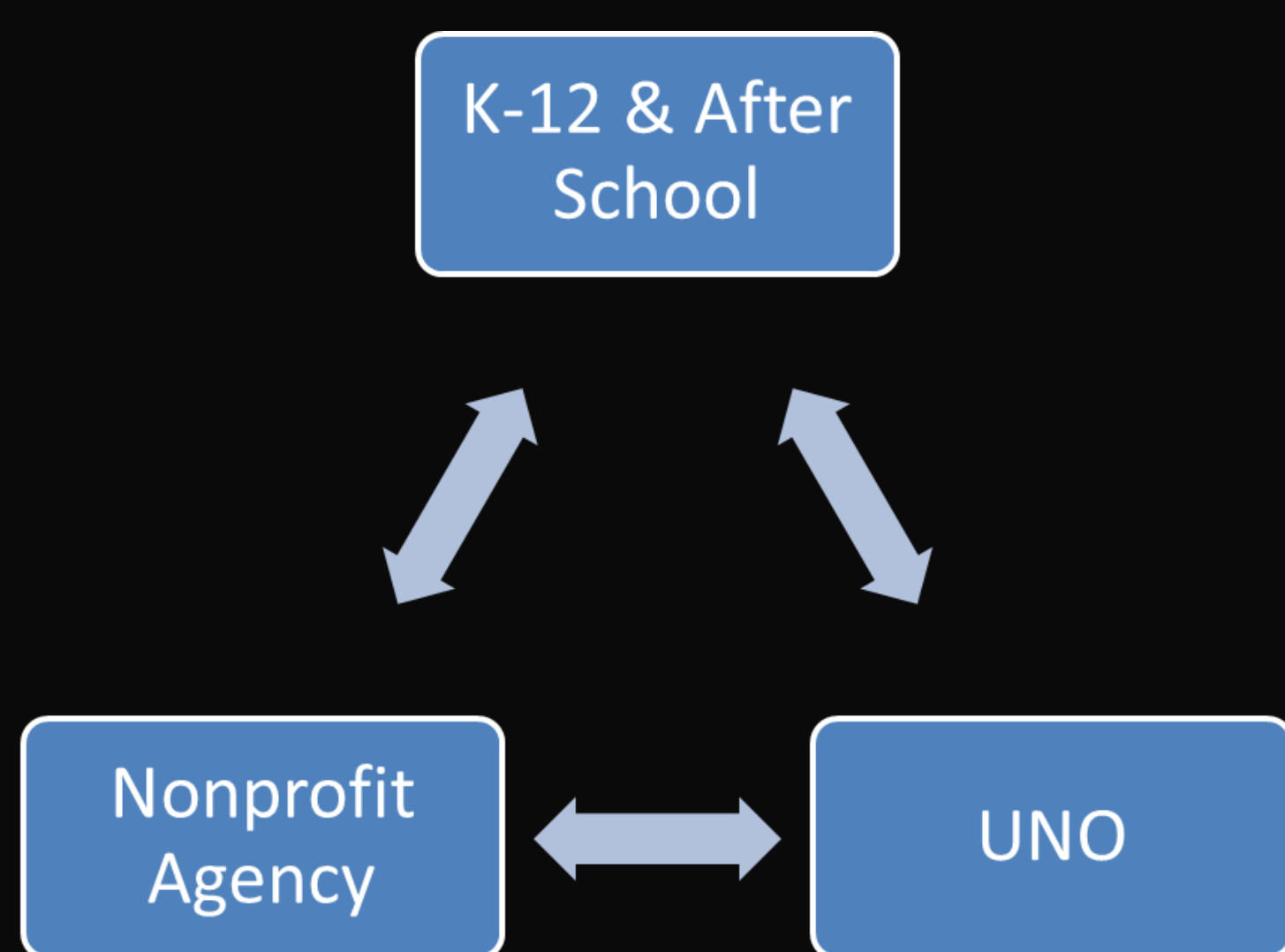


## P-16 service learning outcomes: Charting new paths to assess innovative collaborations

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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