QEP IMPACT REPORT
LEARNING THROUGH ENGAGEMENT:
SERVICE-LEARNING

September 2017
Final Report
Title and Brief Description of the QEP as Initially Presented

To enhance student learning and student engagement, the College of Coastal Georgia selected *Learning through Engagement: Service-Learning* as its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). In 2010, with the involvement and engagement of a broad range of constituents from across the entire campus, this QEP was developed with the goal to integrate and enhance student learning and development through hands-on, experiential activities that also meet community needs.

The College chose service-learning as its QEP because of its proven strength as a pedagogical tool to help students achieve a broad range of important personal and academic outcomes. Service-learning will be a key mechanism to help the College’s students develop the intellectual skills they need in a 21st-century context that requires adaptability, sophisticated knowledge, problem-solving capacities, and self-directed learning skills. Additionally, the College’s commitment to service-learning enhances its broader institutional goals of encouraging civic engagement among students and increasing outreach to local communities.

- Learning through Engagement: Service-Learning, 2011, p. 3

1. Initial Goals & Intended Outcomes of the QEP

With the overarching goal to integrate and enhance student learning and development through hands-on, experiential activities that also meet community needs, the four primary objectives and their associated student learning outcomes are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overarching Goal: To integrate and enhance student learning and development through service-learning activities and experiences that also meet community needs</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Objectives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Enable community engagement and promote leadership.</td>
<td>1.1 Students will collaborate and build relationships with community organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Students will demonstrate an understanding of how communities function.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Students will demonstrate effective leadership in community activities, including skills of interpersonal communication, collaboration, and collective action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Students will demonstrate the ability to access the larger community as a resource for course-specific skill building and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enable enhanced understanding of course content.</td>
<td>2.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively apply theories, concepts, and methods to practical problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Students will demonstrate effective use of problem-solving skills and strategies in service-learning assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively transfer course theories, concepts, and knowledge to novel situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop critical and creative thinking and reflection skills.</td>
<td>3.1 Students will demonstrate higher levels of critical and creative thinking by recognizing and analyzing problems, identifying viable solutions when possible, and defending choices of solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze and reflect upon their own and others' beliefs and assumptions about an area of service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promote social responsibility, global awareness, and openness to diverse perspectives.</td>
<td>4.1 Students will demonstrate comprehension of the community issues that are relevant to their service-learning course content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 Students will demonstrate awareness of global issues, processes, trends, and systems in relation to their service-learning experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to understand, make reasoned judgments, and respond to differences in perspectives and viewpoints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.4 Students will gain practical experience and make community contacts that will help them start and/or advance their careers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The objectives and outcomes listed connect directly to the overarching goal of integrating and enhancing student learning and engagement. The program objectives and student learning objectives listed were originally stated in the QEP.

**MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

The effectiveness of QEP implementation is measured through the QEP programmatic objectives and measurement of student learning outcomes (SLOs):

SLO 1.1 Students will collaborate and build relationships with community organizations.
- Grow to at least 30 service-learning course sections offered on a yearly basis by 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMESTER:</th>
<th>SP11</th>
<th>SU11</th>
<th>FA11</th>
<th>SP12</th>
<th>SU12</th>
<th>FA12</th>
<th>SP13</th>
<th>SU13</th>
<th>FA13</th>
<th>SP14</th>
<th>SU14</th>
<th>FA14</th>
<th>SP15</th>
<th>SU15</th>
<th>FA15</th>
<th>SP16</th>
<th>SU16</th>
<th>FA16</th>
<th>SP17</th>
<th>SU17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SECTIONS (SEMESTER):</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTIONS (ACADEMIC YEAR):</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSES (SEMESTER):</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSES (ACADEMIC YEAR):</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW COURSES (SEMESTER):</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW COURSES (ACADEMIC YEAR):</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above demonstrates growth in S-L sections and unique courses by semester and across academic years (fall to summer). More than 30 service-learning courses have been offered at the College since the academic year 2013-14. In fall 2016 alone, nearly 20% (n=596) of the college’s student population was enrolled in a service-learning course.

When included in a service-learning course, the achievement target is that 75% of students will demonstrate accomplishment of the following SLOs:

SLOs 1.2-1.4; 2.1-2.3; 3.1-3.2; and 4.1-4.4
- Students will score at least at a proficient level using: A) Common rubric associated with a specified objective; B) Faculty checklist of SLOs included/met in the course; and C) Post-course student self-assessment of learning (survey)

**2. CHANGES TO THE QEP AND REASONING FOR THE CHANGES**

The QEP implementation protocol has provided a comprehensive blueprint for the broad-based institutionalization of service-learning. The plan encompasses a wide range of programmatic issues, including: support for faculty development, incentives, and rewards; community partner development and participation; and student involvement and leadership opportunities. Additionally, the plan provides assessable benchmarks and goals that can be used to guide and monitor the College’s progress toward completion of the QEP.

**2.1 PROGRAM PLAN IMPLEMENTATION: ACHIEVEMENT OF IDENTIFIED GOALS, CHANGES, & RATIONALE**

In order to fulfill the QEP goals of initiating a service-learning program and ingraining the service-learning pedagogy into the College’s culture and curriculum, the College’s QEP identified six key areas on which to focus: 1) Faculty development, support, & involvement; 2) Student support, involvement, & leadership; 3) Community agency support, participation, & partnership; 4) Program development; 5) Institutional support & institutionalization; and 6) Assessment development & implementation. These focal areas are derived from Andrew Furco’s (2002) rubric for service-learning institutionalization.

**1) FACULTY DEVELOPMENT, SUPPORT, & INVOLVEMENT**

- Continually provide professional development opportunities to potential and established service-learning (S-L) faculty
- Annually increase the number of faculty teaching S-L courses
• Create and continually provide incentives for faculty teaching S-L courses
• Recruit S-L faculty to assist with faculty development workshops and mentor colleagues
• Provide recognition receptions and faculty awards to honor S-L faculty commitment
• Establish a Service-Learning Advisory Committee

Since Fall Semester 2011, the Center for Service-Learning annually – sometimes bi-annually, as demand warrants – offers a Service-Learning Scholar’s Workshop to train faculty members in the service-learning pedagogy.

The College provides incentives for faculty teaching S-L courses and for S-L Faculty Fellows who champion S-L in their academic departments, mentor new/potential S-L faculty, and assist with peer faculty workshops. Incentives for faculty teaching their first S-L course, as proposed in the QEP, were to consist of a stipend, “course reassignment, or professional development funds” (Learning Through Engagement: Service-Learning, 2011, p. 38). The initial incentive structure allowed for first-time implementation awards consisting of a course reassignment, or $1,800 in professional development funding, or an equivalent cash stipend. Course reassignments were costly, not heavily utilized – one professor over a three-year period – and have since been eliminated as an incentive. As the program has grown and service-learning has been integrated into the culture of CCGA, professional development and cash stipend incentives have been restructured. Instead of a one-time, large lump-sum payment, faculty S-L incentives have been spread over 3-5 semesters to reward longevity and a continued commitment to the S-L pedagogy. Spreading the initial large reward over several years allows the College to reward faculty beyond the first implementation. Additional ongoing implementation awards for faculty include the opportunity to apply for mini-grants while teaching a service-learning course and travel funds (when available) to share their research at regional and national service-learning conferences. The Center for Service-Learning also hosts an annual S-L Faculty Appreciation Reception to recognize and celebrate faculty members who engage in service-learning teaching.

Service-learning has been included in a 2015 update of the Faculty Handbook as an important criteria in tenure and promotion decisions but has not been included as a criterion in annual faculty evaluations. The Service-Learning Advisory Committee – comprised of S-L faculty, staff, administrators, and S-L Student Assistants – made the recommendation not to include S-L in annual evaluations because we did not want to alienate those faculty members who chose not to participate in the teaching of service-learning courses.

2) STUDENT SUPPORT, INVOLVEMENT, & LEADERSHIP

• Pilot service-learning courses in fall 2011 and continue to offer courses with S-L component
• Annually increase the number of students enrolled in S-L courses
• Offer leadership opportunities for students as S-L Assistants
• Integrate “Introduction to Service-Learning” unit into CCGA 1101 seminars
• Establish S-L Living Learning Community in residence halls
• Organize student poster session to showcase service-learning work
• Initiate student-led Alternative Break experiences

Service-learning courses are offered each semester and offer an assortment of upper and lower level courses in a variety of disciplines. From academic year (AY) 2011-12 to AY 2016-17, the number of students enrolled in service-learning sections nearly doubled, with a 79% increase in course enrollment.
Student leadership opportunities are offered to Student Assistants within the Center for Service-Learning and Volunteer Coordinators within Student Life. These students plan and lead Alternative Break trips and plan the annual Service-Learning Symposium and S-L Faculty Appreciation Reception. Service-Learning Student Assistants also assist faculty members teaching S-L courses and create/implement communications plans for events and throughout the semester.

A service-learning unit was integrated into all of the College’s CCGA 1101 sections. However, in an effort to reduce student time-to-degree and student debt, CCGA 1101 courses were eliminated in favor of an information-rich Anchor Days workshop series. Anchor Days allow incoming freshmen and transfer students an opportunity to learn about the College’s programs and campus policies. Service-learning has been fully integrated into the Anchor Days since their inception in fall 2015.

A Living Learning Community was piloted with residential students in the Residence Hall, Lakeside Village, in fall 2014. Select students living in the Residence Halls took College Success Seminar (CCGA 1101), English Composition I, and College Algebra as a cohort. Service-learning was integrated as a component in this pilot within the CCGA 1101 courses. A freshman learning community is being piloted this semester in which one of the English Composition I courses has an S-L designation. All non-commuter freshman must live in the residence halls.

The annual Service-Learning Symposium, initiated in 2013, is an event to celebrate the hard work and dedication of faculty, students, and community partner organizations. The Symposium encompasses a student, faculty, and community Poster Showcase, community partner exposition, and award ceremony. Professional development is offered to students prior to the Symposium via a poster development workshop.

The first Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip was completed in 2013 by the Center for Service-Learning. Student Life took over the trip because of the non-academic nature of the activity. Student Life staff lead two ASB trips in 2015 and 2016.

3) COMMUNITY PARTNER SUPPORT, PARTICIPATION, & PARTNERSHIP

- Establish and expand diverse community organization partnerships and relationships
- Create online database of current and potential community partner organizations
- Engage with community agency representatives and connect them with faculty members
- Provide S-L development opportunities for community partner agency representatives
- Establish a Community Advisory Board

Fully embracing community engagement as a core component of our institutional mission, the service-learning program catalyzes the development of strong community partnerships. With the variety and abundance of community organizations in the area, the S-L program has provided the fertile ground for faculty and students to connect and engage with the community. With the growth of the program since 2011, not only have the number of S-L sections steadily risen, but also the quantity, quality, and diversity of community partnerships.

Resources are provided to faculty, students, and community agencies in the form of an online database listing of past community partners – over 130 organizations in the major five counties which CCGA serves. In spring 2017, Center for S-L staff and Student Assistants began compiling S-L project ideas and community agency needs. These self-identified community needs are published on CCGA’s service-learning web page as a comprehensive database for faculty and students looking for high-quality service-learning projects.

The Community Advisory Board was established in 2010 and continues to meet when needed to discuss issues pertinent to service-learning. Such pertinent initiatives include community partners’ relationship development opportunities such as service fairs, community partner expositions during the annual Service-Learning Symposium, and one-on-one service-learning information meetings with targeted potential partner agencies.
4) PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Market the service-learning program internally (on campus) and externally (off campus)
- Create staff and student positions to assist Director in operating Center for S-L
- Apply annually for the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll
- Provide Excellence in S-L Awards to faculty, students, and community partners
- Create S-L website as information portal to internal and external constituents
- Publish bi-annual service-learning newsletter

The Center for Service-Learning was initiated out of the College of Coastal Georgia’s Quality Enhancement Plan. Since its inception, staff in the Center for S-L have worked tirelessly to develop the service-learning program. The Center provides marketing materials to both on and off-campus constituencies, has created student leadership opportunities through the Service-Learning Student Assistant program, and has applied for and been recognized on the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll since 2012.

As part of the annual Service-Learning Symposium mentioned in Section 2 (Student support, involvement, & leadership), Excellence in Service-Learning Awards are presented to outstanding faculty, students, and community partner organizations. The Symposium also encapsulates a Community Partner Exposition which provides opportunities for faculty members to make valuable connections and gather information about community agencies.

In Fall Semester 2017, the Center for Service-Learning is activating a comprehensive Community Partner Clearinghouse as a resource to connect community partners with faculty and students. Community partners self-identify their needs, and those needs are posted in the Clearinghouse. Faculty members and students can browse the web page to seek out intriguing and academically relevant service-learning projects. Contact information for agency representatives is provided to facilitate the first contact with the agency.

5) INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT & INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- Develop a service-learning course designation (S Designation)
- Integrate S-L as a factor in annual evaluations and tenure & promotion decisions
- Incorporate S-L into all academic/departmental strategic plans and class offerings
- Establish lower-level S-L requirement for all degree programs and upper-level requirement for baccalaureate programs
- Create community-engaged certificate or minor for students in service-learning

Service-learning has been integrated into courses with a special ‘S Designation’ and service-learning has been included as a factor in and tenure and promotion decisions. Service-learning has also been included in most major academic departmental strategic plans and course offerings.

The College and Center for Service-Learning have yet to implement a service-learning or community engagement certificate or minor as originally stated in the approved Quality Enhancement Plan. The depth and breadth of service-learning course offerings are not yet great enough to support a certificate or minor for students. However, the investigation into a certificate program has begun.

Initially proposed in the College’s QEP was an upper and lower-level requirement for all degree programs. The College decided against a service-learning graduation requirement because faculty and community partners aren’t yet ready to deal with the number of students who would need courses for a requirement. It is a challenge to offer enough upper and lower level courses to make service-learning a graduation requirement. Instead of a requirement, many academic programs have built S-L into the curriculum (e.g., Nursing) in such a way that includes S-L in required courses for a specific degree.
When the College of Coastal Georgia transitioned to a baccalaureate degree granting institution in 2010, the mission of the institution was altered to reflect this change and to highlight service-learning as a preferred pedagogy. On November 10, 2015, the Board of Regents approved a restructured mission statement that does not specifically mention S-L – as proposed in the original QEP document – but advocates for "excellence in scholarship and community engagement . . . Through student–centered programs that offer a rich and diverse student experience" (CCGA Mission Statement, 2015). However, service-learning is still specifically mentioned in the College’s Vision Statement: “The College of Coastal Georgia will be a college of choice for students within Georgia and beyond, providing an outstanding education for tomorrow's leaders and citizens through service-learning, global awareness, and engaged entrepreneurship.”

6) ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

- Develop, evaluate, and refine course assessment tools for faculty and students
- Survey community partners and analyze feedback
- Survey graduating students in their experiences with service-learning
- Track community impact of service-learning activities
- Evaluate S-L course assessment results and utilize findings to improve programming and professional development
- Engage in course and institutional assessments of student learning outcomes

Assessment measures at both the course level and institution level have been employed since 2012. Course-level assessments are measured through faculty, student, and community partner surveys. Institutional tracking of student learning outcomes, coupled with course-based assessment, have been used to continuously improve CCGA’s service-learning program. Measures for tracking of graduates and community impact have also been planned.

Course-level assessment measures for various stakeholder groups (faculty, students, and community partner agencies) have been altered based on feedback from respective stakeholders. The delivery method for surveys had previously been digitized for all stakeholder groups. Due to low response rates for electronic surveys, the Center for Service-Learning decided to revert to paper surveys for students.

Course-level assessments are utilized on a semester-by-semester basis to: A) Revise faculty training, SLOs, and areas of emphasis; B) streamline the service-learning implementation process and decrease paperwork; C) provide additional supports, web resources, and programming when necessary; and D) revise policies and procedures. An area of emphasis for the future is to add additional measures to survey graduating students and to track community impact beyond simply hours served and projects completed.

As initially proposed, there were four service-learning objective areas with 13 Service-Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and a separate rubric for each outcome. Faculty members were asked to select two outcomes to focus on. Feedback from faculty attempting to utilize the objectives, SLOs, and accompanying rubrics established: 1) there were too many objectives, outcomes, and rubrics 2) some objectives and outcomes appeared to overlap, and 3) selection of two of the four originally proposed objectives had potential for one to two objectives to never be selected.

In the fall of 2014, Interim Director of Service-Learning, Dr. Elizabeth Wurz, revised the originally proposed S-L objectives, SLOs, and combined the 13 rubrics into one comprehensive rubric. Revisions were adapted from CCGA's existing outcomes, SLOs, and rubrics as well as the DEAL Model for Critical Reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009), and VALUE Rubrics (Civic Engagement/Intercultural Knowledge) from the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Revisions provided three objectives, nine SLOs, and one rubric. Faculty members are now asked to focus on one SLO within each of the three objective areas. See the figure on the next page for SLO revisions.
## College of Coastal Georgia's Center for Service-Learning

**Overarching Goal:** To integrate and enhance student learning and development through service-learning activities and experiences that also meets community needs

### Program Objectives & Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011-2014</th>
<th>2015-Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Enable community engagement and promote leadership.</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Civic Learning. Enable community engagement and promote leadership.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Students will collaborate and build relationships with community organizations.</td>
<td>1.1 Students will demonstrate ability to describe community need and work collaboratively with community partners to achieve a civic objective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Students will demonstrate an understanding of how communities function.</td>
<td>1.2 Students will demonstrate ability to develop and implement goals and strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Students will demonstrate effective leadership in community activities, including skills of interpersonal communication, collaboration, and collective action.</td>
<td>1.3 Students will demonstrate ability to assess impact of service-learning on various stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Students will demonstrate the ability to access the larger community as a resource for course-specific skill building and learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Enable enhanced understanding of course content.</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Academic Enhancement. Link service experience to course content utilizing critical thinking and reflection skills.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Students will demonstrate ability to effectively apply theories, concepts and methods to practical problems.</td>
<td>2.1 Students will demonstrate higher levels of critical thinking by adapting and applying skills, abilities and theories to various situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Students will demonstrate effective use of problem-solving skills and strategies in service-learning</td>
<td>2.2 Students will demonstrate an ability to connect service-learning experience with academic knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively transfer course theories, concepts and knowledge to novel situations.</td>
<td>2.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to value the community as resource for research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Develop critical and creative thinking and reflection skills.</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. Personal Growth. Promote openness to global and diverse perspectives.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Students will demonstrate higher levels of critical and creative thinking by recognizing and analyzing problems, identifying viable solutions when possible, and defending choices of solutions.</td>
<td>3.1 Students will demonstrate awareness of global perspectives and demonstrate cultural self-awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze and reflect upon their own and others' beliefs and assumptions about an area of service.</td>
<td>3.2 Students will demonstrate comprehension of the community issues and explain civic identity and commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Promote social responsibility, global awareness, and openness to diverse perspectives.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Students will demonstrate comprehension of the community issues that are relevant to their service-learning course content.</td>
<td>3.3 Students will be able to describe the impact of service-learning on his/her marketability in graduate studies and/or chosen profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Students will demonstrate awareness of global issues, processes, trends and systems in relation to their service-learning experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to understand, make reasoned judgments, and respond to differences in perspectives and viewpoints.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Students will gain practical experience and make community contacts that will help them start and/or advance their careers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE QEP’S IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING

The QEP has had a substantial impact on student learning and engagement at the College of Coastal Georgia. Since 2010, the College established the Center for Service-Learning as a conduit to institutionalize service-learning into the culture of CCGA.

3.1 ACHIEVEMENT OF IDENTIFIED OUTCOMES

Measurable outcomes are the key to any successful Quality Enhancement Plan. Three outcomes of focus include 1) civic learning, 2) academic enhancement, and 3) personal growth. The College defines civic learning as enabling community engagement and promoting leadership. This outcome was consistently achieved as demonstrated by the strong body of work that has been completed in the community by our service-learning students. Over 350 projects serving over 130 community partners have been completed. Through these community-based projects, students have demonstrated the ability to describe community need and to work collaboratively with community partners to achieve civic objectives. For example, one student said in a speech at a service-learning ‘Attire for Hire’ event:

A majority of college work, when applied to real-world situations, is still theoretical. But service-learning is different from the norm. It is through this partnership that we have been able to impact the lives of real individuals who have committed to excel. I cannot convey how thankful I am for this experience. - Samantha Cain, November 21, 2014

Service-learning projects foster students’ abilities to implement goals and to develop effective strategies to approach problems that face our community. For example, a teacher education candidate indicated the best part of the service-learning experience was “Being able to identify a need, research what and how to present it, design an age-appropriate learning program, and then see its success!!” At the completion of their service-learning projects students can assess the impact of service-learning on various stakeholders by participating in the annual Service-Learning Symposium, an event that brings together students, faculty, community partners, community members at large, and stakeholders. The Symposium is designed to showcase the service-learning projects and provides a venue for the various factions of the service-learning community to share and network which fosters civic learning.

The next identified outcome, academic enhancement, has been achieved in all courses in which a service-learning component has been integrated. Grade distributions were compared for courses that offer sections with a service-learning component versus those which do not include service-learning. The following graphs depict a comparison controlling by class, in particular, ENGL 1101 and ENGL 1102. Comparing a total of 4643 students in ENGL 1101, and a total of 3567 students in ENGL 1102 since fall 2012, the graphs show that the service-learning sections of English 1101 and 1102 courses both produced more A’s than the non-service-learning sections of the course.

Other ways of measuring academic enhancement in service-learning courses were used. By applying skills, abilities, and theories to various situations, students demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking
as a result of completing a service-learning component in their courses. This qualitative change in thinking is demonstrated in the following student comment:

The service-learning course improved upon my past experiences by supplying real, hands-on opportunities to work with community partners accomplishing service work that directly related to course lecture and content, allowing me as the student to make connections that will apply to a future career.

Connecting the service-learning experience with academic knowledge also demonstrates how service-learning contributes to enhanced learning. One student noted, “I think the theory of the service-learning tied with the environment of business course is to give incoming students an idea and ability to grasp and understand how a business operates and what affects it.” Finally, students demonstrated that they value the community as a resource for research by describing the impact as, “being able to reach out to the community and also seeing developmental levels (of children) in real life and being able to apply what was learned about those from the classroom.”

The final identified outcome of service-learning was personal growth, promoting openness to global and diverse perspectives. Many service-learning projects were designed to increase awareness of global perspectives and cultural self-awareness such as:

Any time that you can contribute more to the global community is the time that you should be happy to give. I love that we were able to do something productive that helps others all while tying abstract theories and formulas to real-world situations.

Students who completed service-learning courses demonstrated comprehension of the community issues by, “Knowing the data we collected for the Living Shoreline project was going to be real data to be used in the post construction analysis.” Another student addressed the benefit of comprehending community issues: “. . . Looking into everyday problems that individuals face and that people must look out for. Being able to help look into and make a difference to help patients stay safe and well is more rewarding than any other.” By designing posters for the service-learning symposium and through other reflective activities such as class papers, reflective journaling, and community presentations students demonstrate an understanding of civic identity and commitment which further shows personal growth.

Finally, students often share the impact of service-learning on their marketability in graduate studies and their chosen profession. One example of a student discussing their future career said “I learned more about my future career and a lot about myself during this service-learning experience. It validated my feelings on wanting to become a high school math teacher.” Many students have parlayed their S-L experiences into jobs after graduation, such as two Psychology students who completed a service-learning project with Gateway Behavioral Health Services that now work there.

3.2 UNANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF THE QEP

Anticipated outcomes of the College’s Quality Enhancement Plan include Enhanced community engagement, increased student leadership opportunities, academic enhancement, improved critical/creative thinking, a consciousness of social responsibility, and heightened openness to global/diverse perspectives. Feedback on faculty and student surveys, interviews, and focus groups have evidenced that S-L contributes to these learning outcomes and additional unanticipated outcomes have been realized as well.

Institutionally, the College has gained exposure in the local, state, and international community through service-learning endeavors. The College has been recognized in the southeast region and national stage through service-learning publications and conference presentations. Much as the institution is seeing the benefits of service-learning interactions and community partners are seeing increased awareness of their mission and goals through greater exposure and partnership opportunities.

Local partners are also hiring students at a steady rate. Anecdotally, there are several dozens of students that are gaining employment with, or via a recommendation from, an organization they completed their
service-learning project with. Hiring students help the local economy by retaining graduates – and tax dollars – within this community. Employers hiring students who have service-learning experience note an increase in what they consider ‘soft skills’ – professionalism, communication, and presentation skills.

Faculty members and students are also experiencing unintended outcomes of the service-learning program. In recent interviews, faculty sometimes forget about rewards (stipends or professional development funds) promised as they initiated their first few S-L courses. It seems to be the case that faculty is motivated to engage in the S-L pedagogy because it will help increase student learning and engagement. The College is also seeing an increased number of faculty applying for mini-grants to increase student engagement in S-L projects. When asked about mini-grants, faculty members noted that the more flexibility students felt to shape their projects, the higher the level of engagement. And faculty members noted that when the engagement was increased, so did the academic performance.

4. FINAL REFLECTION AND LESSONS LEARNED AS A RESULT OF THE QEP EXPERIENCE

As a result of the QEP experience, service-learning has become an integral part of the campus culture. Internally, faculty, students, and staff have been supportive of the S-L program. An important lesson learned is that an S-L program requires faculty to both buy into the program and to be rewarded for their efforts. Professional development awards and stipends seem to work best as an initial motivating factor to get faculty involved and sustain involvement in the service-learning program.

Students taking service-learning courses require an introduction about the program at orientation events and the beginning of each S-L course. Creation of an S-L course designation helps students understand the type of course they are enrolling in or allows them to seek other options that better fit their educational needs/learning styles. Service-learning staff should emphasize the pedagogical benefits to students as well as the student learning objectives for the course. As faculty members develop their understanding of S-L, course orientations can be conducted by faculty members.

Externally, community organizations have embraced the College’s effort to strengthen the service-learning program. Centers for Service-Learning will need to send a strong message to the community as to exactly what the S-L program can offer, but also what partners need to bring to the table to create quality S-L experiences. Agencies are typically well-versed in taking on volunteers but do not intuitively understand the intricacies of a S-L partnership. Service-learning offices will need to be strategic to not oversell the reach of the S-L program, especially in the developmental stages. Staff should not make a hard sell to potential partners without a caveat that many agencies will not be selected for partnership.

Regarding institutionalization, an important step is to create a service-learning designation for courses and to market what the designation means to students, faculty, and relevant staff (Registrar, etc.). Also, a critical initial step is to develop a reward structure for faculty initiating S-L courses. Initial faculty rewards may need to be larger but can be spread out to encourage longevity as the program grows. Finding a place for S-L within the mission/vision, strategic plan, academic department plans, and tenure and promotion guidelines early in the life of the program will help faculty and staff realize the priority that the institution places on service-learning teaching.

Finally, assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) related to service-learning must be addressed early and often with faculty members. Faculty should understand the importance of including SLOs in their syllabi and assessing the learning that is borne out of student engagement of the S-L experience. The emphasis should be for faculty to award grades for learning exhibited from service-learning, not from engaging in the service component.