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In times of shrinking resources and growing needs, the aging network must increase its efforts to involve the voluntary sector in services and programs for the aged. A relatively untapped source of manpower is our nation's 12,300,000 students in 3,200 colleges and universities. This article, based on the findings of a national demonstration project, examines feasible outcomes and practical limitations of service-learning as an approach for increasing the involvement of students in providing services to older persons.

Students as Resources to the Aging Network¹

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James P. Firman, EdD,² Donald E. Gelfand, PhD,³ and Catherine Ventura, MGS⁴

Most service providers agree that students can make useful and needed contributions to organizations that help older people. Conversely, the recent report from the Gerontological Society of America and the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (Johnson et al., 1980) confirms the importance of field experiences to gerontological education. Unfortunately, however, the literature on appropriate roles and feasible outcomes for student efforts in the community is sparse.

Service-learning includes any activity which yields both learning for students and services for the community. It has been hypothesized to be a needed and feasible strategy for meeting overlapping needs of academic institutions and community service agencies in the aging network (Gelfand & Firman, 1981).

Service-learning is both a form of experiential education and a type of public service activity. Other scholars have ably described typologies for field education (Haughtsby, 1980; Williams, 1980) and methods for field instruction in gerontology (Ewing, 1981). Any of the various forms of field education (which include practica, internships, class projects,

and field placements) can also be classified as service-learning provided that some useful community service is also performed.

Service-learning also encompasses those types of community services emanating from colleges and universities in which students rather than faculty are the primary service providers (Berte & O'Neill, 1977). It includes activities for which students receive academic credit, monetary compensation, or altruistic rewards (Eberly, 1977) as long as student learning is also an integral part of the activity.

In this article we examine findings from a 30-month demonstration project at The National Council on the Aging (NCOA). Our goal is to provide the aging network with an understanding of the benefits and limitations of service-learning as an approach for increasing student involvement in services to older persons.

In the following analysis we initially focus on the types of services that students can most adequately perform for community agencies. Differences in services provided by graduate and undergraduate students are then examined. Relationships between service outcomes and various types of service-learning are also explored. Next we identify campus and agency barriers to successful service-learning projects and discuss feasible strategies for funding student services to the elderly. We conclude with some suggestions for future research and demonstration efforts.

Background

The discussion is based upon findings of NCOA's Intergenerational Service-Learning Project (ISLP) which was funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Community Services Administration, and the participating institutions of higher education.

A mix of colleges and universities was selected by NCOA to participate in the project: they included

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Participating in the project were the following institutions of higher education: Boston University, Massachusetts; The George Washington University, Washington, DC; The Hampton Institute, Virginia; Oregon State University, Corvallis; University of Denver, Colorado; University of Georgia, Athens; and the Consortium for Urban Education, Indianapolis (Butler University, Christian Theological Seminary, Franklin College, Indiana Central University, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, and Marian College). We are grateful to the project personnel at each of these schools for their contributions to this research and demonstration effort.

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schools that were urban and rural, public and private, large and small; a minority institution; and a consortium of seven schools in one city. NCOA provided each of the demonstration sites with a total of \$60,000 over a period of 30 months. Funds were used to hire staff who were charged with the mission of increasing faculty and student involvement in service-learning with the aged. Health needs and services to the poor elderly were emphasized along with the development of projects which could become self-sustaining beyond the demonstration phase. Otherwise, the local sites were given a relatively free hand to develop projects most consistent with local campus and community needs.

During the 30 months of the demonstration project, 2,305 students participated in providing more than 106,000 hours of services for or on behalf of older persons. Thirty percent of the participants were graduate students and the rest were undergraduates. Approximately two-thirds of the students participated for academic credit, one-quarter were volunteers, and the remainder were employed.

The findings presented in this paper are based primarily on analyses of aggregate data reported by campus personnel as well as an in-depth study of 40 exemplary projects. Four criteria were used to identify these exemplary projects:

1. The project was developed and implemented during 1979 or 1980 at one of the participating colleges or universities.
2. Both significant learning and substantive service appeared to be associated with the project.
3. The project involved three or more students in a similar or related activity.
4. The project seemed likely to be continued or repeated or it had come to a satisfactory and planned conclusion.

We also report on selected findings of interviews with staff members of 45 community agencies that utilized students as part of the demonstration program.

Services and Students

For many community agencies the major attraction of students is that they are extra personnel at a time when staffing needs are critical. Students thus assist in carrying out the normal functions of the agency. In some cases, the availability of students may enable the agency to expand its services and close some of the gaps in its service-delivery efforts. Important limitations on the types of services that students can provide do exist, however, and these limitations must be delineated.

Remedial, Supportive, and Basic Services

Upon examination of the 106,000 hours of services rendered through the ISLP, several patterns become evident. These patterns can be examined in terms of the OARS framework (Pfeiffer, 1975), which suggests

three major categories of services: remedial, supportive, and basic. To describe the full range of student-delivered services, we have added a fourth category, indirect services, to the OARS typology.

As Table 1 indicates, remedial and indirect services are clearly feasible for a variety of student interventions. Together these two categories accounted for about 92% of all services provided through the demonstration project. Remedial services (those which help to improve an individual's functioning) seem particularly appropriate for student interventions for a variety of reasons: (1) social service agencies often do not have the capability, time, and/or resources to provide remedial types of services; (2) these types of services are amenable to part-time or short-time interventions; and (3) significant learning can often be associated with participation in such experiences.

Indirect services are another group of needs for which manpower resources are often in short supply. These services are also particularly appropriate for students because they usually require relatively short-term commitments and take advantage of specific skills that students often develop through academic programs.

Supportive services (which maintain functioning of impaired individuals) accounted for 6.3% of all services rendered and seem appropriate for student delivery in only a few instances. A project at the University of Denver demonstrates that homemaker/household services can be provided by students when they are paid an hourly wage for services rendered. Legal services can be provided by law students through law clinics. None of the other types of supportive services (i.e., personal care, continuous supervision, checking, and meal preparation) proved to be appropriate for student interventions because they require time commitments which most students cannot meet.

Basic maintenance services (services required by all persons, healthy or impaired) also do not seem to be an appropriate area for student interventions. Although 2% of all services rendered were in the basic maintenance category, these projects (primarily transportation and escort services) were not considered successful and they were not likely to be continued or repeated by the individual schools. We conclude there are two major reasons why students should not or cannot provide basic services: (a) basic services are too important to rely on a sporadic short-term source of labor such as students, and (b) relatively little learning seems to be associated with the delivery of basic services which would be pertinent to most academic curricula.

The five most common types of services (Table 2) rendered were social/recreational services, applied research and planning, general staff assistance, medical services, and educational services. These five types of services accounted for 82% of all services rendered. "Other services" included publicity (4% of total service hours), homemaker/household (3.4%) counseling (3.3%), legal services (2.6%) and in-service education (2.3%) as well as seven other categories.

Table 1. Service Outcomes of Student Service-Learning Activities by Categories of Service

Category of Services/Definition ^a	Examples of Services	Total # of Service Hours for All Projects	Percentage of Total Service Hours	Percentage of 40 Most Successful ISLP Projects
<i>Remedial or rehabilitative services</i> are those services which are designed to or which can improve the basic functional capacity of an impaired individual.	Social/recreational, employment services, educational services, counseling, nursing, medical, physical therapy, relocation and placement, systematic multi-dimensional assessments, financial assistance, coordination of services	62,813	59.0	60.4
<i>Supportive services</i> are those services which are provided to impaired individuals which of themselves do not improve the basic functional capacity of the individual but which serve to maintain his functioning.	Personal care, continuous supervision, checking, meal preparation, homemaker-household, administrative/legal/protective services	6,727	6.3	13.3
<i>Basic maintenance services</i> are those services required by all persons, healthy or impaired. They include the need for foodstuffs (i.e., groceries), living quarters, and transportation. Whether these services are to be provided is never in question, but only by whom they are to be provided.	Transportation, foodstuffs, living quarters	2,042	1.9	0
<i>Indirect services</i> are those services which are provided to community agencies or organizations rather than to individuals.	Applied research, service planning, publicity, in-service education, general staff assistance	34,794	32.7	26.2
TOTALS		106,376	99.9	99.9

^aThe first three categories, definitions, and examples were developed by the Center for the Study of Aging at Duke University for use with the OARS instrument (Pfeiffer, 1975). The fourth category was developed by NCOA project staff.

Table 2. Services Rendered by Students in ISLP (Total Service Hours: 106,376)

Type of Service	Percentage of Total Service Hours
Social/recreational	37.0
General social services (13.3%)	
Activities programs (13.1%)	
Friendly visiting (10.6%)	
Applied research and planning	18.0
Applied research projects and activities (9.7%)	
Planning: services, programs, and activities (7.9%)	
Compiling service and resource directories (0.4%)	
General staff assistance	8.4
Administration (6.1%)	
Other roles (2.3%)	
Medical services	8.4
Health screening and assessments (3.1%)	
Home medical services (2.1%)	
Speech and hearing screening and follow-up (1.6%)	
Others (1.4%)	
Educational services	6.1
Health education (5.5%)	
Other educational activities (0.6%)	
Other services	22.1
All services	100.0

Graduate vs. Undergraduate Participation

Significant differences appeared in both the types and the intensity of services provided by graduate

and undergraduate students. A substantial majority of five types of services was provided by graduate students: applied research and planning (98%), activity programs (94%), general social services (91%), medical services (80%), and educational services (71%). Conversely, in four other service areas, undergraduates rendered the bulk of services provided: homemaker/household (100%), publicity (97%), friendly visiting (77%), and general staff assistance (74%).

Another highly significant difference between graduate and undergraduate student participation was the intensity of involvement. Graduate students (29.5% of all participants) provided 68,280 hours of services (64.2% of the total service hours). Undergraduate students (71.5% of all participants) provided only 35.8% of the total service hours. Put another way, the average graduate student provided 99.7 hours of service whereas the average undergraduate provided 23.6 hours of service. This large difference is probably attributable to a variety of factors including greater undergraduate participation in short-term volunteer projects and the more significant role of the fieldwork as a requirement for graduate training.

Types of Service-Learning

Our data also show that the three major types of service-learning projects (academic, volunteer, and employment) tend to yield quite different service outcomes.

Academic projects (i.e., projects where students received course credit for participating) accounted for 58% of all services rendered. Further analysis showed that virtually all services rendered for course credit were either remedial or indirect.

Employment projects (where students were paid for their work) accounted for 27% of all services rendered. Employment projects rendered most supportive services as well as remedial and indirect services.

Volunteer projects (where students received neither money nor academic credit) accounted for only 15% of all services rendered. This figure may be surprising to many people who think of student service as primarily a volunteer activity. Most volunteer services that were rendered were either friendly visiting or various social/recreational activities, and they were usually of a short duration.

Another significant difference between academic, volunteer, and employment service-learning is highlighted by Table 3, which presents data from the forty exemplary projects.

Examination of these projects shows that the intensity of student involvement was higher in academic than in volunteer projects but was highest in employment projects.

These data have significant implications for agencies planning to involve students. The type of compensation available to students (money, course credit, or altruism) will be a major determinant of the expectations agencies can have about both the intensity of student efforts and tasks which students can complete.

Community Agency Perspectives

Community agency personnel reported three major benefits from student involvement in their organizations: (1) intergenerational exchange enhanced their service programs; (2) students brought new, creative ideas and knowledge; and (3) students provided extra staff at a low cost.

In retrospect, students were found to be most effective in two roles: working directly with older persons on a one-to-one basis and developing and implementing special projects. One-to-one projects were particularly successful with undergraduate students who generally had limited skills and worked at the agency only a few hours each week.

Special projects designed especially for and by students also proved to be quite effective. In projects such as creative drama, health education, and marketing studies, students took the initiative in using their abilities, skills, and creativity for a specific activity for which the fulltime staff were too busy or were incapable of doing.

While recognizing the potential contributions of students to their services and programs, community agency personnel also reported that certain types of students were more desirable than others. A consensus emerged that students who were both well-motivated and self-directed usually made the

Table 3. Hours of Student Participation in 40 Exemplary Service-Learning Projects

Type of Project	All			
	Projects	Academic	Volunteer	Employment
Total number of students	978	659	246	73
% of students in each mode	100	67.4	25.2	7.5
Average annual service hours per student	60.8	62.6	15.5	197.1

greatest contributions. With few exceptions, graduate students were also clearly preferred. Approximately one-third of the agency personnel interviewed felt that the services provided by undergraduate students were simply not worth the time required to supervise them.

Barriers to Service-Learning

Despite the multiple benefits of service-learning to community agencies, designing and implementing a successful project are often difficult tasks. In the interest of facilitating future efforts, we wish to identify these barriers.

Project data about barriers and problems were collected through interviews with campus coordinators, participating faculty, and community agency staff. In more than 75% of all projects and situations studied, at least one problem or limiting factor was cited. The barriers that were reported can be grouped into four major categories: marketing, financial, logistical, and interpersonal. In general, marketing and financial problems tended to prevent projects from getting started or from continuing; logistical and interpersonal problems, on the other hand, were more likely to limit the effectiveness of a project rather than prevent it from taking place.

Marketing Barriers

Marketing barriers prevented certain projects from getting started and limited the eventual size of each program. In this context, marketing refers to the challenge of securing the voluntary cooperation of all groups or individuals who can have a decisive impact on the service-learning project.

For a service-learning project to be successful, voluntary participation is often needed from six different groups: students, faculty, agency staff, older people, campus administrators, and funding sources. Each and all of these groups should think that participation in the project is a wise investment of their personal time and resources. Designing a project where this condition is true for all necessary participants is a complex and sometimes impossible task.

In addition to the design problem, coordinators were faced with a complex communications challenge. Recruiting and convincing faculty and students to participate in service-learning projects were

often found to be difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating processes. Not only must each of the key participants go through an internal process of knowledge, awareness, interest, trial, and acceptance, but their acceptance must be simultaneous.

Financial Barriers

Service-learning projects cannot be successfully developed and sustained without funds, and financial barriers were prevalent on ISLP campuses. Service-learning always requires the time of participants and may also require expenditures for travel, supplies, or equipment. Whereas some of the key participants may not require monetary compensation for what they do, others will require payment either directly or indirectly (e.g., released time for faculty or academic credit for students).

One of the difficulties in funding service-learning is that, although it produces dual products (service and learning), most potential funding sources are interested in either one or the other but not both. Another aspect of the problem is that sources of developmental funds are usually not interested in ongoing support of an activity and sources of ongoing support often do not want to pay for developmental phases. Thus some service-learning projects require two sources of funds: one source for developmental support and another for ongoing maintenance.

Logistical Barriers

A variety of logistical barriers was found to be common to service-learning in aging. One often-cited logistical barrier related to students' schedules and competing demands on their time. Most students can devote only a limited number of hours per week to service-learning and the hours when they are available may not coincide with agency needs. Most student projects are also tied to the academic quarter or semester, which is usually only 10 to 16 weeks long. During exam and vacation periods students may be unavailable. Students may also find it difficult to reach sites where service experiences are planned. Adequate transportation is a particular problem in rural areas.

Interdisciplinary projects usually experience an additional set of logistical problems. Various disciplines often have different requirements for the length and intensity of service-learning experiences, making interdisciplinary projects difficult to implement successfully. For example, social work students may be required to work two full days per week in the field for an entire semester, but medical students may be at the same site only 4 hours per week for 4 weeks.

Interpersonal Barriers

Because service-learning projects involve human beings, the realities of interpersonal dynamics cannot be ignored. This is particularly true with in-

tergenerational projects. It was not uncommon for students to have stereotypic images or other inappropriate attitudes about the older people with whom they were working. In some cases faculty reported that students were reluctant to work with the frail elderly. A recurring problem was differing expectations among students and older people about exactly what was expected of the student. Some older people were fearful or distrustful of youth. Although most intergenerational service-learning experiences seemed quite positive, personal and/or, in a few cases, racial prejudices appeared to prevent the development of good relationships.

Potential interpersonal barriers are not limited to student-elderly relations. In more than one case community agency personnel seemed threatened by students with extensive academic experience.

Funding Service-Learning in Aging

In times of scarce resources, the issue of funding is critical to any new activity. Successful implementation of any service-learning project is contingent upon feasible strategies for both developmental and ongoing funding.

In this project, funds for developmental or "start-up" costs were obtained from eight separate federal sources and two types of private sources. Federal sources in particular tended to emphasize developing something "new, different, and innovative." It is interesting to note all but one of the federal sources have been substantially cut back since 1981. Private sources of developmental funds utilized by demonstration schools included local foundations and student organizations.

Some service-learning projects are difficult to begin, but many are difficult to sustain over a long period of time. However, the project did demonstrate the feasibility of obtaining at least four different sources of funds, two from the campus and two from the community, which can help to sustain a program on a continuing basis.

Campus Sources

Perhaps the most readily available source of funds for service-learning projects is student tuition dollars. At the demonstration schools, 39 different courses which had a component of service-learning in aging were developed or expanded. Most of these courses will be offered on a regular basis as long as sufficient interest is evidenced by students and faculty.

The College Work-Study Program is another source of funding for service-learning that is locally available in most communities. The 1980 Amendments to the Higher Education Act contain two new provisions (a "carrot" and a "stick") which should encourage colleges and universities to utilize a greater portion of their work-study funds for service-learning. The "carrot," a new Section 448 developed and advocated by NCOA staff, provides institutions

of higher education with a financial incentive for developing programs of service-learning on behalf of low-income people: it allows schools to recoup double the usual administrative cost rate for every student placed in a qualifying experience. (U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Human Relations, 1980).

The potential impact of Section 488 is further enhanced by a "stick," an amendment to Section 443b(8) which states that institutions of higher education using college work-study funds must

provide assurances that employment . . . will, to the maximum extent practicable, complement and reinforce the educational program or vocational goals of each student receiving assistance . . . (Pub. L. No. 96-374 (Oct. 3, 1980), 94 Stat. 1435.)

In 1981, total appropriations for the College Work-Study Program were \$550,000,000. Funds are awarded directly to colleges and universities which then set up on-campus or off-campus placements for eligible students.

Community Sources

Community agency funds may be tapped for either developmental or ongoing support of service-learning projects. In several localities, agencies used their own funds to provide the required minimum 20% match for the College Work-Study Program. In other communities, agencies hired students outright. For example, nursing students were hired to work as homemaker/home health aides; art, music, and dance students were employed to provide enrichment activities at senior centers and nutrition sites; and sociology students were hired to conduct a needs assessment for an area agency on aging. In these cases, community agencies viewed student employees as a relatively inexpensive source of manpower with specific and needed skills. Since most community agencies operate on tight budgets, efforts to increase student employment in those agencies must be part of the long-range planning and budgeting process.

An often overlooked source of continuous funding for service-learning is the personal financial resources of individual older adults. The Student Help for the Elderly (SHE) project at the University of Denver, which was based on an earlier project at Columbia University, demonstrates the feasibility of this source. Through the SHE project students provide home help/chore and companionship services to older adults who usually pay \$3.50 per hour. The project at Columbia University, which began in 1975, currently employs 50-55 students on a part-time basis. Although home help/chore services may be particularly appropriate to offer for a fee, this financing scheme may also be feasible for other types of services.

Future Directions

Several dimensions and parameters of the service-learning model require further articulation, particu-

larly as they apply to the field of gerontology. In the course of our research and demonstration activities it has become clear that future efforts are necessary to help maximize the potential benefits of service-learning to both the campus and the community.

Although this article emphasizes the benefits of service-learning to community agencies, the academic perspective is equally important. It is unrealistic to expect colleges and universities to participate in academic service-learning beyond the point that it contributes substantively to curricular needs. In a forthcoming article we will present findings on both student learning and faculty benefits associated with participation in these projects (Firman et al., in press). More research is needed, however, to relate various aspects of academic field experiences to student learning outcomes. Controlled research designs and studies are needed to examine the effects on students and older people of field experiences which may be differentiated by organizational settings, characteristics of the older individuals, and tasks performed. The sparse literature on service-learning will greatly benefit from such studies.

A promising area for pilot projects is the use of retired faculty and/or agency personnel as service-learning supervisors. At least three potential benefits may be derived from this approach: it would reduce the time required for full-time faculty to set up and supervise service-learning projects, it would provide retirees with an opportunity to contribute both to society and student development through meaningful part-time work (either paid or volunteer), and it would expose students to healthy and active older persons as well as to a possibly frail and vulnerable client group.

More attention should be given to developing employment-related service-learning through the College Work-Study program and on a fee-for-service basis. These projects provide community agencies with maximum control over the nature and duration of student efforts in both remedial and supportive services. We believe that the fee-for-service home help/chore model is one that is feasible and needed in many communities. Undergraduate students who are interested in part-time work, gerontology, and developing one-to-one relationships with older individuals may be an ideal manpower source for provision of low-cost, high-quality home help services. Recent cuts in federal student financial aid programs may significantly increase the receptivity of campus administrators to developing employment-related projects.

The approaches utilized in this study may be applicable to other areas. College and university students are just one of several sources of voluntary manpower that can contribute to the goals and services of the aging network. The potential contributions and limitations of other segments of the voluntary sector (including churches, high schools, civic and fraternal organizations, and senior citizens groups) should also be examined through multi-site research and demonstration efforts.

Conclusion

Service-learning is emerging as an increasingly promising and attractive approach for meeting overlapping needs of service providers and academic institutions in the aging network. Opportunities exist in most communities to simultaneously expand and enrich community services, improve gerontological education, and promote intergenerational relationships.

Recent budget cuts in gerontological training and service programs as well as the growing needs of older people are likely to provide further impetus for developing service-learning projects. While delineating some of the most appropriate roles and feasible strategies for student involvement in services to the elderly, we have also tried to emphasize the limitations of and barriers to the service-learning approach. Greater understanding and further articulation of these parameters are needed to maximize future benefits to both the campus and community.

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