BRIDGING ACADEMIC WRITING WITH SERVICE-LEARNING: MEASURING
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES OF AN ACADEMIC
WRITING COURSE

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Outcomes of An Academic Writing Course

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Abstract

Karen Gabrielle Johnson. BRIDGING ACADEMIC WRITING WITH SERVICE-LEARNING: MEASURING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES OF AN ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE. (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Towles) School of Communication, September, 2009.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference between students who completed a service-learning component and those who did not complete a service-learning component in the areas of student achievement of learning outcomes and perceptions of the course. Proponents of service-learning claim that students write higher quality papers and are more engaged, motivated, and satisfied when they complete a service-learning component. However, these findings are largely based on anecdotal and qualitative evidence that lack empirical evidence to strengthen these claims. This study employed a quasi-experimental design using static group comparison to measure differences between the groups. Student perceptions of the course were measured by the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales that demonstrated high reliability through Cronbach’s alpha. Assessment of learning outcomes was accomplished by evaluating students’ academic papers with the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric. To compare the groups, t-tests for independent samples and Cohen’s d were utilized to determine significant differences and the effect size. Results indicated significant differences in student perceptions and in the achievement of learning outcomes. Medium effect sizes were found in student perceptions and large effect sizes were demonstrated in achievement of learning outcomes. These findings provide empirical evidence of the
positive effect that a service-learning component has on an academic writing course. Implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and a call for more empirical studies in composition are also included in this study.
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In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever (Psalm 44:8). If it were not for the Lord’s graciousness, guidance, and presence in my life, I would not have been equipped to complete this task as a number of hardships were encountered along the way. I am grateful for the strength He has given me to fulfill a lifelong dream.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to two important men in my life who left this earth to attend their heavenly graduation while I was working toward my earthly one. First of all, I dedicate this work to my father, Dr. Edgar Cicero James, who was my biggest cheerleader in encouraging me to pursue my doctorate long before it had even entered my mind. His belief in my ability to achieve this goal has inspired me to persist in the research and writing of this project. Secondly, I dedicate this dissertation to my younger brother, John Paul James, whose ultimate goal was to publish a book, but whose life was cut short before his own dream could become reality. Their love for me and interest in my life are gifts that I will always treasure.
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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Bridges built over any substantial body of water require a community of workers who share the common goal of providing a safe and efficient way to travel from one area to another. To successfully build a bridge, construction workers need to spend time communicating and interacting with each other. Through the process of concerted planning, effort, and collaboration, workers are able to experience the satisfaction of a well constructed project while providing a needed form of transportation to the community. Teaching composition in a college classroom can be viewed in a similar light. Students who engage in conversations about the process of writing and use their composing skills to real world applications are able to build their knowledge of writing in meaningful ways (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997; Heilker, 1997). Through interactions and contributions of community citizens, fellow students, and instructors, the art of academic writing can be built while students develop proficiency in learning how to translate their research to public forums.

There are a number of ways in which to approach this goal. One theme that appears to be constant in these dialogues concerns the conviction that constructivist teaching strategies provide an ideal setting for teaching an academic writing course (Hansman & Wilson, 1998; Mullen, 2006; Ochse, 1995; Weaver, 1996). Providing constructivist writing instruction to students in higher education can spur interactive strategies to guide students in the creation of well-written productions. Through the incorporation of these strategies, students can become more engaged in learning, motivated to author outstanding products, and satisfied with their work. Of course,
developing a model to make this transformation in ways that engage, motivate, and satisfy students is no easy feat. However, connecting students with topics related to their future career interests and linked to real world problems may prove to be beneficial in developing such a model.

At the target college, a new writing course was developed that highlights building academic writing skills, creating a community of writers and researchers, and constructing public arguments. The strength of this course lies in its goal to have students take their research and transform it into a form that best suits its intended rhetorical situation. Since scholarly research can be successfully applied to public purposes (Delli-Carpini, in press) this course seeks to teach students how to take their academic essay and use various media to serve a real social purpose. As a result, students learn how to launch a public argument that can be received by a different and broader audience to fulfill a real, public purpose by using new media. For instance, a student could take his or her research on the growing popularity of electronic newsletters and use that information to design an innovative newsletter template for a non-profit private school. Throughout the writing department, this public argument has been termed as an alternative genre project, one in which the writing instructors embraced the first year it was implemented.

Students in the academic writing program seemed to do well in developing an alternative genre project, but some instructors found that their students had more difficulty in finding venues or individuals with whom to share their projects. In other words, students spent a great deal of time developing a project, but usually only shared their project with the class instead of an outside person or organization. As a result, the project lacked meaning and a public audience, so the purpose of the project to promote civic engagement was not truly met. Also, some students viewed the alternative genre as
an *add on* and not linked to their research. Other students appeared unmotivated to do quality work on the research, writing, and project while others lacked satisfaction with their final paper and project. Finally, creating the community of writers was somewhat problematic, and this instructor was not content with the level of student engagement and interaction inside and outside the classroom. Classroom discourse seemed to be limited and lacking in depth while civic engagement was only truly realized by a small percentage of students. However, those students who did interact with organizations outside the classroom seemed fully engaged and satisfied with their work. Finding a way to obtain this kind of engagement with the entire class could help build a community of writers and higher quality papers and projects.

Service-learning is one model that a limited number of composition classrooms have used to bridge the gap between academic writing and the real world (Dorman & Dorman, 2005) while offering opportunities for civic engagement (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997; Arca, 2005). Qualitative evidence and anecdotal records have suggested that service-learning projects can help teach students how to serve others, be socially responsible, and manage real world problems (Sapp & Crabtree, 2002). Additionally, other qualitative studies have shown that students seem to appreciate opportunities for service when they use skills learned in the classroom that are applicable in the real world (Hafer, 1999). These perceived benefits paint an appealing picture of service-learning; however, the claims made by studies conducted in composition on service-learning are somewhat untested and could benefit from empirical investigations to strengthen these claims.

One of the claims made by studies conducted in service-learning concerns the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning course. Studies have
revealed that students enrolled in service-learning courses seem to be more engaged (Arca, 2005; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans, 1997; Dorman & Dorman, 2005), motivated (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005), and satisfied (Bacon, 1997; Bordelon & Phillips, 2006), but these findings are based on anecdotal evidence, and it is unclear if these students are more engaged, motivated, and satisfied than those who did not complete a service-learning component. It seems plausible that this type of model could be adapted to an academic writing course to improve engagement, motivation, satisfaction, promotion of public arguments, and perhaps, even help students compose better-written research papers. Numerous service-learning models exist in the field of composition, but many service-learning models are concerned with civic engagement and community service in which students provide services such as office work, tutoring, or manual labor. Although these types of civic engagement are a worthy goal, this research was more concerned with getting students connected with their major, engaged, motivated, and satisfied. At the heart of this investigation, pedagogical strategies were examined to determine if writing, engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and achievement of learning outcomes could be improved.

The model needed for this academic course required a type of service-learning program where students could perform a type of service in which they created new or revised documents or media instead of manual labor types of assistance. In addition to this difference, many service-learning initiatives in writing programs that do have students crafting written documents or other media typically offer only a limited number of organizations for students to choose from. Of those organizations that are available, most are typically non-profit organizations, and unfortunately, this small pool of organizations does not always match student interests.
For a service-learning initiative to meet the learning outcomes of the program at the target college, a variety of recipients, including non-profit organizations and organizations that could be found on campus, would need to be available so students could choose the organization that piqued their interest. This study sought to see if a different model of service-learning that linked students with their career interests while meeting the learning outcomes of the course could improve their attitudes and quality of academic writing. Instead of creating an alternative genre for an undetermined audience that was typically remaining enclosed within the small classroom community, the service-learning project transformed the alternative genre into one that required students to consider their intended audience and project before they set out to research, compose, and create an alternative genre. Crafting a project that would actually be used by a real world audience had the potential to influence the delivery of the project and the amount of effort students would invest in it.

Despite the advantages of employing service-learning methods in a college composition course, implementing this component is not without its problems because it requires a good deal of time to develop, produce, and manage (Scott, 2004). If instructors are going to take on this extra effort to incorporate a service-learning aspect into their courses, then they will want to be assured that students perceive the extra work as beneficial. When students view their work favorably, they tend to gain more from their academic endeavors, which helps to accomplish the goals of a course. However, composition instructors not only want students who view a process as valuable, they also seek to have students master the course’s learning outcomes. Instructors are often already squeezed for time in their classes, and it is difficult enough without a service-learning project to meet the learning outcomes of a course, so it is unclear if a service-learning
project would either enhance or decrease student achievement of the learning outcomes. Therefore, it appears that instructors need to know whether a service-learning course is worth the time it takes to develop and manage this kind of initiative, thus requiring an experimental model that reveals whether students engaged in a service-learning course meet the learning outcomes better than students who are not completing a service-learning component. Currently, this type of study is virtually absent in existing literature.

In addition to a lack of clarity regarding the impact of a service-learning element in a research writing course, there is a lack of applicable studies in this area which give guidance in establishing or conducting this type of course. Of the general studies that do exist in service-learning, the large majority of these studies involve qualitative studies, and the quantitative studies that are available lack an experimental study design (Smith & Martin, 2007). Smith and Martin state that the field of service-learning would benefit from additional research that provides more quantitative and large scale research in order to help guide practitioners and policy makers in the practice and implementation of this method. Finally, according to the most current volume of the *Recent Dissertations on Service and Service-Learning Topics Volume IV*, the number of dissertations investigating service-learning issues during the 2004-2006 time span is sparse, with only five studies conducted in composition, none of which incorporated an experimental component. Therefore, more studies embedded with an experimental research design need to be conducted for the purpose of investigating the proposed benefits of service-learning to determine whether or not this strategy is worthy of the time and energy required for an academic writing course.
Background of the Study

*Important components of academic writing programs*

Since social interaction is linked to learning (Vygotsky, 1978), student collaborations in an academic writing course are of key importance to writing instructors. Stimulating engaging collaborations, however, is not easily accomplished as students are often hesitant to actively engage in discussions. Essid (2006) notes that contemporary students need carefully designed instruction to promote engagement and meaningful applications of writing:

Even before cellphones, iPods, and ubiquitous networked computing, students were reading less and tuning out in class. One part of this was their resistance to the fossilized forms of academic work we continue to ask them to do, such as traditional analytical papers mostly useful for those seeking to follow us into academia... If we cherish our disciplines' survival, we should consider how to meet students halfway by encouraging active learning, multigenre projects, and writing for real-world audiences or for publication. (p. B13)

Essid elucidates the need for fresh ways to engage students and integrate relevant writing tasks. To achieve more engagement, learning activities should be designed to promote dynamic interaction with the materials, other students, and the community. Since writing involves active construction of knowledge, it is important to keep students motivated and engaged. Discovering strategies to meet these criteria is of prime importance to writing instructors.

Active participation in the writing process can set the stage for students to become problem solvers, construct knowledge, and transfer learning to unique settings. In order to improve student involvement and interaction, a change in the teaching culture may
need to take place in which the role of a traditional teacher transforms from a leader to a guide or facilitator in order to provide learner-centered instruction (Alesandri & Larson, 2002; Salinas, 2008). Since students in academic writing courses benefit from additional experiential learning experiences that spur active participation and transfer of knowledge, writing instruction should include problem-solving approaches that guide students to adapt their research and academic writing skills to broader audiences and alternative genres.

Learning communities work well in composition classrooms where rich conversations find a home. Gonzales and Nelson (2005) describe communities of learners as embodying multiple learning communities in which students collaborate with their peers, instructors, mentors, and those in their community through various projects. These learning communities can be powerful constructs that can affect college students’ motivation and use of cognitive learning strategies. A community of learners which incorporates integrated courses, emphasizes active and collaborative learning, and integrates information technology and library resources as tools for learning can serve as an effective classroom context for developing first year college students’ motivation and cognitive learning strategies (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002). Determining whether a service-learning component can build strong learning communities that improve motivation is worth investigating.

One of the most important writing skills for college students to develop is audience awareness, which is the “ability to develop a representation of the potential readers of a text” (Jones, 1994, p.70). However, defining an audience of a written discourse and knowing what it means to address an audience has received quite a bit of lively discussion since the 1980s and continues to generate discussion among English
teachers today. Jones believes that the ability to choose words that an audience can understand, recognize the relationships between the audience and subject matter, and detect the relationship between the audience and speaker are important skills for students to develop. Furthermore, Lunsford and Ede’s (1996) studies on this relationship have underscored the complexity of this interaction and shed insight on the challenges that student writers face in navigating these skills. Helping students understand the nature and role of audience in discourse should be addressed in first-year composition courses, yet if students are writing for canned audiences, practice in this skill may be hindered.

One of the issues students face when writing their academic essays is the limited audience they are required to address. Writing for an audience of “one” can limit students in developing audience awareness. Additionally, writing for a general audience is also challenging. However, when students focus their writing toward a knowable audience, their writing can improve (Mortenson, 1998). Given the challenges presented by audience awareness, Mortensen states that helping to develop audience awareness will depend on providing students with an authentic purpose where a knowable audience exists.

In addition to building audience awareness, instructors also help students learn how to write for a broader audience that extends beyond the classroom walls. Unfortunately, in a typical college writing course, students often view the instructor as their singular, primary audience (Lester et al., 2003; Yancey, 2004) and may write in a manner that will please the teacher. Writing in this fashion is often stilted; however, students who learn to write for expanded audiences that include others besides an instructor experience more of a positive effect on writing than students who compose for a singular audience (Sperling, 1996). Additionally, Sperling has cited evidence that writers who make adaptations are more proficient, and responses from students and the
instructor are important to the learning process. Certainly, nurturing students to broaden their audience can enhance their writing proficiency, improve rhetorical writing skills, and increase opportunities for learning.

Another important component to consider is relevancy. Students must engage in writing experiences that are viewed as relevant and not just a task to be endured. Writing essays for the sake of completing a course requirement may give students the impression that writing has nothing to do with the real world (Heilker, 1997), but when real rhetorical situations are presented, instead of just writing for a grade, students have found writing to be a meaningful task (Bacon, 1997). Writing to fulfill an assignment requirement that lacks a real rhetorical situation gives only surface level relevancy for students; on the other hand, authentic writing tasks that are situated outside of the classroom may take on great meaning for individuals. Certainly institutions of higher learning desire students to put higher level thinking tasks into their work, but if students are merely completing an assignment for a grade, deep levels of thinking may not be stimulated.

Instructors who wish to empower students to take responsibility for the learning process should consider selecting relevant writing projects that help spark self-sufficiency in students so they can develop into independent learners who desire to continue learning outside the classroom. Finding ways to encourage students to take ownership of their learning is especially crucial in a writing classroom where so much depends upon a student’s ability to complete the independent task of writing. By providing students with relevant writing projects, instructors can equip students in becoming life-long learners, resulting in benefits that far exceed the confines of the college classroom.

Helping students take ownership of their learning is vital for writing students, and
this can become easier when students explore topics of interest to them. In an academic writing class, instructors often allow students the freedom to choose their research topics in order to maintain student interest. Since academic writing requires persistence, topic selection plays a fundamental role in helping students remain focused on their topic during the entire writing process. Writing instructors support this process by providing an environment that encourages students to explore topics of interest.

Students can be motivated when they know that their research and projects will extend to others. Heilker (1997) states that confining topics within the classroom does not present real rhetorical situations in which students can come to view writing as a social action. Relevancy can be created when students view the purpose of their writing as a social action that is driven by the need to understand relevant issues and share their discoveries with others. To help motivate students and use writing for social action, writing instructors can fashion activities that promote public writing projects.

In summary, writing programs that seek to motivate and engage students to undertake challenging research projects that are viewed as valuable to them and relevant to their future career may well consider strategies that offer real rhetorical situations where students explore interesting topics for audiences that include and go beyond the composition classroom. Writing courses that incorporate these methods can improve student collaborations, active participation, engagement in learning communities, audience awareness, and ability to write for broader, public audiences. Developing a model that incorporates these constructs has the potential to build effective writing programs that improve academic writing skills, student engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. This study sought to create such a program and found that service-learning held promise for accomplishing these goals.
Using service-learning as a model for writing classrooms

Much has been written about ways to incorporate a service-learning component into an English course, and a variety of models exist to carry out a wide range of objectives. When this merging of programs is effectively accomplished, service-learning connects classrooms discourses with the world outside the college, provides a context for “real world” writing, supplies real audiences that extend beyond the classroom, discourages plagiarism, develops social awareness and civic responsibility, improves student engagement, and motivates students. It also brings students a sense of satisfaction, links individuals together with common causes that foster communication and social bonds, produces rich, complex papers with varied sources, and provides the academic skills needed for learning (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997; Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Arca, 2005; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans, 1998; Dorman & Dorman, 2005; Eble, & Gaillet, 2004; Hafer, 1999; Heilker, 1997; Herzberg, 1994; Hugg & Wurdingher, 2007; National Commission on Service-Learning [NCSL], 2002; Sapp, & Crabtree, 2002; Shutz & Ruggles Gere, 1998). The body of literature suggests that pragmatic applications of service-learning in composition courses are possible and that students have largely enjoyed this type of learning. However, most of the methodology employed in research studies is primarily anecdotal or qualitative in nature, and empirical explorations need to take place in order to validate findings presented by qualitative measures. More investigation on the quality of writing inherent in students’ academic essays as well as their level of satisfaction, motivation, and engagement would strengthen the results that have been found in the body of literature.

Statement of the Problems

This study examined the relationship in student perceptions between those who
participated in a service-learning course against those who did not complete a service-learning requirement. Additionally, measurements of learning outcomes were undertaken by comparing the academic essays written by service-learning students who completed an alternative genre and students who did not complete a service-learning version of their alternative genre. Specifically, this study sought to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups in the areas of achievement of learning outcomes and student attitudes. This study compared the two scores for each area and sought to answer these questions:

Are the research papers written by students who completed a service-learning component significantly better than the research papers written by students who did not complete a service-learning component?

Is there a significant difference in student engagement, satisfaction, and motivation between students who incorporated a service-learning component and students who did not incorporate a service-learning component?

Statement of Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in the area of Engagement as measured by the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales.

2. There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in the area of Satisfaction as measured by the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales.

3. There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who
participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in the area of Motivation as measured by the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales.

4. There will be a significant difference between the achievement of learning outcomes in the academic essays of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program as measured the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, which is an adaptation of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.

Professional Significance of the Study

Implications

Understanding students’ perceptions about a course is important because mismatched conceptions can lead to difficulties within the classroom (Carnell, 2007). By investigating student perceptions of teaching strategies, educators can better identify particular pedagogies deemed as effective by students so instructors can adapt their methods to improve instruction. Carnell states that there needs to be a bridge between teachers’ understanding and students’ learning, thus strengthening the premise that continued research needs to take place in the area of student perceptions of instructional strategies. An empirical research study that examines student perceptions of engagement, satisfaction, and motivation in service-learning courses could assist instructors in designing service-learning programs. Additionally, research needs to establish whether service-learning programs significantly improve the quality of writing produced by students because if considerable improvement is demonstrated, institutions of higher education might increase their efforts to incorporate a service-learning component into their curricula.
Since experimental studies in composition courses that incorporate a service-learning component are lacking and reveal a gap in understanding the impact that service-learning has on an academic writing course, more research needs to be conducted in order to determine how well a service-learning component can help achieve learning outcomes for a composition course. Along with the improvement in understanding of pedagogical strategies, this knowledge could also help inform administrators in charge of these programs, providing them with essential information that could guide their decision regarding such programs. Research also needs to determine whether connections with organizations through a service-learning initiative make learning more real, and authentic since face-to-face interactions could improve the context for research, writing, and the production of projects. If this blending of an academic writing course with service-learning proves to improve students’ writing, then certainly this knowledge could impact pedagogical practices in composition.

Applications

This study would only be the beginning of developing a model for teaching an academic writing class by providing more insight into the role of service-learning in composition, which could guide the development of that concept in more effective ways. Further study and refinement of methodology might need to be adapted to other schools that teach academic writing courses. Perhaps this model could offer a fresh idea for enriching an academic writing course by tying student career aspirations and community organizations in research projects.

Concepts of communities of learners have been evolving from their inception in the mid-nineteen nineties and are still changing today. Generally, communities of learners are thought to be those within the classroom, but understanding how outside
organizations can enrich the classroom community could be useful for instructors planning their courses. Adding an outside element to instruction might be a valuable tool that could improve the practices of writing teachers.

Research writing that incorporates a community of learners construct appears to present a powerful research model. However, such a model needs to be perceived by students as useful, and this research study could be a preliminary probe in this direction. If this model were deemed effective, then colleagues at the target college could benefit from such a strategy and seek to refine the teaching strategies at the school. If continued applications were successful, these strategies could be extended to other institutions of higher learning as well.

Overview of Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design using static group comparison to measure differences between six groups that incorporated service-learning with six groups that did not use service-learning. Student perceptions of the course were measured by the Service-Learning Student Perceptions Likert Scale. Descriptive statistics were calculated to give an overall view of the perceptions of each statement in isolation as well as a holistic measure of the two courses. Also, $t$-tests for independent samples and effect sizes were calculated to compare the groups for the two different methods. The $t$-test indicated if the observed statistic was equal to or less than the average value that was expected through chance alone (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006, p.189). Lastly, effect size, which utilized Cohen’s $d$, was computed to estimate the strength of significant relationships found in the difference between the two means.

To assess learning outcomes, research papers from each class were evaluated according to the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, which is a customization of
national standards as captured in the WPA Outcomes Statement (See “WPA Outcomes Statement,” 1999). Papers were evaluated by instructors in the English department and scored according to the rubric. The researcher collected the rubrics, recorded data on an Excel spreadsheet, and conducted t-tests and effect sizes on the samples by using the Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS).

Subjects

The target site for this study was a four-year private, comprehensive college in a moderately-sized city in South Central Pennsylvania. Six experimental academic writing classes, each comprised of approximately seventeen students, were compared with a control group of six other academic writing classes of about the same size. Each group was required to complete an alternative genre, which is a piece of writing that goes beyond the “academic” writing by translating the academic essay into an alternative form that utilizes available technologies for design and/or electronic dissemination. In addition to completing an alternative genre project, the experimental group completed a service-learning component as well.

Instruments

The Student Perceptions Likert Scale for Service-Learning, developed by this researcher, was used to measure student perceptions of each course. The final scale contained a total of sixty items with twenty questions each in the areas of engagement, satisfaction, and motivation. Internal consistency and content reliability of the scale were achieved through Cronbach’s alpha. For statistical analyses, SPSS was used to calculate Cronbach’s alpha, descriptive statistics, t-tests, and effect sizes.

The Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, designed by the Writing Program Administrator, was adapted from the WPA Outcomes Statement for First Year
Composition (Harrington et al, 2001). The assessment rubric’s categories were based on the learning outcomes from the course, which assigned seven levels of values, where seven indicated a full demonstration of the competency and one suggested no evidence of that competency. Data from completed rubrics were recorded into an Excel spreadsheet and entered into SPSS in order to assess the groups for the two methods.

Procedures

Two weeks before the close of the spring semester, the Likert scale was administered to 176 students. Students were assigned a number for identification of their responses, but their identities were kept confidential. Once the scales had been collected, scoring of the scales was completed. Values of the Service-Learning Student Perceptions Likert Scales were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet by the researcher. By using the SPSS software, the means, t-tests for independent samples, and effect sizes were conducted on each area of student perceptions to compare the samples for the two different methods.

At the close of the semester, 52 academic essays from the experimental and control groups were randomly selected and evaluated according to the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric. Eleven instructors who taught the academic writing course evaluated papers from both groups. Results were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. To determine any significant differences in achievement of learning outcomes between the groups, descriptive statistics, t-tests, and effect sizes were conducted by using the SPSS computer software.

Definitions

Alternative genre - A descriptive term coined by the target college’s community of writing instructors that explains the final writing production as a piece of writing that goes beyond “school” or “academic” writing by translating the academic essay into an
alternative form that utilizes available technologies for design and/or electronic dissemination.

Civic responsibility - A model of service-learning that seeks to develop civic and social responsibility by helping students discover the significance of their work within a community along with understanding how their work can effect change (Hutchinson, 2005).

Communities of learners - The community of learning is characterized by an emphasis on collaboration, gift giving, service-learning, and interdisciplinary work, where individuals are less interested in power and self-promotion and more concerned with helping people develop, interpret, and share ideas (Moxley, 2008).

Public writing - Written discourse that attempts to engage an audience of local, regional, or national groups or individuals in order to bring about progressive societal change by having students compose forms of writing that produce meaningful discourse (Dobrin & Weisser, 2002).

Service-learning - “A teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002, p.3).

A Look Ahead

The goal of the introductory chapter was to set forth the foundation for the research study. This research study sought to determine whether a service-learning component in an academic writing course provided more student engagement, motivation, and satisfaction than a course that did not incorporate a service-learning element. In addition to this goal, this investigation studied the influence that a service-learning strategy had on the level of achievement of learning outcomes, which are based
on national outcomes measures. Since existing studies on service-learning are primarily qualitative in nature, an argument for conducting an empirical investigation was presented.

Chapter Two places these issues into perspective by examining educational theories that support effective pedagogies in college composition courses along with the impact that a service-learning component has on college students. Chapter Three explains the setting of the study and the instruments and procedures that took place, including a description of how the Likert scale was developed, data was collected, and information was analyzed. In Chapter Four, the results of the study are provided and presented according to the hypotheses in Chapter One. Finally, Chapter Five provides a summary of the results of research and an interpretation of its findings. Within this last chapter, sections will include a summary of the results, researcher’s insights, the relationship of the current study to prior research, theoretical implications of the study, implications for practice, limitations, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter examines educational theories that support effective pedagogies in college composition courses, along with the impact that a service-learning component has on college students. A case for developing a program that combines these theories in an academic writing course will be presented. Additionally, an argument for strengthening the empirical base for service-learning in composition courses will be offered.

Constructivist Supports for an Academic Writing Program

A theoretical base for designing instruction must be established before planning strategies to meet learning outcomes. Constructivist theory is one foundation that can provide a base for instruction in a composition course. Constructivists propose that individual learners actively participate in social activities with a teacher to build knowledge, skills, and ideas that have personal meaning for students by activating their existing knowledge to create new meanings (Anderson, 1996; Huitt, 2003; Null, 2004; Prestine & Nelson, 2005; Sherman & Kurshen, 2005; Thanasoulas, 2007). Constructivist teaching strategies for an academic writing course can be likened to the supports on a bridge that serve to secure the foundation for planning effective instructional strategies in the college classroom.

In constructivist classrooms, the emphasis is placed on the learner rather than the teacher so students can develop the ability to become effective problem solvers, thereby transferring their learning to unique learning settings. Since college composition courses involve active construction of knowledge that requires an integration of prior knowledge to create new and relevant understandings, teaching writing from this perspective has found its way into composition classrooms.
Much of constructivism’s foundations are rooted in the works of Lev Vygotsky, which were written in the 1930s but did not find a home in America until his works were translated from the Russian language into English in the 1960s. Vygotsky stressed the importance of dialogue in the development of learning where social interactions help construct knowledge. His theories began to impact institutions of higher education in the 1960s when open admissions prompted many instructors to reconsider their role in the classroom (Bruffee, 1972). On the heels of change in the American educational system in the 1970s, students entering college seemed to have difficulty adapting to the traditional conventions of the classroom and were refusing offered help (Bruffee, 1984). Bruffee issued a call for collaborative learning, which he defined as social engagement in intellectual pursuits, in composition because the first step to learning was to build better thinking, which he believed to be bridged through social contexts fostered via conversations which are valued by the community members.

Social constructionist themes began to take root in composition theory due to its premise that writing is primarily a social act (Bruffee, 1986). Bruffee’s main argument for this position was based on the idea that since writers’ language originates with the community to which they belong, language can be used to join communities in which they do not belong and cement memberships into communities to which they already belong. This view of social construction forms the groundwork for collaborative practices because it assumes learning takes place among and between persons.

Contemporary constructivists have translated these theories into pragmatic applications. Alesandrin and Larson (2002) have identified five basic components of constructivism that play a role in bridge building prior knowledge to new learning. The first premise states that learning results from exploration and discovery. Because of this,
teachers are viewed more as facilitators who coach students in their quest for learning. Learning is viewed as a process of exploring new information and then constructing meaning by linking it with prior knowledge and experience. This theoretical framework supports a firm foundation for writing because academic writing is an exploratory process in which proactive learning takes place from the onset of an initial idea to the progression of researching and composing a paper on a topic.

Second, Alesandrini and Larson state that learning is understood to be a community activity that is facilitated by shared inquiry. In collaborative activities, many benefits are realized that include interactive cooperation which aids in accomplishing shared goals, reflection of ideas, ability to see problems from a variety of viewpoints or perspectives, and the opportunity to learn how to negotiate meaning during an activity in an attempt to flex with the changing problems. These constructivist activities are easily realized in a composition course through peer editing, discussion groups, instruction on the writing process, investigating topics outside of the classroom, and the sharing of research projects both within the classroom and the community at large. These social benefits provide students with feedback and create an atmosphere of a community of learners.

A third tenet posits that learning occurs during the constructivist process while students are in the midst of exploring applications to proposed problems. Self-assessment occurs at this time because students are directed to verbalize what they have learned through their experiences. The writing process is also an activity where learning occurs throughout the development of a written document because inquiry explorations must take place while writing. Also, as new questions arise during the writing process, new avenues must be explored to answer them. Finally, self-assessment is also realized in
writing because the act of composing should be an ongoing process that writers go through when they revise, edit, and consult a rubric for the intended goals.

The fourth principle includes the idea that learning results from participation in real-life scenarios. Linking activities to real-life situations brings relevancy to learning. Students also typically enjoy connecting outside events to classroom discussions and activities. For an academic writing course, topic exploration that incorporates real-life problems of interest to the students could be extremely useful. This process could entail not only conducting research in scholarly journals and books, but also venturing out into the field where these situations occur. For instance, conducting research on wellness programs could necessitate a trip to a local organization that offers wellness programs in the workplace. Once at a health education center, students might engage in experiential learning though interaction with employees, interviews with wellness experts, and information available at the center. Direct contact with places and people strengthen one’s understanding of a rhetorical situation or a topic that is undergoing research.

The final tenet suggests that outcomes of constructivist activities are unique and varied. Since each student possesses a distinctive array of background experiences, the final products should represent a collection of distinctive creations. This feature can occur when students give classroom presentations where a range of shared writing projects are promoted. When research projects are shared, a variety of distinctive experiences and worldviews are presented, and as a result, broaden the educational experiences of a community of learners. In summary, constructivist writing instruction promotes interactive strategies to guide students in the creation of well-written productions.
Not only does using a constructivist strategy make pedagogical sense, but this strategy also seems logical when considering the transformed classroom culture precipitated by the Information Age. Due to the vast amount of information available, students may feel that learning can be easily attained. However, constructivist strategies are especially needed so students are equipped to evaluate the reliability and validity of information. Since much of the research conducted now takes place electronically, students also need guidance in learning how to locate information through the internet and databases. The forces of technology have crept into classrooms of higher education, compelling instructors to employ constructivist strategies to guide students in their searches for valid and reliable sources of information.

In addition to altering pedagogy and classroom structures, technology has also shaped a different student body. Today’s students are quite different than they were two decades ago, and the current educational system needs to change in order to design instruction that is appropriate and challenging for them (Prensky, 2001). Technology has enabled students to network with each other through a number of outlets such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, shaping relationships in digital formats rather than through the spoken word or physical presence. The widespread popularity of these technologies reveals students’ desire to interact with others through electronic means. Classroom strategies can also incorporate techniques where students learn and interact with each other to make learning more meaningful.

Integrating technology in writing classrooms has become almost standard operating procedure for today’s instructors, but its assimilation into writing courses has forced instructors to devise new pedagogies (Faigley, 1997). Although Faigley stated this premise in the late 1990s, its truth continues to hold true today. To stay current with new
technologies, instructors will have to work diligently when designing a computer-supported writing environment and consider the implications of these changes for teaching (“Re-defining literacy,” 1992). The silver lining of these new digital technologies is the vast new opportunities that have opened up for new discourse communities. Faigley argues that digital literacy improves democratic participation and believes that civic engagement can be experienced through digital tools such as discussion boards, wikis, blogs, and the newly acclaimed Twitter. As these new digital technologies wend their way into composition classrooms, instructors may discover a new and different kind of classroom community, one that may be somewhat foreign to them but quite common for their students.

As instructors begin creating new types of classroom communities, they may find it beneficial to turn to the digital natives for assistance. Selfe (1992, as cited in “Re-defining Literacy”) suggests instructors can learn from their students by observing the literacy strategies students develop on their own for coping in computer-supported communication environments. By turning to some of the savviest users of technology, instructors can not only expand their knowledge of technology, but they also set a powerful example by modeling how a collaborative, organic classroom community can function.

Constructivist practices in composition classrooms can aid students in learning how to evaluate text and learn from their fellow students through collaborative activities such as peer editing and group critiques (Hansman & Wilson, 1998; Mullen, 2006; Ochse, 1995). Constructivism’s foundational premises rely on social interactions, so instructional practices that use dialogue to build learning experiences, provide opportunities for students to share ideas, critique the structure and content of written
essays, and build editing skills easily fit the bill for a writing classroom. This atmosphere can be best accomplished through a relaxed, interactive workshop environment in which the instructor is available for questioning, capable of providing feedback, and able to monitor progress (Hansman & Wilson, 1998; Mullen, 2006; Osche, 1995; Weaver, 1996) while also providing an atmosphere where students are allowed to discuss writing with their peers. Osche found that students reported a better chance of succeeding in “an environment of partnership” (p. 6) while Hansman and Wilson reported that students remarked that talking about their writing helped them learn better. Clearly, the powerful effects of collaboration in the writing process can yield many benefits to drive home solid concepts to students who participate in such activities.

Integrating Problem-Solving Approaches in Writing Instruction

Learning is not a passive process of receiving and automatically retaining new information; instead, learning is achieved through active mental processes mediated by instructors’ instructional strategies (Firestone and Reihl, 2005). Classrooms typified by active learning support conversations among students and instructors concerning tasks that require complex problem-solving (Wenger, 1998). Problem-solving strategies are often referred to as Problem-Based Learning and are found in multi-faceted forms throughout all disciplines.

Several features make Problem-Based Learning strategies appealing to both students and instructors. Undoubtedly, in Problem-Based Learning classrooms, a learner-centered environment is promoted (Chapman, 2002; Duch, 1996; David, 2008; Magnuson, 2005). Through a learner-centered environment, students are able to take charge of their learning because they know the outcomes will reflect the time, effort, and expertise that are invested in the project. Another added quality of Problem-Based
Learning that arises from these activities is critical thinking since students are given real world problems designed to capture student interest (David, 2008). Of course, solving the problems requires dialogue and inquiry among classroom members, which often results in creating a community of inquiry (McGrath, 2003). Solving the problem will necessitate acquiring knowledge, participating in the activity, and engaging in reflection. This type of learning is a far cry from the viewpoint that many freshmen students carry with them into their college composition classrooms. Quite often, students in freshmen composition courses view writing as a technical skill reduced to the lower levels of grammatical exercise, which is an unrewarding task, while others see the process of solving a problem and writing a persuasive piece as an obstacle to overcome rather than an opportunity to develop better communication skills (Chapman, 2002). Problem-Based Learning challenges these perspectives by offering opportunities for rich conversations, real world problems, and active learning.

Instructors can try to change a student’s mindset of viewing writing as merely practice in the formalities of writing and grammar exercises (Chapman, 2002). Instead, teachers can kindle excitement once students understand the nature of good rhetorical writing, which includes one’s ability to define a problem, communicate it effectively for a particular audience, and use persuasive techniques to build a case. Through problem-based strategies, Chapman found that students generally experience overall satisfaction in a course, are able to define a rhetorical problem, and learn to write for different purposes, audiences, perspectives, and disciplines.

Instructors of composition courses can apply adapted versions of Problem-Based Learning to their courses. Flower (1998) advocates a problem-solving approach to writing because it helps writers to develop better ways to complete the undertaking of
writing. The act of writing involves solving the problems of trying to read a situation, understand the expectations, make decisions and guesses, and use feedback as a method to continue learning. A problem-solving approach is a good skill for college students to master because outside of writing in college, problem-solving continues to endure in the professional world where one seeks to discover, define, and analyze problems so an audience can be persuaded to accept the writer’s solutions.

Student engagement and participation are complimentary by-products of a project-based learning environment. Gonzales and Nelson (2005) have found that more advanced collaborative and leadership skills can be developed by using a project-based setting instead of a lecture setting. Additionally, these researchers have discovered that instructors also find these types of learning environments to be more interesting and rewarding to work in. It appears that Problem-Based Learning works well with either small groups or individual arrangements, and depending on the outcomes that the instructor is seeking to develop, it may be best to allow each student to make the choice of either working independently or in a small group. However, those who choose to work in small groups can develop valuable skills that will benefit them when they enter the workplace.

Using a problem-based approach to writing appears to hold great potential in an academic writing course while offering flexibility in delivery and strong student engagement. However, most studies conducted in Problem-Based Learning, such as Chapman’s and Flower’s, have a tendency to focus on qualitative data and anecdotes to support the merits of this approach. While these studies added knowledge to educators’ understanding of how to incorporate Problem-Based Learning and contributed to the theoretical base of using Problem-Based Learning in composition, it is unclear whether or
not a problem-based component demonstrated significant improvement in student achievement of learning outcomes and perceptions over methods that did not include a problem-based component. Indeed, David (2008) pointed out that only a few studies have measured the effects of PBL on student achievement.

David points out that Thomas’s (2000) comprehensive review of the limited research on PBL found that this approach seems to enhance the quality of student learning when compared with other instructional methods, but comparisons with other methods are lacking. Additionally, David found that research has had a tendency to focus more on the challenges of implementing Problem-Based Learning instead of providing insight on its results. A need exists to empirically compare the effects of problem-based approaches with those that do not use a problem-based strategy to determine if Problem-Based Learning does indeed improve student perceptions and achievement of learning outcomes.

**Integrating Learning Communities in the Writing Classroom**

A current theme found in contemporary literature concerns the importance of classroom communities for effective learning (Firestone & Reihl, 2005). This call to learning communities is not a new concept, and it took root in the 1970s when collaborative learning started to enter university classrooms. Bruffee (1981) promoted the practice of collaborative learning and stressed the importance of its use in composition for several reasons. He stated that students personalize knowledge within the social contexts of their peer groups when engaging on conceptual issues. Through these conversations, students learn to negotiate meaning by testing the quality and value of their knowledge through interactions with their peers who are quite similar to themselves. Bruffee purported the value of collaboration to be grounded in the emotional element of
learning contextually through the powerful social context of peer influence rather than the teacher’s use of pedagogical strategies. Collaboration provides a social context where students can experience and practice the kinds of conversations used by college teachers, which in turn, can improve their mastery of discourse needed for their future professions (Bruffee, 1984).

To encourage collaborative practices, Bruffee (1984) states that students must be engaged in conversation among themselves, and instructors must guide those conversations about their reading and writings in a manner that encourages the kinds of conversations valued by college teachers. However, he believes that a great deal of the responsibility of learning should rest upon the writers themselves, based on the principle that students learn well from each other. He suggests dual sharing by both teachers and students in teaching and evaluation of student writing. In this approach, instructors would provide support and aid by setting priorities and establishing criteria for evaluating writing.

In the college realm, the classroom environment is vital for student engagement and learning. Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1995) have identified four characteristics that are necessary for effective learning in a classroom community. These characteristics include trying to create a climate of shared values, engaging students in reflective dialogue, designing instruction that focuses on student learning, and employing collaboration between all classroom members. All of these characteristics involve methods that engage and motivate students. Student engagement can be further improved by creating opportunities for students to experience success and by designing relevant assignments. Certainly, positive classroom experiences can motivate students to persist in their studies and view collegiate studies as rewarding.
Though often overlooked, a community surrounding the school can also support student achievement and help them feel like a part of the college body. Students who connect to the larger community are able to form social capital whereby they can rely on interpersonal relationships for support. Furthermore, linking students with the surrounding community gives students a sense of connectedness where they feel like a contributing member of a group and experience satisfaction from their work. Providing opportunities for students to get connected in a community outside the college may enhance college retention, create authentic learning experiences, and improve learning outcomes.

Learning communities can foster deeper approaches to learning, and although they can embody various forms, for the purposes of this study, the discussion will center on the model advocated by Gonzales and Nelson (2005). In the Gonzales and Nelson model, writing instructors do not let the classroom walls limit a community of learners’ framework since writing about the real world extends outside the classroom where true rhetorical dilemmas are present. Gonzales and Nelson describe these kinds of communities of learning as representing multiple learning communities in which students collaborate with their peers, instructors, mentors, and those in their community through various projects. Since the effectiveness of extending learning to public areas outside the classroom is the query under examination, this definition of communities of learners will be referred to throughout this discussion.

The idea of structuring classrooms into learning communities has the potential to produce a number of positive outcomes. Research has revealed that communities of learning dynamically engage students (Carnell, 2007), promote active participation (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002), enhance collaboration (Gonzales & Nelson,
2005), improve motivation (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002), foster learning (Boud & Prousser, 2002; Brown, 1994; Gonzales & Nelson, 2005), celebrate individual differences (Brown, 1994), encourage responsibility (Brown, 1994; Carnell, 2007), involve sharing of information (Brown, 1997; Moxley, 2008; Carnell, 2007), depend on dialogue (Brown, 1997; Carnell, 2007), focus on learning inquiry (Adler-Kassner, 2003; Carnell, 2007) take place in learning-centered colleges (Bosch et al, 2008), and extend to communities outside the college (Adler-Kassner, 2003; Bosch et al., 2008). Each of these constructs deserves individual attention in order to expand upon these outcomes more thoroughly.

Dynamic engagement with fellow students, the classroom instructor, and learning materials is one feature of community learning. A community of learning is characterized by collaboration, gift giving, service-learning, and interdisciplinary work, where individuals are less interested in power and self-promotion and more concerned with helping people develop, interpret, and share ideas (Moxley, 2008). Since learning is closely related to what students experience and not to what teachers do, this interactive, experienced-based approach can improve a student’s understanding of material (Boud & Prosser, 2002). Boud and Prosser have stated that since teaching and learning are relational, designing teaching and learning activities that promote dynamic engagement with the material can help students adopt deeper approaches to study. Interdisciplinary learning can also be realized in learning communities and stimulate engagement when students have a real interest in research problems found in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.

Students in a community of learners tend to become active participants. This active participation is vital for teaching composition because writing requires students to
become problem solvers, construct knowledge, and transfer learning to unique settings. Applying innovative uses in technology can also transform the instructor’s role and help build learning communities through the use of course management systems, chat rooms, wikis, and blog spaces. Technology possesses great potential to encourage active participation by building learning communities that can ultimately affect college students’ motivation and use of cognitive learning strategies (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002).

One of the most important activities in a community of learners is collaboration. These learning communities set the stage for powerful interactions that can affect college students’ motivation and use of cognitive learning strategies. A community of learners which incorporates integrated courses, emphasizes active and collaborative learning, and integrates information technology and library resources as tools for learning, serves as an effective classroom context for developing first year college students’ motivation and cognitive learning strategies (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002). Through this kind of structure, classroom members can contribute to a base of knowledge to bridge old learning with the new through their interactions and sharing of information.

Individuals can be transformed in a community of learners setting as they learn to take responsibility for learning and grow to appreciate individual differences among their peers. Brown’s (1994) Fostering Learning Communities model discovered that active, purposeful learning can be developed through designing projects that foster a thirst for knowledge and build understanding. A community learning setting can give learners tools and guidance to help them construct knowledge better than if they were on their own. Understanding individual differences and celebrating those differences can increase the diversity of students’ knowledge and skills so they can develop their own individual areas
of expertise and act as resources for one another. A community of discourse can pave the way for communicating goals, values, and ideas in a group setting. Finally, a community of practice ensures that members are responsible to each other, treat one another with respect, and identify as part of the group.

Brown (1997) has emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge in order to give back to others. In conducting research projects that can be applied to the college realm, Brown identified three key activities for practice, which include conducting research so members can share information in order to perform a consequential task. To be successful, participants must dig deep into the content to learn something meaningful. Students are required to master the topic and share their expertise with their classmates. In essence, research is conducted in order to give back to the community so that lives are enriched. Teachers in Brown’s study revealed that they focused more on the learners because they were alert to the activities of students. This practice revealed a co-constructivist learning stance where there was a community of learners who were becoming skilled in dialogue and sharing responsibility for teaching and learning.

Dialogue holds an essential role in helping students to construct knowledge. Carnell’s (2007) recent research into practices incorporating a community of learners framework in higher education has shed some important light onto this concept. She described the purpose of community learning as collective knowledge construction through dialogic means where the teacher and learners have joint responsibility for learning. The importance of dialogue in this community of learners model is crucial, for dialogue can transform the learning process. Through her research, Carnell found that when instructors incorporate the dialogic classroom structure, students experience a sense
of learning together by talking about their learning, engaging in co-constructive dialogue, and focusing on learning about learning.

Using a community of learners model sets an agenda for learning by stimulating classroom inquiry. Carnell (2007) points out the importance of learning inquiry in educational experiences. A student’s quest for learning something new should result in processes that include active engagement with community goals, bridge building to other communities, and collaboration to create joint products. An academic writing course relies on an inquiry process when forming a research question. Formulating a research investigation that involves a community could foster richer learning experiences that address real world problems.

Communities of learning are often housed in a learning-centered college. In the college venue, Bosch et al. (2008) described this type of community as one that includes all college stakeholders such as the students, faculty, and administration. Activities to build this community encompass inquiry, problem solving, creativity, and reflection. Students must be challenged, engaged, and open to learning and experiencing new ideas and concepts. Ultimately, learning experiences could connect with real life applications that are outside of the university. Understanding whether this type of bridge building to other communities improves student engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and achievement of learning outcomes is a major focus of this study.

As previously discussed, communities of learners should not be limited to a single classroom setting. Although the research seems to extol the value of interactive learning in the classroom, it seems that value-added learning could take place by continuing the research process into the community at large (Bosch et al., 2008). Perhaps the initial stages of inquiry should begin out in the community as proposed in the model developed
by Adler-Kassner and Estrem (2003). In this method, students were required to identify a community important to them and then to observe that community. Next, they developed a research question that needed to be answered through reading, interviews, and any possible analysis of artifacts. This type of strategy seems to have real promise for students since they will need to make contacts with a community distanced from their college culture, which could lend a deeper dimension to research.

An academic writing course can approach a community of learners model in a rather unique manner. First of all, a learning community is formed within the classroom itself. In an academic writing course, a learning community takes place when students are continually engaged in discussions about research findings, projects, and proposals. Additionally, in composition classrooms, students often form small groups to work collaboratively on a larger project and consequently, structure their own distinctive learning community within the larger community atmosphere. Learning communities can also occur through online discussion boards and workshops where students can support each other through peer reviews and in the development of projects.

To extend the learning community outside of the classroom, students can also connect with organizations that are related to their future careers. In this manner, students can acquire active learning experiences in their prospective fields and also learn about the problems that exist in their potential careers. This process supplies a natural rhetorical situation for research to take place because concrete connections with professionals in the field bring new meaning to researching problems that solicit fresh solutions. Satisfaction for students can also take place because helping an organization not only gives purpose and meaning for research but also provides a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment because organizations have been helped in an unusual fashion. Finally, direct research
and contact into students’ proposed fields may either confirm or dispel their convictions about following specified career paths.

By expanding the scope of learning to include the local and college community, valuable effects on both students and recipients can occur. Benefits of a community of learners model in composition classrooms have shown that richer learning experiences can take place. An added benefit of a community of learners model includes extending applications to broader realms rather than limiting learning experiences to a singular, encapsulated classroom setting. Whether or not embedding a service-learning component within an extended community of learners model yields significant differences in student perceptions and achievement of learning outcomes when compared to a learning community that does not contain a service-learning component is unclear. An experimental model would be useful in determining the effectiveness of combining the two approaches.

Setting the Context for Writing Programs

*Guidelines for First-Year Composition Programs*

To guide first-year composition programs for schools in higher education, the Council of Writing Program Administration (1999) published a statement to describe the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes sought by these programs. Development of the statement was grounded in practice, research, and theory and uses the term “outcomes” to describe types of results expected instead of precise levels of achievement. These statements reflect expectations at the end of first-year composition courses in the areas of rhetorical knowledge, processes, knowledge of conventions, composing in electronic environments and critical thinking, reading, and writing. These statements structured a
firm groundwork for identifying the goals and learning outcomes for the target college’s
academic writing program.

The Role of Grammar Instruction

As the second course in the first-year composition program, the main focus for the
academic writing class is not on grammar instruction, albeit this is an important
component of the course, but rather on guiding students to conduct research and
synthesize their findings into an academic essay. A stronger emphasis on grammar
instruction is typically found in the first part of this two-part series, freeing instructors to
concentrate their efforts on the actual process of research, academic writing, and
generation of an alternative genre. However, a discussion on the role of grammar
instruction in an academic writing course is an important component as students practice
developing academic writing skills and will undoubtedly meet grammar concerns along
the way.

A lack of a consensus on how to teach grammar in higher education began to arise
as early as 1906 when Franklin Hoyt began to question instruction in grammar in an
effort to improve logical thinking, which he believed was a primary reason for teaching
grammar (Hartwell, 1985). According to Hoyt, there seemed to be no relationship
between knowledge of technical grammar and the ability to use English and interpret
language. This theory gained momentum in the 1960s when the Braddock Report claimed
that formal grammar did not improve writing and could even create a harmful effect on
the improvement of writing (Kolln, 1996). The controversy that arose from this report
evolved into what is known as The Great Grammar Debate in which questions ensued
over whether or not to teach grammar in writing courses (Vavra, 1996). Vavra states that
both sides of the Great Grammar Debate, which are only carried out by a few people at
each extreme, have flaws in their arguments that can only be resolved by reformulating the question of whether or not to teach writing.

The two sides have quite diverse views on how writing should be taught, and both sides have spent a great deal of time in study over the two methods. A survey of the literature reveals that the anti-grammarians believe that grammar improves as a result of writing while the pro-grammarians believe in the value of direct teaching of writing (Hartwell, 1985; Martinsen, 2000; Vavra, 1996). In reality, refusing to teach any grammar does not make sense in an academic writing course since questions concerning citations, quoting, appropriate sentence structures for APA or MLA formatting, punctuation, style, and clarity will certainly come to pass. It seems reasonable to provide students with guidance in understanding and applying those aspects of grammar that are most relevant to writing (Weaver, 1996). Perhaps the central question should not focus on whether grammar should be taught. Instead, queries should center on how grammar can best be delivered in ways that engage students, spark critical thinking, preserve students’ power over their writing, and improve students’ quality of writing.

Quite a number of responses to that question have been proposed that seek to preserve the position of grammar in a writing program without compromising the writing process. A common practice that has arisen from the anti-grammar movement has been to integrate grammar into the practice of writing. This method seems to hold promise in helping students apply grammar rules to their own writing rather than teaching grammar as a formal system (Hartwell, 1985; Horner, 1992; Martinsen, 2000; Van-Zalingen, 1998; Vavra, 1996; Weaver, 1996). However, using students’ writing takes great care, and Williams (1981) suggests concentrating only on the grammar rules that negatively affect meaning or clarity in a text. Student errors fall at various levels of violations, some of
which are obvious while others are modestly discrete. He states that addressing errors involves a great deal of judgment and care:

> We need not believe that just because a rule of grammar finds its way into some handbook of usage, we have to honor it. Which we honor and which we do not is a problem of research. We have to determine in some unobtrusive way which rules of grammar the significant majority of careful readers notice and which they do not. (p. 164)

For college students, Williams believes concentrating on the most significant errors that disrupt meaning will best serve the needs of students. For a freshman writing course, this may be the best approach to take.

When integrating grammar instruction into students’ writing, Hartman (1985) suggests that active involvement with the language is preferable over instruction in rules or definitions. He believes writing errors need to be viewed not as grammar errors but instead, as a problem of metacognition and linguistic awareness. In his view, practice with written language can actually increase awareness of language as language.

Incorporating grammar instruction from this perspective requires a rhetorical slant where students communicate in meaningful contexts and a metalinguistic focus that involves active manipulation of language with conscious attention to surface form.

Writing workshops can help students view writing as a process and also provide a means of integrating grammar instruction into their own writing. Vavra (1996) suggests helping students identify various grammatical constructions in their own writing by designing lessons in sentence construction where students learn to recognize grammatical constructions of their writing. Weaver (1996) provides more specific guidelines in areas that should be taught, practiced, and applied so students can use grammar more
effectively and conventionally in their writing. She believes that constructivist pedagogy can be employed to teach the following: concepts of parts of speech and related concepts for editing; style through sentence combining and sentence generating; sentence sense and style through lessons on syntax; the power of dialects and dialects of power; and punctuation and mechanics. Certainly, some features of grammar must be taught to help students produce good writing, and by using students’ own writing, improvement in student understanding and confidence in their grammar knowledge can be built.

Another useful feature of writing workshops includes incorporating small groups or conferences for proofreading, revising, and editing student writing. Horner (1992) suggests using engaging methods that empower students in their writing and in their ability to negotiate. When employing editing practices, Horner stresses the importance of helping students maintain authority and responsibility of their writing in order to preserve meaning construction during the writing process. This strategy can be accomplished through teacher conferences, peer group editing, or class discussions. In conferences, teachers can direct questions concerning clarification issues and grammar trouble spots while peer group editing can practice negotiations inherent in editing. Through collaboration and discussions, students can employ critical thinking and evaluation skills to improve their writing.

Teaching grammar in the context of writing in an academic writing course can work well in this type of setting where process writing resides. Using Weaver’s suggestions for mini-workshops can help students build proficiency in their writing skills. Additionally, providing time for peer reviews and conferences can also provide opportunities for students to grow in their abilities by using their own writing as the
curriculum for lessons. Through such a process, students can maintain authority over their writing while learning to improve grammar within their original essays.

Real Rhetorical Situations

A rationale has been presented that explains how a constructivist theoretical framework that employs learning communities and problem-solving approaches can form the foundational supports for the bridge of an academic writing course. For an academic writing course to fulfill its purpose and meet learning outcomes, rhetorical instruction is vital to helping students learn how to write academic essays. Developing students’ rhetorical skills requires intentional instruction on the part of professors in order to construct the substructure of the bridge of an academic writing course.

At the target college, teaching an academic writing course undoubtedly focuses on helping students employ rhetorical devices in the construction of their research papers. To write powerful papers that utilize the persuasive features of rhetoric, students must choose topics embedded in real rhetorical situations. In other words, writing that is completed about real people with real problems for real audiences form the richest source for investigations (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans & Meyer-Gonclaves, 1998; Dobrin & Weisser, 2002; Eble & Gaillet, 2004; Essid, 2006; Hafer, 1999; Heilker, 1997; Himley, 2004; Lester et al., 2003; Mortensen, 1998; Watters & Ford, 1995; Yancey, 2004). For instance, writing a research paper on early intervention programs for preschool children that relies solely on scholarly journal articles is far more distanced from a rhetorical situation than a research paper that gathers information through visits to an actual Head Start facility, talks with staff at the organization, and researches scholarly journal articles. However, along with investigating authentic
rhetorical situations, writers must develop audience awareness and embrace the role of real world problems.

*Developing Audience Awareness*

One of the most important writing skills for college students to develop is audience awareness, which is an understanding of their audience and determining the relationship that they desire to attain (Jones, 1994). Although this concept seems simple enough, much has been debated on how to define and address an audience. In the 1980s, Ede and Lunsford (1984) initiated quite a bit of discussion on the topic of audience and their proposed new model. These authors believed that two models of audience, the audience addressed and the audience invoked, were too simplified and failed to recognize the fluid, dynamic character of rhetorical situations and the integrated, independent nature inherent in the composing process. In the audience addressed model, composition theorists, primarily Ruth Mitchell and Mary Taylor, proposed that the addressed audience referred to actual or real people who read a discourse. On the other end of the spectrum, Walter Ong and Russell Long suggested an invoked audience that encompassed an imagined or unknown audience to the writer.

Ede and Lunsford found that the audience addressed model leaned toward a tendency to overemphasize the writer’s independence while the audience invoked model focused on the reader’s independence and power. However, these composition theorists proposed that writers, who are also readers and writers of their own text, are more apt to be guided by a sense of purpose and the rhetorical situation, providing a range of potential roles an audience may play. In this sense, writers must continually adapt their discourse to satisfy the needs and expectations of an addressed audience by using their past experiences or visualizing a representative of that audience in their mind. For this
reason, Ede and Lunsford’s conception of audience synthesized these perspectives by acknowledging the creativity and interdependence of readers and writers, as well as writing and reading, which accounted for the fluid and dynamic character of rhetorical situations. These authors conceptualized audience as a “complex series of obligations, needs, resources, and constraints” (p.165) that enables and constrains writers and readers.

However, discussion concerning audience awareness in the late 1980s through the mid-1990s continued to spark lively discussions, prompting Lunsford and Ede (1996) over a decade later to critique their original model. In their self-critique, Lunsford and Ede sought to convey multiple understandings of the process they had previously proposed and to point out the omissions in their stance. One of the areas the authors had failed to address were the ways in which audiences can silence writers and readers. An additional weakness was found in their assumption that writers are able to negotiate their way through the process with discursive power and achieve success. In reality, because student writers often possess less ability, power, and freedom in some rhetorical situations when compared to their instructors, Lunsford and Ede had not addressed the multiple ways student writers’ agency and identity were shaped by both immediate audiences and larger institutional frameworks. Additionally, these authors did not delve into the powerful effects of ideology that exists in genres, disempowering and constraining writers and audiences. As a result, Lunsford and Ede realized the potential for students to find themselves full of contradiction and conflict, making it difficult for writers to find their identity in writing.

As a result of revisiting their stance on audience, these authors realized that students are not always allowed to freely express their ideas. Instead, multiple discourses and ideological and institutional influences exert constraints on writers and chide
instructors to examine their assumptions and practices. In conclusion, Lunsford and Ede suggest that students should be led to become aware of their own situatedness and represent themselves as fully and ethically as possible.

In practice, this type of writing is difficult to achieve, directing students to carefully examine their audience or audiences. One of the hardest types of audience to address is a general audience, so in order to write better, students must focus on exploring a knowable audience (Mortensen, 1998). Once an audience has been identified, Jones (1994) explains that the ability to choose words that the audience can understand is an important skill. In addition to this, Jones states that students must have the ability to understand the relationships between the audience and subject matter as well as the relationship between the audience and speaker. Even so, this is not an easy task to accomplish.

Students often view the instructor as a primary audience, which does not truly represent an authentic audience, and students characteristically try to please the teacher by writing a paper in a manner to procure a good grade. Bigelow (2007) believes that a lack of an authentic audience produces lifeless student writing. He states that designing writing assignments for canned audiences does not encourage great writing, whereas assignments that allow students to write beyond the classroom does improve student writing. Therefore, he discovered that developing audience awareness must be predicated by authentic writing tasks.

Bacon (2000) concurs that authentic writing tasks depend on first-hand experiences that take place outside the classroom. Through her research she has found that it is not enough to simply tell students that writing varies with its audience and purpose. Instead, for students to develop a real understanding of rhetorical principles,
they need to write in multiple settings, and for varied audiences and purposes. She has suggested pedagogies such as service-learning to give students first-hand experiences in practicing writing in varied rhetorical situations.

Findings from Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, and Macgill (2008) confirm the importance of audience and provide further understanding of circumstances that motivate teens to write. Students state they are motivated and inspired to write when they view their writing as instrumental, relevant, challenging, and publically shared. Motivation seems to take place when it has a broad impact whereas public sharing can take place in class, in person, in print, or on the internet. Interestingly, actual writing for people was identified as their single, most important motivator. Obtaining the attention, respect, and praise of a guiding adult or members of a public forum is essential for them. Hence, opportunities for public sharing in a composition course appear to improve student motivation.

Heilker (1997) has criticized composition courses that situate writing solely within the classroom walls. Audience awareness is difficult to develop when students tailor their writing to a teacher, creating a spurious context for development of this skill. An audience of one is not a desirable framework for the development of audience awareness, and Heilker (1997) aptly describes such a scenario in unfavorable terms:

Composition students have suffered too long in courses and classrooms that are palpably *unreal* rhetorical situations. Their audiences are not real audiences; their purposes not real purposes. In most cases, students are writing to the teacher, to an audience of one, who is required and paid to read the text at hand, who is almost always both a better writer *and* more knowledgeable about the subject matter than the writers, and who is reading primarily to find error and grade the
formal attributes of the text. Sometimes students are instructed to write to their classmates as their audience, a group homogenous in strange manufactured ways, and who almost never get a chance to actually read the *finished* versions of the texts supposedly intended for them. (p.71)

Writing in a fashion that primarily addresses an instructor is often stilted and disconnects the real purpose of writing from authentic world situations. To combat this dilemma, writing assignments can be designed in a way to include other audiences besides a teacher. Much has been written about the positive effects an expanded audience has on student writing (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Deans & Meyer-Gonclaves, 1998; Dobrin & Weisser, 2002; Heilker, 1997; Lenhart, et al., 2008; Sperling, 1996; Watters & Ford, 1995; Yancey, 2004). One of the effects of enlarging an audience for writers is that students learn to make adaptations that are more proficient, and they are able to incorporate responses from their colleagues along with the instructor to help in the composing process (Sperling, 1996). Certainly, nurturing students to expand their audience to include other individuals in addition to an instructor can enhance proficiency, rhetorical writing, and capacity for learning.

Heilker (1997) supports this premise by stating that “writing teachers need to relocate the where of composition instruction outside the academic classroom because the classroom does not and cannot offer students real rhetorical situations in which to understand writing as social action” (p. 71). Dobrin and Weisser (2002) have applied this concept by designing assignments that direct student writing to issues of local and global concerns. In their course design, students found public outlets for their writing, and instructors directed their students to a variety of public places for their writing. As a result, by encouraging students to produce written work that reaches readers beyond their
classrooms, students began to value their own writing as part of larger, public conversations. Through this course of action, students were better able to understand the power of rhetoric and writing, and this process provided them with real reasons to learn the “subject matter” of the issues they had chosen to address and support. The benefit of this kind of course design is that students learn to write in ways that reach dual audiences—the teacher and the public.

Paretti’s (2006) studies on audience awareness has found problem-based learning as a way to encourage students to adapt their writing and speaking to the needs of audiences. Since success in the business world depends on effectively communicating information, students must learn how to adapt a document or presentation to the needs of an audience. Paretti redesigned her course assignments to help students develop analytical skills needed for audience awareness by including concrete audiences where students must adapt content, organization, tone, and design for the specific needs of the situation. Through this problem-based model, Peretti noted that notable gains in audience awareness resulted because the projects were presented to wider audiences that included peers, faculty, graduate students, and the upcoming class.

Indeed, writing for interested readers outside the classroom gives students a real stake in writing where ideas and information are communicated (Watters & Ford, 1995; Lenhart, et al., 2008). Watters and Ford have found that this kind of writing gives students more investment in their learning and opportunities for critical reflection on their efforts as well as on social and community issues. It is not hard to imagine why students invest more in this kind of writing since the accomplishment of a writing project benefits a group of recipients rather than a singular audience. Along with a student writer’s increased initiative to meet a literary need for a wider audience, is the incentive to please
the recipient. In many service-learning programs, a relationship with the recipient is often established, so a desire to please the recipient and create a worthy project seems to impel students to put forth their best work. Watters and Ford sum up the advantages by stating that students are more engaged, concerned about obtaining more accurate and timely information, and vigilant in producing polished pieces of writing.

*The Role of Real-World Problems*

Helping students to take ownership of their learning becomes easier when they explore topics of interest to them, especially topics that are related to students’ majors. In an academic writing class, this entails linking student interests to topics that they can write about. One of the learning outcomes of the writing course at the target college involves the development of a sophisticated research project which has a focused topic and a specific and appropriate audience. In the development of their project, students will need to choose a topic that is important to them and understand that the issues they explore will transcend the confines of the classroom to a wider audience.

Choosing a topic needs to be viewed as relevant so that students can be more engaged in the research process (Lenhart, et al., 2008). Composition instructors try to empower students to take responsibility for the learning process. To do this, teachers must endeavor to spark self-sufficiency in their students so that they extend these strategies to become independent learners outside the classroom. Finding ways to encourage students to take ownership of their learning is especially crucial in a writing classroom where so much depends upon a student’s ability to complete the independent task of writing. Helping students to develop research skills that can enable them to become life-long learners can begin with choosing a real-world context in the sphere of their community.
Finding a real-world context while attending college can be problematic because in a sense, the college community seems to be somewhat disconnected from the demands and contexts of local, regional, and global communities. To launch the process, one need not look very far. The local community typically provides an array of options from which to select. Choosing problems that are close to a college campus or on the campus itself can provide real world problems for a true rhetorical situation. Indeed, it may be best to have topics brought forth from organizations that face needs on a daily basis. Writing instructors can take this approach by contacting organizations within the college and local community to request proposals for research topics and writing projects that they would like to have addressed. Designing a course with this structure could help students select relevant topics connected to real-world issues.

Selecting a problem to be shared with others can also prove as a motivating factor (Lenhart, et al., 2008). Relevancy is created when students view the goal of their writing as a purposeful action driven by the need to understand relevant issues concerning real world topics and when they share their discoveries with real-world audiences. Additionally, when students are able to apply their research in ways that benefit organizations, motivation may help them put more effort into creating quality projects. Finally, if students select issues that are related to their future career aspirations, personal relevance to the research process could be enhanced.

Students must be encouraged to view research as a way to learn new information and to contribute knowledge in their field (Watters & Ford, 1995). Nevertheless, students may feel that their contributions to a discipline are insignificant since their instructors’ knowledge far exceeds what they could contribute and students feel they do not have the ability to contribute anything new (Herzberg, 2000). However, if writing programs are
carefully structured, students can offer fresh insights and discoveries to their academic disciplines as they begin working in their major. In formats that incorporate community service, Watters and Ford have found that the firsthand experiences stimulate the research while the research enhances student knowledge of the issues.

Real live audiences entwined with real community issues are vital components in college composition classrooms. Why? Exploring rhetorical situations can naturally yield yet another byproduct that results from research—a desire to act upon newly discovered knowledge.

Service-Learning in Writing Programs

To connect the roadbed of the bridge from the school to the community, service-learning can be integrated into a college composition course. The National Commission on Service-Learning provides a good foundational definition for the purposes of this study: “A teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (2002, p.3). The “Learning Indeed” report from the National Commission on Service-Learning found that service-learning reverses student disengagement, increases student participation in school activities, provides a real-life context for learning, prepares students for citizenship, promotes learning through active participation, gives opportunities for using skills and knowledge in real-life situations, extends learning beyond the classroom, fosters a sense of caring for others, helps students become more willing to become involved in service to their communities, and contributes to personal and career development. At all levels of schooling, service-learning appears to have nurtured student motivation as well as civic and social responsibility.
According to the National Commission on Service-Learning (2002), there are many roads that lead to service-learning. However, two common threads seem to be woven in the fabric of service-learning. These two strands are represented by the combination of service objectives with intentional learning outcomes and the changes that the recipient and provider of the service experience as a result of the activities that have taken place. Different interpretations, objectives, and contexts exist in service-learning programs, but all are uniquely fitted to address the rhetorical situations in the various disciplines of study. Finally, service-learning should not be viewed as a volunteer program, an add-on to a college curriculum, or a one-sided deal that benefits only students or only the community. Instead, purposeful learning takes place while serving the needs of an organization.

The National Commission on Service-Learning (2002) maintains that authentic service-learning can be characterized by a number of features. First of all, participants in service-learning programs report that the experiences are positive, meaningful, and real. Engaging in service-learning programs also requires the skill of problem-solving in specific contexts situated in complex settings where simple solutions are not viable. Because problems are situated in real-world problems, critical thinking and deeper learning take place. Finally, students learn how to work in teams, develop citizenship, increase their awareness in social responsibility, and grow socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Two main categories exist for the types of service-learning found in higher education. These two categories include a focus on a service-based ethic, also referred to as citizenship responsibility, and the work experience, or intern type approach, which is designed to help students gain experience in order to obtain a job in the future. For the
purposes of this discussion, a focus is made on the service-based ethic and citizenship categories, although experience in these types of areas can be applied to future career opportunities. The intern approach is better suited for courses that are positioned in students’ junior and senior years when they are seeking to integrate their major with practical work experience.

Within the service or citizenship approach, many forms of service-learning exist to accomplish diverse outcomes. These subcategories are known by a variety of names that includes the following: civic discourse, community literacy, democracy, community inquiry, civic literacy, social justice, community service, social action, social awareness, civic responsibility, and community writing (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997). Although each type may possess slightly different goals, commonalities are present in all these forms. Instructors assimilate service-learning projects into their courses to help teach students how to serve the public, to be socially responsible, and how to grapple with real world problems (Sapp & Crabtree, 2002).

*Popular forms of service*

The types of projects characterized by providing a service are quite varied and can take the form of tutoring, collaborative writing projects, or writing documents, publications, or web pages for organizations. Tutoring is one of the most common forms of service-learning (Schutz & Gere, 1998) in which college students work with at-risk students. In this model, students must research problems, investigate solutions, and articulate challenges they faced in written productions (Amare & Grettano, 2007; Brack & Hall, 2005). In these tutoring settings, Amare and Grettano have found that this service fits well into writing courses because it brings into classrooms varied discourses and activities in the world outside the college, and tutoring requires students to mediate
the relationships between the discourses of the college and actual community contexts. In this manner, tutoring connects the classroom with the larger community in which it is situated.

When using writing and the designing of publications as a service to organizations, students frequently find that multiple methods and varied ways of producing materials can open the door to innovative ventures that create interest for them, which might improve student engagement and motivation. Some of these projects include producing publicity materials, web pages, brochures, newsletters, articles, press releases, surveys, and reports of those surveys (Deans & Meyer-Gonclaves, 1998; Dobrin & Weisser, 2002). Although designing instruction for this type of service-learning takes concerted planning, this preparation is necessary for success to transpire.

Often collaborative ventures are formed as an alternative to individual projects. Interest in collaborative writing projects has been fueled by the efforts of Peck, Flower, and Higgins (1995) through their work at the Community Literacy Center, which is a community/university union at Carnegie Mellon. In this setting, community literacy required both action and reflection. At the center, the collaborative work of writing in public, transactional texts has promoted new connections and conversations with the goal of solving problems in the community. According to the authors, community literacy is a search for alternative discourse that supports social change, intercultural conversation, a strategic approach, and inquiry. In this practice, “Community literacy…..places education and inquiry at the center of its practice” (p.214).

Civic and social responsibility

Another major school of thought that exists in service-learning is the development of civic and social responsibility. Goals of this type of service learning aspire to build
students’ understanding of civic and social responsibility by seeking to help students discover the significance of their work within the community and how their work can effect change (Hutchinson, 2005). Herzberg (2005) has stated that good evidence exists from their program to illustrate that service-learning generates a social consciousness, although this does not happen automatically. His belief that more effort is needed to improve social consciousness is revealed in the following statement: “I don’t believe that questions about social structures, ideology, and social justice are automatically raised by community service. From my own experience, I am quite sure they are not” (p.59). In essence, students often need guidance in developing a social consciousness.

Spigelman (2004) also believes that raising social awareness takes some effort. Spigelman’s model proposes that service learning courses should incorporate social justice, educate faculty and administration on the history and theory of service-learning, and train others on the social, ethical, and political questions that encompass outreach efforts. Through educating stakeholders in difficult issues inherent in civic and social responsibility, students may experience improved social awareness.

Although developing an understanding of civic and social responsibility is a worthy cause and an outcome from the WPA Outcomes Statement (See Council of Writing Program Administrators, 1991, for complete statement), since developing civic and social responsibility is not one of the stated learning outcomes for the target college’s academic writing course, this goal is not measured in its academic writing program. However, weaving these concepts into the target college’s writing course has advantages that transcend the learning outcomes of a course and serve to help develop desirable characteristics in college students. Understanding the benefits of incorporating a service-
learning project into a writing course is crucial for instructors who seek to build this strategy into their courses.

Features of Composition Service-Learning Models

A number of models for service-learning are present in composition courses in colleges and universities, so it would be difficult to discuss all of them. Since service-learning courses in composition do share similar features, it is unnecessary to delve into a lengthy discussion on each model. Reviews of courses that fit the goals and objectives of the target college will be discussed. One feature that has been found in all models is the progression of the course. Service-learning models tend to orient students to the process of service-learning before they actually venture out to provide meaningful service (Oster-Aaland, Sellnow, Nelson, & Pearson, 2004).

For service-learning models to be successful, programs must be organized and carefully planned. At Stanford University, Watters and Ford (1995) authored a guidebook, *A Guide for Change: Resources for Implementing Community Service Writing*. In this guidebook, students and instructors are introduced to the concepts of service-learning, given step-by-step instructions on how to carry out a service-learning project, provided with reflective activities on audience awareness and journal writing, supplied with worksheets that guide the project, and offered advice on how to successfully complete their project. By using this resource, a practical method is offered for instructors to design ways for integrating real world writing into their courses in ways that enable students to create products of worth such as newspaper articles, proposals, and brochures for community organizations.

Deans and Meyer-Gonclaves (1998) developed a service-learning model because they desired courses that were relevant and provocative, promoted active learning,
increased engagement in the classroom and wider community, connected academic
courses with community needs, and linked cognitive thinking with ethical social action.
Goals in the course encompassed a student-centered process that built writing and
research skills in a writer's workshop fashion.

Deans and Meyer-Gonclaves’s (1998) service-learning model fits the learning
outcomes of the target college and provides good procedures for carrying out a service-
learning program. First of all, the authors suggest starting early by contacting agencies at
least a month before the beginning of the class and working with each agency to define
two or three projects. Next, they suggest introducing the project on the first day of class
and having students commit to one of the projects by the third week. The next step
involves having the students investigate the agency, collect publications from the
organization, and read information on the group. Following research on the agency,
students interview the contact person supervising their project. A community writing
project agreement is then drafted along with a reflection essay on the interview and
progress in the project. Finally, the project is developed and presented to the
organization.

In Hutchinson’s (2005) model, a similar procedure was followed. At the
beginning of the semester, goals and objectives of the course were discussed, and a range
of projects were recommended for the course. After this had been accomplished, students
made contacts with community-based partners early and then sent follow-up letters to the
organizations. Next, students worked in groups to learn about the organization, identified
appropriate projects, and wrote a proposal. Finally, a service-learning project was created
and given to the agency. Success of the program was attributed to the strong connections
between the faculty and community as well as students who were engaged with the
organization. Once students understood the holistic needs of the agency, its mission, and its role in addressing community needs, an appropriate project could be developed.

Cooper and Julier (1995) adapted Watters and Ford’s model to fit their program at the Writing Center at Michigan University. Their course, known as the Service-Learning Writing Project (SLWP) is a unique course where students study and write about public life in America while completing writing projects for public service agencies. The goals of the program seek to help students “become more effective writers and more thoughtful, critically literate citizens better equipped to meet the challenges and responsibilities of civic life” (p.8). The authors believe that service-learning assignments support effective writing pedagogies by linking field work and academic research, producing meaningful projects for authentic audiences, providing collaborative learning and peer editing, encouraging student responsibility in the research and writing process, helping students to write across academic disciplines, and advancing higher order academic discourse skills.

In the Writing in the Public Interest: Service-Learning and the Writing Classroom resource guide, a rationale for their program is provided for two different courses on civic traditions in America and Public Life in America. A detailed curriculum with weekly instructions and assignments, guidelines for the service-learning writing projects, and worksheets from Watters and Ford (1995) provide assignments for developing, assessing, and reflecting on the project. This course is well organized but primarily geared toward developing civic literacy and not designed for an academic writing course.

Hugg and Wurdinger (2007) developed a model termed The Partnership for Learning Model which was constructed to combine theory with direct experiences so that educational experiences are more meaningful. PFLM uses a variety of methods such as
the following: Project-Based Learning, Problem-Based Learning, Applied Learning, Practical Skills/Life Skills Training, Service-Learning, Authentic Learning, and Action Orientation. This model assumes that students must be prepared to learn and participate in their learning environment in order to excel; therefore, meaningful education must be connected with other parts of the students’ life experiences. Hugg and Wurdinger believe that a disconnection with theory and practice will result in limited understandings of theory and practice; therefore, students must have experiences that allow them to apply theory, spend time in reflection, and then apply their learning to future experiences.

The Partnership for Learning Model model of learning allows groups of three to four students to choose a professional project from the real world. Students learn about the projects by reading short paragraphs that provide a description of the project. Each team is responsible for delivering an acceptable project to the organization. The teams meet with the organization to get more information about the project and then later critically analyze the components through inquiry. During each class session, brief status reports were given, which produced a number of benefits. Students learned how to work in teams, communicate, and develop leadership skills.

The Partnership for Learning Model’s pedagogical premise is centered on small groups and the marriage of content to context. Homework prepared students for class sessions and a final project report and presentation were the culminating benchmarks. Partnering with the community allowed overworked customers to receive help from an outside source. Instructors tended to operate less like instructors and more like facilitators while students tended to bond professionally to the customers. In the end, the students, agencies, and faculty experienced satisfaction during the process.
Findings from Hugg and Wurdinger indicated that students desired to take another course like the Partnership for Learning Model and continue working on community projects. Students felt the course was meaningful because they contributed in a real way and found rewards not only in the process but also in the results. Finally, through facing and solving real world problems, students were able to actually experience working through the concepts in order to formulate solutions, thus growing in their critical thinking skills.

Success in service-learning programs appears to be the result of adequately preparing students, maintaining good communication with the organizations, providing opportunities to solve real world issues, encouraging the creation of meaningful projects, and allowing individuals to choose an organization along with a corresponding project. Wittmer (2004) concurs with the importance of student choice. In Wittmer’s study, a review of a variety of service-learning courses revealed that student choice was the key component for success was student choice. As a result, Wittmer found that allowing students to choose the organization and activities helped ensure program success as well. Clearly, choice must be a key component for the remaining desirable components to come to fruition.

Although each of the service-learning programs achieved success in the situated setting, transference to other institutions of higher education is not readily achieved. Each college or university writing program has specific learning outcomes, unique student populations, and variances in the surrounding community. Service-learning programs must be adapted to accommodate such environments, requiring introspective planning and adjustments. At the target college, reflective preparation in designing a curriculum that can create meaningful experiences for students who are carrying out a sophisticated
research project can be achieved through a service-learning initiative that effectively fulfills the learning outcomes of the program.

A Service-Learning Model for the College

At the target college, the first year writing program was developed to engage students in “civic deliberations that ask them to consider their future roles as professionals and citizens of the wider community through the lens of their present role as academics” (Delli-Carpini, in press). The program was developed to legitimize academic research and writing as preparation for public writing. In essence, public writing is viewed as the culmination of academic research. This program seeks to prepare students for their current and future work as citizens through strategies that develop academic research skills as well as help them learn how to deliver their productions to a public sphere. A highlight of this program is that it works to help students transfer higher order academic habits through research and writing to their role as active citizens. To accomplish this, students share their projects with organizations, which can enhance students’ engagement in the process.

Knowing that interactions with organizations tend to improve engagement provides a sound reason for using service-learning in the existing writing course. However, it is unclear whether a service-learning model would improve upon the current model at the target college. Therefore, measuring the perceptions of students who have participated in a service-learning component would be necessary. Comparing academic writing courses that incorporate a service-learning component with academic writing courses that do not employ a service component could specifically determine significant differences between the two strategies.
Benefits of Service-Learning

Many benefits of incorporating a service-learning component into a course in higher education are found in the existing literature. Overall, studies seem to suggest that by interlocking service-learning and writing, a symbiotic relationship occurs because firsthand experience and observation stimulates research while the research amplifies students’ understanding of societal issues raised from their community involvement. Along with increased awareness and focused research skills comes the satisfaction of giving. Watters and Ford (1995) state that students learn to give while actively learning, which results in giving students a stake in writing because they are seeking to communicate information and ideas to a wider audience. According to Watters and Ford, such actions require students to invest more energy into their writing and spend more time in critical reflections. However, a number of other benefits result from service-learning that deserve attention.

For years, educators have understood the value of experiential education in its ability to make learning become meaningful and real for students. One of the benefits of service-learning, however, is that not only do the benefits bloom in academic forms, but the experiential component of service-learning also builds many competencies in students that go beyond academic learning to include leadership, communication, and organizational skills (Carter, 1995). According to Carter, the experiential aspect of service-learning also allows students to become more effective change agents, develop their sense of belonging in the communities, and build student competence. Certainly incorporating strategies that encourage growth in areas other than learning outcomes would have holistic value for students.
In composition courses, conducting an audience analysis by determining readers' needs, values, and attitudes is an important goal. Too often, students envision a singular audience for their academic essays—that of the solitary teacher. Writing in this fashion only works to fulfill the purpose of pleasing one person for a grade. However, with service-learning, writing becomes more meaningful because there is a real world audience (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans & Meyer-Gonclaves, 1998; Dobrin & Weisser, 2002; Eble & Gaillet, 2004; Flower, 1998; Hafer, 1999; 2004; Watters & Ford, 1995; Yancey, 2004). Service-learning writing also employs the skills of audience analysis that require deep thinking about relevancy in terms of language and material (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003). Audiences in a service-learning course often include the peers within the classroom as well as the audiences outside the classroom. By using service-learning in a composition course, students can understand the importance for writing to varied audiences and different discourse communities outside the confines of their classroom (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Watters & Ford, 1995). Dobrin and Weisser have described this situation well:

Students can find public outlets for their writing; teachers can begin to explore broader definitions of publication so that they might direct their students to a variety of public places for their writing. Encouraging students to produce written work that reaches readers beyond their classrooms encourages students to value their own writing as part of larger, public conversations (p.583).

Another benefit of service writing is that it provides the opportunity for a real rhetorical analysis that creates an authentic purpose for writing (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997; Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Arca, 2005; Bacon, 1997; Brack, G. & Hall, 2005; Dobrin & Weisser, 2002; Dorman & Dorman, 2005; Flower, 1998; Hafer, 1999; Heilker,
Getting students out into the community face to face with bona fide issues gives them a valid reason to learn the subject matter of the topic they are exploring. Digging in the trenches will present opportunities for students to network with individuals who share common interests, and through these interactions, social connections can be formed along with unique occasions for new types of communication (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997). Once students begin to deal with genuine problems embedded in the community, they can conduct real research to uncover solutions.

Through service in the community, students become exposed to new people and environments that can increase their social awareness, civic awareness, and civic responsibility (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997; Arca, 2005; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans & Meyer-Gonclaves, 1998; Dorman, & Dorman, 2005; Eble & Gaillet, 2004; Hafer, 1999; Herzberg, 1994; Himley, 2004). Crossing borders into different communities strengthens students’ abilities to better understand the world, improve their ability to communicate in different communities, and to feel comfortable operating outside the college walls. Herzberg has stated that service-learning generates a social consciousness and a responsibility to help others. Deans and Meyer-Gonclaves use service-learning opportunities to discuss issues about democracy and justice and their relationship to concepts of service and community.

In addition to building social and civic awareness, engaging in service-learning projects encourages students to reflect on the social conditions in order for them to consider solutions to problems and changes that need to take place. Going into the communities can bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world while helping to establish community relationships that bring benefits to all stakeholders—students,
universities, and the surrounding communities (Eble & Gaillet, 2004). Through these interactions, “real world” writing occurs and an understanding of the function of literacy as a way of acting in the world takes root (Deans and Goncalves, 1998). The context of situating writing in the real world allows for significant learning because students are given the chance to solve real world problems (Watters & Ford, 1995).

A number of studies claim that the solving of real world problems results in learner satisfaction. Students who are satisfied will complete tasks that bring gratification and avoid those tasks that do not, especially when no clear benefit can be seen from the experience (Bartholomew, 2007). Perhaps the success of service-learning programs is due to the benefits students gain from the activities. In Hugg and Wurdinger’s (2007) study on service-learning they found that eighty-seven percent of the students found the service-learning course more satisfying than their internship experience. Why was this so? Students felt the course was more meaningful because they contributed in a real way and found that not only were rewards enjoyed in the process, but gratification was also experienced in the results. Finally, through facing and solving real world problems, students were able to fully learn new concepts and grow in their critical thinking abilities since they experienced connecting the process with the results. However, although these studies are good ones, measurements of student satisfaction were based on descriptive statistics, so it is unclear whether students are more satisfied completing a service-learning project than students who are taking a similar course without the service-learning component. This is an area that should be confirmed through a study that compares student satisfaction between these two different types of courses.

Other benefits of service-learning cross the spectrum to include improved student retention. Service-learning activities assist students in feeling more connected to the
community in which the college resides. For college students who are learning to transition to a new community, service-learning can help them become fuller participants in a larger social world (Brack & Hall, 2005; Watters & Ford, 1995). Arca (2005) found that community service writing aided students in understanding the nature of what service is along with their individual roles in the world. This experience can open students’ minds because, “They begin to understand the symbiotic nature of service and its capacity to give power to those who serve” (Arca, 2005, p.141). Finally, when students become tied to an organization related to their future profession, they can become more connected to their future careers.

The non-traditional nature of service learning lends itself to more student involvement in which students tend to take pride in their final projects, and service-learning can reduce incidents of plagiarism. Many instructors who work a component of service learning into their courses find that students really enjoy this kind of learning experience (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Adler-Kassner et al., 1997; Bacon, 1997; Herzberg, 1994) In Adler-Kassner and Estrem’s model, a “Celebration of Student Writing” took place where students displayed their work at the end of the semester in a public forum. With such an emphasis on creative applications, plagiarism became less of a concern. Perhaps knowing that their projects would be on display to all their peers motivated students even further to do a good job on their projects.

Classrooms that incorporate service-learning as part of a course generally use collaborative activities as part of the structure of the course (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans, 1997; Dorman & Dorman, 2005; Flower, 1998; Herzberg, 1994). Years ago, Vygotsky (1978) brought to light the integral role that collaboration and social interactions play in learning. Today, Vygotsky’s theories on the
importance of collaborative learning have found fertile ground on college campuses. Currently, collaboration is generally desired for institutions of higher learning in order to improve knowledge acquisition and learning. Given the social predisposition of human beings, much of what students remember and learn is through their conversations with others because dialogue transforms learning (Carnell, 2007). Therefore, creating dynamic contexts for dialogue through service-learning activities makes sense.

Learning outcomes in an academic writing course have the potential to be met through a service-learning strategy. The procedure for service-learning programs generally involves research and the writing of academic papers that fit the unique goals of a class (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997; Amare, 2007; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans, 1997; Dorman & Dorman, 2005; Flower, 1998; Hafer, 1999; Hutchinson, 2005; Peck et al., 1995; Wittmer, 2004). Some service learning programs require academic papers to accompany their projects. Through such a process, an added-value element that makes a genuine contribution to a community can strengthen the applicability of a solitary research paper (Bacon, 1997).

Finally, service-learning strategies tend to engage students and to increase their motivation for learning (Adler-Kassner et al., Amare & Grettano, 2006; 1997; Arca, 2005; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Dorman & Dorman, 2005; Flower, 1998; Hutchinson, 2005; National Commission on Service Learning, 2002). At the target college, motivating and engaging students is an important goal in the academic writing course. Students at the target college are often hesitant to engage in discourse and seem to lack motivation in completing assignments. Since engaged learners are intrinsically motivated by curiosity, interest, and enjoyment, they will more likely want to achieve their goals (Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006). If service-learning is a powerful strategy, then
incorporating a service-learning component into an academic writing course would seem like a logical solution. Nevertheless, the existing literature has not used control groups in measuring perceived effectiveness of this strategy. Therefore, a question that needs to be asked involves the following query: “Will a service-learning component yield better achievement of student outcomes and more positive student perceptions than a course that does not incorporate a service-learning initiative?”

Weaknesses in the Theoretical Framework of Service-Learning

Although the literature appears optimistic about the benefits of service learning, there are problems with its underpinnings. Despite the positive reviews on the part of those who have engaged in service-learning projects, hard empirical evidence is missing to support this premise. Most of the existing studies have focused on qualitative features without the benefit of experimental designs. To truly verify the effectiveness of service-learning, qualitative evidence must also be verified with quantitative findings. Determining the effectiveness of such strategies is one major area that needs exploration.

Claims about the benefits of service-learning need to go beyond reflections of practitioners—experimental evidence needs to substantiate the claims. Without empirical investigations, the strength of this theory is weakened. At the present time, few experimental studies have explored this aspect of service-learning in college academic writing courses. Few empirical studies can be found in the literature, and those that do exist are often in other disciplines, such as the one conducted by Wittmer (2004) for business major students. In this study, only descriptive statistics were provided, and these findings focused on the effects of the perspectives of students as a result of their service-learning work. The literature on service-learning has attested to this weakness in empirical studies. Wittmer conducted this study because he claimed that, “… there has
been little empirical data collected in terms of the value and impact on students” (p. 360). Clearly a gap between theory and research exists on correlations that exist for college writing courses and service-learning.

Second, a look at the literature also reveals that the evidence about the benefits of service learning is largely anecdotal (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997). Even with the anecdotal records that exist, composition and service-learning are relatively under-theorized (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997). Deans (1997) also concurs and has found that there is little research available in service-learning. Although these authors made these claims in 1997, there has been little accomplished in verifying service-learning’s effectiveness over the past decade. As a result, the efficacy of these programs is reduced to the perspectives of instructors. These findings could be clouded since teachers in the studies tend to support service-learning, and their positive attitudes about service-learning could influence the results. Instructors’ claims about improved engagement, motivation, and satisfaction need an empirical foundation that uses control groups to measure differences between service-learning classrooms and traditional ones.

Third, since the vast majority of the literature on service-learning in composition emanates from qualitative studies, a need exists for more empirical studies to be conducted in composition courses that employ service-learning. Smith & Martin (2007), editors of Recent Dissertations on Service and Service-Learning Topics Volume IV, stated that only five studies were conducted in composition between the years of 2004-2006, and of those studies, none were empirical ones. A lack of experimental studies weakens the claims of service-learning proponents, and for service-learning programs to claim positive outcomes from this pedagogical strategy, empirical evidence is necessary to substantiate those claims.
Fourth, service-learning projects require a great deal of planning and collaboration between students, instructors, and recipients. These collaborative connections require time and effort and are considered to be one of the most difficult projects to undertake (Henson & Sutliff, 1998). College instructors lead busy lives and have a hard enough time trying to meet the competing demands placed upon their time. Developing, producing, and managing service-learning projects can be quite challenging because students have to analyze the organization and target audience as well as adapt to the organization’s values and discourse conventions (Scott, 2004). These are time-consuming tasks that leave little time for reflection, an important component in a service-learning course (Anson, 2005). Challenging tasks also exist for instructors as they try to find sponsors, give guidance to their projects, discuss a variety of genres and conventions, and evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of their work in relation to the parent organization. For instructors to take on the labor-intensive task of service learning, the benefits would need to far outweigh the obstacles for them to consider its practice.

Research that addresses these issues is lacking in the literature.

Finally, there is concern that learning outcomes in composition courses may not adequately be met by integrating service-learning with composition (McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007). These authors maintain that instructors must do a balancing act between content area and service, and they frequently experience difficulty in integrating and assessing the impact of service-learning on their courses. It appears that understanding how to align learning outcomes with service-learning initiatives needs refinement. To improve understanding of this alignment, McGarrell suggests that research on grounded theory needs to take place by studying service-learning courses that successfully integrate service within a composition course. At the present time, grounded theory in this area
seems to be missing from the literature. In essence, instructors need to feel assured that learning outcomes can be adequately met through service-learning.

These issues incite a number of questions. How do the students really feel about service-learning? Will students who participate in a course that has a service-learning element be more motivated, engaged, and satisfied than students who do not have a service-learning requirement in their course? Can anecdotal claims be verified through empirical investigations? Is it worth the extra work to graft a service-learning component into a first-year composition course? Does having a service-learning requirement align with learning outcomes and possibly improve those outcomes?

This study supplies an experimental component to determine if service-learning strategies are significantly effective and if students perceive these strategies as motivating, engaging, and satisfying. By conducting experimental studies, an understanding of the strength of the relationship between service-learning and composition outcomes can also add to the existing body of knowledge. This investigation seeks to use an experimental design that compares classes where a service learning component is required to classes where it is not required.

For the college, better understanding about factors that influence motivation and engagement is desired because freshmen students are often hesitant to actively engage in discussions. Building on this knowledge may possibly direct needed changes in the structure of the course that could promote dynamic interaction between students and the materials, other students, and the community. Since writing involves active construction of knowledge, it is important to keep students motivated and engaged on an individual and group basis. By considering the perspectives of students who are engaging in this type of learning, new insights could be gained in this area.
Understanding students’ perceptions and attitudes about a course is important because mismatched conceptions can lead to difficulties within the classroom (Carnell, 2007). Knowing what students think about teaching practices can help educators know what constitutes effective teaching so that instructors can adapt their methods to improve instruction. Furthermore, it can also help Writing Program Administrators make decisions concerning program and curricula designs and assess the effectiveness of their models. Carnell has stated that there needs to be a bridge between teachers’ understanding and student learning. Administering an experimental component is a good first step to determining the effectiveness of service-learning.

Summary

A study of the literature suggests that incorporating service-learning into a course has numerous positive outcomes. Evidence has been provided to justify how service-learning fits into a sound theoretical support structure. The instructional paradigm of constructivism is quite evident in service-learning because the nature of this strategy ensures that students must actively participate in the construction of knowledge. One cannot help but form new understandings about topics that have been researched when he or she must apply and integrate that knowledge through a service-learning project. Constructivist approaches have been shown to bear a sound conceptual framework due to their capacity to build knowledge, skills, and ideas that have personal meaning for students and assist them in formulating new meanings.

The role of problem-solving as a constructivist strategy was found to be congruent with the intended outcomes of an academic writing course. Research has shown that composition students who participate in problem-solving activities generally experience overall satisfaction in a course, are able to define a rhetorical problem, and learn to write
for different purposes, audiences, perspectives, and disciplines. Finally, student engagement and participation appear to be strong in a project-based learning environment. As a result, using problem-solving approaches or inquiries should be a component of writing courses.

Setting up classrooms as communities of learning has a number of advantages that enhance learning. Communities of learning have the potential to dynamically engage students, promote active participation, enhance collaboration, improve motivation, foster learning, celebrate individual differences, encourage responsibility, incite the sharing of information, depend on dialogue, focus on learning inquiry, and extend to communities outside the college. With such a wide range of positive outcomes for setting up classrooms as communities of learners, courses that contain a service-learning component typically create learning communities as part of the structure of the course.

Certain features are essential in a college writing course. For a writing course to be successful, creation of real rhetorical situations, development of audience awareness, and exploration of real-world problems must take place. Students must view writing actions as relevant in order to motivate them to craft worthy written documents. Studies have suggested that incorporating constructivist practices along with a problem-solving component into a service-learning course can help writing become more powerful and meaningful for students. Nonetheless, it is unclear if the service-learning component helps students to achieve the learning outcomes for a course better than courses that do not incorporate a service-learning component.

A discussion of how well a service-learning component can fit into an academic writing course and meet the requirements for a constructivist structure along with the goals for academic writing has been presented. The literature has shown through
anecdotal records and qualitative assessments that service learning claims to achieve the following aims: help students develop an expanded understanding of audience; provide purpose and meaning to the research and writing process; create authentic learning from real-world complexities; grant a greater sense of responsibility and accountability; possibly improve retention rates for students due to more classroom community involvement; make concealing failure more difficult since results are visible to all; assist students in becoming fuller participants in larger social systems; bridge people together with common causes and bonds; promote communication, which is vital in a freshman college classroom; forge a connection to the community; create research skills of lasting value that can also carry over to other disciplines and future research work; connect the college with the community; and span social boundaries. These all appear to be remarkable outcomes from service-learning proponents, but again, anecdotal evidence should be backed up with empirical measures to corroborate such claims.

Discovering strategies that effectively engage and motivate students, lead to satisfaction with the final product, build academic writing skills, help students construct knowledge, employ rhetorical devices, meet learning outcomes, and create a quality alternative genre project simultaneously presents a challenge in an academic writing course. The best rhetorical writing will certainly emanate from a course that is able to fulfill these objectives. However, there is a gap in the literature in that quantitative measures are virtually absent in substantiating claims on outcomes from service-learning. There is a need for empirical methods that can determine whether service-learning students view service-learning courses more positively than students who are not in a service-learning course and whether service-learning students can achieve learning outcomes than their counterparts.
Can a service-learning component help achieve these goals? Will choosing a project and organization, which gives a focus for an intended audience, before conducting research produce better research and academic essays? By using empirical research to investigate these questions, more understanding of the theoretical posturing of service-learning can add to the body of knowledge concerned with understanding the value and impact of a service-learning requirement for students.

Chapter Three outlines a methodology to examine service-learning and traditional academic writing courses in an effort to determine if significant differences exist between the two methods in the areas of student perceptions and the achievement of learning outcomes embedded within the course.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participated in a service-learning program and students who had not participated in a service-learning program in the areas of engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. Additionally, this study sought to determine if there was a significant difference between the achievement of learning outcomes in the academic essays of students who participated in a service-learning program and students who did not participate in a service-learning program. The general perspective, research design, research context, the participants in the study, the procedures used, and the analyses of the data are detailed in this chapter.

The General Perspective

This quantitative study analyzed two types of collected data that included the following: (a) a comparison between the perceptions of students who participated in a service-learning program and the perceptions of students who did not complete a service-learning project and (b) evaluations of the achievement of learning outcomes in their academic essays that included the students who participated in a service-learning program and the students who did not complete a service-learning component. Data on student perceptions was collected the last two weeks of the semester using the Service-Learning Student Perceptions Likert Scale developed by this researcher. Evaluations of student papers took place one week after the close of the semester. The evaluation instrument employed was an assessment rubric developed by the Writing Program Administrator, which was based on the National Council of Teachers of English WPA
Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 1999). After the collection of data from both projects, the following statistical analyses were performed: the mean, $t$-tests for equality of means, and Cohen’s $d$ for effect size.

This study compared the two scores for each area and sought to answer the following questions:

Are the research papers written by students who completed a service-learning component significantly better than the research papers written by students who did not complete a service-learning component?

Is there a significant difference in student engagement, satisfaction, and motivation between students who incorporated a service-learning component and students who did not incorporate a service-learning component?

**Research Design**

To carry out the objectives of this study, a quasi-experimental design with static group comparison was required. Since randomization of subjects was not possible in this college setting, a quasi-experimental design made good sense. However, even though random assignment for subjects could not take place, classes for this study were selected from all five days of the week in both morning and afternoon sessions in order to cover the range of days and times available for college students’ schedules. Additionally, it should be noted that random selection of student essays was employed, improving the internal validity of the assessment of the learning outcomes. At any rate, employing experimental and control groups added a new type of empiricism to previous studies conducted in service-learning.
Static group comparisons worked well for this study since intact, existing groups were available at the college. Although there was no way to ensure complete equivalence of the groups, care was taken to ensure that instructors who participated in the study had demonstrated equal effectiveness in their instruction. Despite the lack of true randomization, this design was strengthened by the large number of subjects who participated, its ability to gather a hefty amount of data on attitudes, and the study’s capacity to provide a foundation for exploratory research. To add further insight on the results as well as strength to the study’s results, an analysis of student responses from their reflective essays was conducted in order to establish corroboration between the empirical and qualitative results of the study.

Research Context

This study took place at four-year private, comprehensive college in a moderately-sized city in South Central Pennsylvania. The college was founded as an academy which began in 1787 as a center for providing classical studies and the fine arts. In 1929, it merged with another institution and became a junior college in the downtown area of the city. After a period of steady growth, the college outgrew its facilities and moved to its present fifty-seven acre campus. At this point, the junior college extended its curriculum in order to provide bachelor’s degree programs, and it became a college in 1968.

For over the last thirty-five years, the college has continued to grow as a center for learning, scholarship, public service, and cultural affairs. Expanded programs grew considerably to include master’s degree programs as well. The college prides itself on emphasizing teaching excellence and the large number of students who live on campus to preserve a true collegiate atmosphere where professionalism is embodied. Approximately
4,600 undergraduate students enrolled in the college for the year 2008-2009, and the average class size for most classes is twenty-one students. There are no graduate teaching assistants at the college and all classes are taught solely by the professors.

The freshman class tends to be homogenous in ethnicity, political viewpoints, and general area of permanent residence. Little variability in gender exists in the freshman class as fifty-one percent are female and forty-nine percent are male. Forty-four percent of the freshman class describe themselves as moderately religious, and half of the student population espouses the “middle of the road” position in regard to political orientation. The majority of the students are Caucasian, comprising eighty-six percent of the student body. Six percent of the students are labeled as “other ethnic backgrounds” where three percent are African Americans, two percent are Hispanic, and the remaining one percent is a combination Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and International Alien. Most of the students live fairly close to the college, with sixty-five percent of the population’s permanent residence within one hundred miles of the college and ninety-eight percent whose permanent home is less than five hundred miles from the campus. In the student population of the service-learning groups, only three students’ permanent residence was from the city surrounding the college.

In the humanities department, the WPA developed a new writing course in the 2007-2008 academic year in which traditional academic research was integrated with student engagement in civic deliberations as they considered their future roles as professionals and citizens (Delli-Carpini, in press). As part of the learning outcomes, students are required to conduct a research query that leads to the development of a paper written in an academic format for the classroom community, which is later transformed into a new form that can be shared publicly. In other words, students must apply the
information compiled from their academic essay and translate it into a public form or argument, known as an alternative genre, that is uniquely suited for the chosen rhetorical situation.

The final alternative genre must be shared with a wider audience and serve a public purpose. As a result of this process, Delli-Carpini suggests that students learn to connect their academic learning with civic obligations. Leadership in this department is supportive of new ideas that can improve the quality of the program and student academic writing skills. Several meetings were held throughout the academic year to discuss strategies and methods shown to improve the attainment of learning outcomes.

According to the Writing Program Assessment Report of 2007-2008 (Delli-Carpini, 2008), instructors have been largely successful in carrying out the objectives in this program. However, challenges in the program still existed, and some of the areas of concern voiced by instructors included the following items: students need guidance to find appropriate, reasonable research topics that motivate them because suitable topics are the key to conducting solid research; efforts to curb plagiarism need to be taken as some students are still turning in papers with plagiarized work; students need to go into depth with their research to avoid settling for superficial findings; some students lack strong motivation to investigate new topics and instead avoid challenging subjects in favor of more simple, familiar topics; and effective measures should be taken to help students try to address topics tied to major or career interests as many students require help on considering how to find topics related to their major. In summary, the report stated a need for continued development for the academic writing curriculum and the development and implementation of a direct measures system of assessing student writing.
With these concerns in mind, this researcher worked to make improvements to the alternative genre project in an attempt to find methods that improve the quality of students’ academic essays and enhance on-going improvements within the academic writing program. Additionally, efforts to improve retention are a concern at the college, so if strategies seem to improve engagement, motivation, and satisfaction with courses, then identification of these methods would be of interest to those who work in administration. This author also desired to promote a dynamic interaction between students and the materials, other students, and the community. Since writing involves active construction of knowledge, it is important to keep students motivated and engaged on an individual and group basis. It was believed that using a problem-based learning approach within a service-learning model could achieve this goal.

Research has shown that service-learning programs offer a means of achieving civic engagement, meaningful genres to share, and an introduction into specified career paths. Additionally, service-learning studies have suggested that students who participate in service-learning programs are more engaged, motivated, and satisfied, although most of these findings are based on anecdotal records. In order to begin developing a model for a quantitative study, a service-learning pilot program was developed in the fall semester of 2008 that was intended to test whether a service-learning component would improve student engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and academic writing skills.

Although engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and writing skills appeared to improve in this pilot study, it was discovered that some students still struggled with finding appropriate venues with which to share their service-learning projects while others lacked confidence to make public contacts in which to share their products. In essence, it appeared that students needed to focus on the final alternative genre project
first and receive more guidance on how to publicly share their work because some of the alternative genres were not strongly linked to their research paper. For some students, the alternative genre almost served as an afterthought instead of an extension of their research paper. Additionally, many students continued to lack direction in their career goals and needed to begin trying various options available in their major in order to discover if their intended major fit with their interests and skills. If students could begin to become involved in their future professions, they might be able to gain a sense of empowerment in civic engagement. With this goal in mind, a more structured service-learning course was designed for the 2009 spring semester to enable students to become more involved in their major with the belief that they would not only be better engaged, motivated, and satisfied, but be able to write better academic essays than students taking the traditional academic writing course.

Statement of Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in the area of Engagement as measured by the Service-Learning Student Perceptions Likert Scale.

2. There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in the area of Satisfaction as measured by the Service-Learning Student Perceptions Likert Scale.

3. There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in the area of Motivation as measured by the Service-
Learning Student Perceptions Likert Scale.

4. There will be a significant difference between the achievement of learning outcomes in the academic essays of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program as measured by the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, which is an adaptation of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.

The Research Subjects

Sample students at the college who were enrolled in the academic writing course comprised the subjects in this study. Students enrolled in the course either met three times per week in fifty-minute classes or twice a week in seventy-five-minute sessions. The cap for class size for all academic writing classes is seventeen students, and students chose courses on their own for the spring semester. This course is a required general education course as well as the second course in the general education composition sequence.

Subjects who participated in the Likert scale were from both experimental and control groups. Six classes were in the experimental group with two instructors teaching three courses each. The first instructor taught the course three days a week for fifty minutes for each class. In the three day format, a Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule, classes were taught in the morning at 8:00, 9:00, and 11:00. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the second instructor taught the courses in the afternoon at 12:30, 2:00, and 3:30. Thus, in the experimental group, both morning and afternoon classes and all five instructional days were included in the study.

Six classes in the control group were also part of the study. The WPA chose seven instructors who were of equal caliber to the two instructors in the experimental group. To
determine instructors who were equivalent to the service-learning instructors, the WPA used his knowledge of the instructors’ skills based on his classroom observations and the end of year assessment forms completed by students in previous academic writing courses. Out of the seven instructors who were asked to participate, six voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. On the Tuesday-Thursday schedule, two instructors taught a morning class at 9:30, another two instructors taught an afternoon class at 2:00, and one instructor taught an afternoon course at 3:30. Only one instructor taught a Monday-Wednesday-Friday course, which took place at 9:00 in the morning. Again, a variety of times in the course offerings served to include both morning and afternoon courses as well as all five days of the week.

In both the experimental and control groups, 88 subjects completed the Likert scale. Nearly equal amounts of males and females comprised the experimental group, with 43 females and 45 males. Except for one Hispanic and seven African Americans, the rest of the students were white. The majority of the students were freshmen, but five sophomores and four juniors were included in the sample.

For the control group, genders were also nearly even, and there were 45 females and 43 males. Again, the student population consisted primarily of white subjects, but there were also three Asians, one Filipino, and five African Americans. Class rank was dominated by freshmen students with eight sophomores and one junior in this group. As a whole, the groups were evenly distributed with an equal number of gender groups and similar compositions of ethnic groups and class ranks.

Academic essays that were included in the writing assessment were randomly selected from both the experimental and control groups. To randomly select the essays, these essays were sent to this researcher from the instructors of both the control and
experimental groups. Each paper was coded and given a number in the order that the paper was received. After all the papers had been collected, every fourth paper was chosen, starting with the fifth paper, until twenty-six papers had been selected from both groups. Identifying information was removed from the papers, and then the 52 papers were burned on a CD and given to the WPA.

Again, equal numbers of essays written by male and female writers were somewhat evenly distributed with 14 females and 12 males in the experimental group and 12 females and 14 males in the control group. In both groups, students of Caucasian descent wrote the majority of the papers; however, some representation from other ethnic groups was included in sample papers. The ethnic groups included in the sample encompassed one Hispanic and one African American in the experimental group while one Asian and two African Americans were found in the control group. Class rankings varied slightly in the two groups as the experimental group papers were all written by freshman except for one paper that was written by a sophomore, but the control group papers were written entirely by freshman except for two papers penned by sophomores and one paper composed by a junior student. However, the difference between the class rankings is insignificant and should not skew the results in this study.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

Two types of instruments were used to measure the results of this study. The first Instrument, Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales, was a Likert scale constructed by the researcher that served to survey student perceptions of the academic writing course. Using a Likert scale would provide a quantitative measurement for the abstract variables of student perceptions. For the second instrument, the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric was designed by the WPA to assess student mastery of learning
outcomes in order to provide an accurate measure of student achievement of learning outcomes for program assessment. A discussion of the contents and formulation of each measurement will follow.

Construction of the scale followed the guidelines set forth by DeCoster (2005). To begin construction, this researcher took the three main components of the course that included areas concerning the actual research paper, project, and community learning, and then wrote statements about perceptions in engagement, motivation, and satisfaction that were based on the learning outcomes. Great effort was made to keep the statements simple, clear, unbiased, and similar in structure. Statements for each component were written with half of the items posed in a positive nature and the other half stated in a negative fashion. Seven response options were made available to improve reliability of the scale. These responses included the options of not at all, somewhat, and very much with the values ranging from 1 for the not at all rating to 7 for the rating of very much on the positively stated items. For the negatively stated items, the scores were reversed with a score of 1 for the very much rating and 7 for the not at all rating.

The pretest version of the researcher-constructed survey instrument was constructed of 72 items in a Likert scale format that asked questions in regard to perceptions of engagement, motivation, and satisfaction in the course. Each statement centered on the student’s perception of learning outcomes. For instance, one question asked, “I was motivated to find relevant sources about my research topic.” Twenty-four items were created for each construct, and each of those items was interchangeable so that the response to one perception would have the same meaning as to the response to another perception in a different statement (DeCoster, 2005). Interchangeable items were employed to increase the reliability of the scale.
Once the initial Likert scale was constructed, it was given to the Writing Program Administrator and the other service-learning instructor who was participating in the study. After feedback was provided on wording of the questions, the scale was administered to students who had completed the academic writing course in a previous semester. Service-learning had not been utilized in courses prior to the spring semester so the term *alternative genre* was employed as this was the language used in the academic writing courses. Furthermore, the service-learning component was taking the place of the alternative genre assignment, so once the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales had been developed, two versions were constructed with identical language except for the terms. In the control groups, the term *alternative genre* was used while the experimental scale incorporated the term *service-learning*.

In order to determine the reliability and validity of the test, a pretest version of the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales was prepared for students who had completed the academic writing course within the past year. Face validity, or evaluating whether the test is actually measuring true engagement, motivation, and satisfaction of the course, was accomplished by analyzing the learning outcomes and developing attitudinal questions surrounding the outcomes. Content validity, which is evidence based on the degree to which the items of a test cover the full scope of a concept, is generally established by logical analysis (Ary, et. al, 2006). Care was taken during test construction to use the learning outcomes as a guide for writing test questions. For instance, Learning Outcome 4 states, “You will demonstrate the ability to carry out a research plan over an extended period of time through consistent, thoughtful, and focused research. You will demonstrate that consistent and thoughtful research through annotation and summary of research materials and oral presentations to the class.” Therefore a question concerning
students’ perception about oral presentations was developed: “I enjoyed listening to my classmates’ oral presentations.”

Construct validity, which determines the extent to which the test measures student perceptions about course requirements, was more difficult to determine beforehand. However, it was noted that students in the pilot program who scored more positively on the scale by rating their courses more favorably tended to make higher grades than those students with lower ratings. Perhaps these students enjoyed the service-learning aspect and put more effort into the course. Additionally, high Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales scores would seem to suggest that the academic essays would be better written, but that determination could not occur until the program assessment had taken place after the semester had ended.

After the pretest Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales had been given to twenty students, the results were scored and checked for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha, a reliability technique that requires only a single test administration to provide a unique estimate of the reliability of a test (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Items from all three constructs of engagement, motivation, and satisfaction had been randomly placed throughout the scale, and the results of each area were evaluated using intercorrelation values generated from SPSS. The goal for the final version of the scale was to have 20 items for each construct because having more items has little impact on the scale’s reliability (DeCoster, 2005).

To reduce the number of statements from 24 to 20 items in each category, an item analysis was conducted, and four individual statements were eliminated. After removing the weakest items, Cronbach’s alpha was computed on the remaining statements. The
results shown in Table 1 reveal excellent correlations between the items in each construct since each measure was greater than .9, well above the .7 level necessary for inclusion.

Table 1: Internal Consistency of Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRONBACH’S ALPHA RESULTS OF PRETEST ACADEMIC WRITING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS SCALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measured Construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After reliability of the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales had been conducted, two scales were created. The first scale used the same items and terminology in the pilot version and employed the term *alternative genre* when referring to the final project. This scale was given to control groups near the end of the semester. In the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales, the term *service-learning* was used in place of alternative genre. Both scales can be found in Appendices A and B.

The second assessment tool was the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, designed by the Writing Program Administrator to assess student mastery of learning outcomes. This rubric was based on the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition and was designed to provide an accurate measure of student achievement of learning outcomes for program assessment. Writing instructors used this rubric to score academic essays after the semester had been completed and grades had been submitted. Ten assessment criteria formulated from the program’s learning outcomes were written to measure student attainment of course objectives. Numerical values for each outcome
were given, and this assessment tool can be viewed in Appendix C. Since these items are
more objectively based on the learning outcomes and not on perceptions, pretest
measures were not conducted on this assessment. However, during the assessment
process, sixteen papers were assessed twice in order to determine if any significant
differences existed between the two independent assessments.

Procedures Used

Before implementing this study, a review of the literature was performed on
effective instructional strategies and service-learning programs. An examination of
literature focused on methods that incorporate constructivist strategies where problem-
solving, community learning, and service-learning are integrated into academic writing
courses. The literature suggested that service-learning can effectively engage and
motivate students, lead to satisfaction with the final product, build academic writing
skills, assist students in constructing knowledge, employ rhetorical devices, and meet
learning outcomes. Since these claims largely lacked strong empirical evidence, an
empirical model was developed to investigate these claims more thoroughly.

Approval Process

In the fall, forms were sent to the Institutional Review Boards for both the college
and Liberty University. A request for permission to conduct the study was submitted
along with a description of the rationale, procedures, subjects, recruitment of subjects,
informed consent, confidentiality, risks, and benefits. After the Institutional Review
Board reviewed the request, permission to proceed with the study had been granted by
both the college and university.

Development of Course Materials

Following the dual approvals from the college and university, a WRT 202
Guidebook (See Appendix D) and the Service-Learning Recipient Informational Packet (See Appendix E) were prepared. Development of this packet was based on suggestions for implementing a service-learning project from Deans and Meyer-Gonclaves (1998) and Watters and Ford (1995). Procedures for carrying out a service-learning project were adapted from Deans and Meyer Gonclaves’s work. Specifically, students were required to personally connect with the recipients (the individuals and organizations they were serving); instructors would introduce the project on the first day of class; students would be required to make a commitment to a recipient by the third week of class; instructors would conference with students; and students would interview recipients. From the Watters and Ford model, questions from the worksheets in the book were adapted to fit the purposes of the service-learning program in the experimental groups.

The WRT 202 Guidebook included a description of the service-learning project, its relation to the learning outcomes, guidelines for completing the requirements, experiences of past students, benchmarks for assignments, and forms that need to be completed. In the Service-Learning Recipient Informational Packet, an introductory letter explaining the project was presented. Included in the packet were the requirements for participating organizations, a listing of the required student benchmarks, and the forms recipients would need to complete. Of primary importance is the Service-Learning Proposal form since this document records a description of the project, how the project will be used, ways to contact the individuals, and the number of students allowed to work on the project.

Recruitment of Participants

After these materials were prepared, gathering a list of available service-learning providers was undertaken. A meeting with the Assistant Dean in Career Services proved
to be crucial in identifying potential service-learning recipients at both the college and in
the local community. Names and contact information were provided to the researcher in
an effort to help launch this initiative. The Career Services department was very
supportive of this project and provided the researcher with 32 programs at the college and
26 local community organizations that were in close proximity to the campus.

Once a comprehensive list had been compiled that encompassed all disciplinary
fields, the data was recorded in a document in order to manage the information. Once the
contact information was recorded, emails were sent to college and community
organizations to explain the service-learning project and request their participation.
Attached to the email were the Writing 202 Guidebook and the Service-Learning
Informational Packet. If there was an interest in participating in this endeavor, then the
recipient wrote a short proposal describing the required research and desired final
product. In essence, the service-learning recipients were responsible for providing a
researchable problem that could be explored along with three or four suggestions for
developing a final project. After all the proposals had been received, the “Proposals from
Participating Organizations” (Appendix F) packet was designed. This guide listed all the
service-learning projects in the various disciplinary areas. Twenty-four disciplines were
represented along with twenty different proposals for projects. Many of the projects
involved several participants, and some proposals offered a number of options for
service.

Six experimental classes, each comprised of approximately seventeen students,
were compared with a control group that consisted of six other classes of the same size.
The experimental group was required to complete a service-learning project in place of
the alternative genre. These two groups were quite similar, but varied in two key ways.
Students in the service-learning group had direct contact with their organizations and intended audiences, which began within the first few weeks of the semester. Second, students in the service-learning group had to determine their service-learning project before beginning their research paper while the students completing the alternative genre were not required to select their projects until later on in the semester.

Students who voluntarily chose the courses taught by the service-learning professors were the experimental subjects for the study. On the first day of the course, students were informed about the service-learning requirement, given the service-learning materials, and encouraged to peruse the supplemental materials posted on Blackboard. Students who remained in the course were considered as informed and voluntary participants.

Instructors for the control groups were adjunct professors since the experimental group instructors were also adjunct professors. The researcher sent an email to the pool of seven instructors requesting participation in the study one month prior to the administration of the Likert scale. Six instructors responded and agreed to willingly participate in the study. Students taught by professors in the control group were given a choice about completing the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales, and those who participated in completing the scale were considered voluntary participants.

Research Procedure

During the fall semester, the researcher met with another instructor to discuss the possibility of participating in the study. After discussing the procedures and components of the program, the instructor eagerly agreed to participate. A few more meetings were scheduled before the actual study began to discuss methods and procedures for implementing the study. These meetings continued throughout the semester to ensure that
both groups were conducting the course in the same manner. Frequent email exchanges ensured that the experimental groups were consistent in the delivery of instruction and expectations of the course. Many of the PowerPoint presentations and notes were shared between the two instructors so that students in all six groups had access to the same information.

On the first day of class, an explanation of the service-learning component was provided, and the WRT 202 Guidebook and Proposals from Participating Organizations were given to the students. At this point, students chose an organization to work with and began collaborations with recipients in order to provide a focus for the research. Students who could not find an appropriate proposal for their major were encouraged to find their own recipient who was willing to follow the course guidelines, and a number of students followed this course of action. Development of individual proposals between students and recipients enabled students to work on projects more closely aligned with their major.

Following the selection of an organization and a proposal, students spent the first half of the semester learning how to critically read and summarize articles, write for varied audiences, locate and evaluate credible information, create a research proposal, write a literature review, give oral presentations, use mature sentence structures and language styles, employ the conventions of standard English, master APA style, and collaborate with their organization. Through interactive discussions with their organizations, students developed a research question in order to follow a problem-based format for writing. A formal proposal was written and presented to the classroom community for consideration. Once approval of the research project was accomplished, solving the problem was carried out through research, interviews, and an analysis of artifacts. Annotations from research were written and compiled in a reading and research
log that served as an organizational and research tool. Near the end of the investigation process, students began writing their research papers.

Once the research papers were written, students prepared their service-learning projects for the organizations. This step required students to focus their writing on the needs of the organization with intent to please the individuals with their projects. By serving the needs of the organization, the service-learning project created a newer incarnation of service-learning because the organization, instead of the instructor, guided the development of the projects. Frequent communication with recipients took place during the development process in order to guide students through necessary revisions. Exchanges between recipients and students continued until both parties were pleased with the final product. Following the final development of projects, students gave oral presentations to their peers. These presentations were presented in a PowerPoint format that described the research conducted and the result of their final project.

Before students were given the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales, the researcher assigned an identification code, known only by the researcher, to each student in order to ensure confidentiality. The scales and consent forms were coded and placed in legal-sized envelopes. A record of identifying student information was entered on an Excel sheet in the researcher’s computer and backed up on an external hard drive. Once student presentations were completed, the researcher administered the scales to both the experimental and control groups in order to standardize the testing procedure. Students completed two consent forms, keeping one for their records and placing one back into the envelope. Once each student had finished answering the scale, the document was also placed back inside the envelope. Each of the scales was scored by the researcher, and results were recorded.
Near the end of the semester, all instructors teaching academic writing were required to collect essays from one of their classes for a program-wide assessment. For instructors participating in the study, collection of research papers came from the same classes that completed the scales. Instructors who participated in the study emailed all of the academic essays from their class to the researcher, leaving the students’ names intact. Once the researcher received the academic essays, the papers were coded, names were removed, and essays were compiled into an electronic folder.

Probability sampling was accomplished by using systematic random sampling of the population. Systematic random sampling of the essays took place in order to select 26 papers from the experimental group and 26 from the control group. From the experimental group, 81 papers were randomly compiled in the order in which they were received. Starting at the fifth paper, every fourth paper was chosen until 26 papers were selected. For the control group, 72 papers were submitted, and the same procedure was used for selecting the sample population. Selected papers were copied onto a CD and submitted to the Writing Program Administrator for distribution on assessment day.

Approximately one week after the semester had commenced, eleven instructors voluntarily attended an assessment session at the college. Each professor was assigned approximately eleven papers in an electronic format. Instructors were asked to read the paper all the way through before filling in the assessment data in order to use a holistic assessment method. After reading the paper, assessors were to evaluate the degree to which each paper demonstrated specific traits related to course outcomes and the degree to which the outcomes of the course had been met. Instructors were discouraged from going back through the paper after reading it to assess the observable facets of the paper. Since variances in the assignments existed in the samples, professors were advised not to
take those differences into account but to rather base the assessment on the specific learning outcome listed and the degree to which is was fulfilled.

On assessment day, the researcher attended the session but did not review papers. Once instructors had completed their assessments, the researcher entered the results in an Excel spreadsheet. Sixteen papers were reviewed twice to determine if there were significant differences between reviewers. Once all of the papers were evaluated, data was entered into SPSS software to determine any significant differences between the means of the two groups. A $t$-test for independent samples was conducted to establish whether the observed statistic was equal to or less than the average value that is expected through chance alone (Ary, et al., 2006, p.189).

**Analysis of Data**

Once students completed the scales, scoring took place. The scoring process was conducted in accordance with the model provided by Ary, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006). Tabulating results on the scale required weighting of the responses. For the positively stated items, numeric values were given to the selections rated from 7 to 1 with the highest ratings respectively decreasing from favorable responses to unfavorable ones. Thus, *very much* had a rating of 7 while *not at all* was rated as 1. On the negatively stated items, the weighting was reversed with the *very much* weighted as 1 and *not at all* weighted as 7.

Next, the weights for each construct were summed for an individual’s total score. This required multiplying the total number that each category received by the weight of the value. For instance, if there were ten selected items with a value of five, one would multiply ten times five for that category. Each weight was done in the same manner, and
the sum of the totals provided the final score. A mean attitude score was then calculated by dividing the total score by the number of items.

This quantitative study required the use of a statistical software package, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0, to complete the calculations. By using SPSS, overall means of the control and experimental groups, the *t*-test for independent samples, and Cohen’s *d* were completed to determine if any significant differences existed between the groups in both the areas of perceptions and learning outcomes. Significance was based on a level of .05.

**Summary of Methodology**

This chapter explained the methods used in this quantitative study to determine if students who participate in service-learning programs were more engaged, motivated, and satisfied than those who do not participate in a service-learning program. Methods were also described on how to evaluate whether students who participated in service-learning programs wrote better academic essays than those who were not involved in a service-learning course. In this chapter a discussion of the research design, research context, participants, instruments, and data analysis was also described to present a clear picture of the methodology that took place in the study. Chapter Four will present the results obtained from both quantitative queries.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Results of Student Perceptions

As stated in Chapter One, this study sought to determine if there was a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participated in a service-learning program and students who had not participated in a service-learning program. In addition to this objective, this study aimed to discover if significant differences existed between the attainment of an adaptation of national outcomes in the academic essays of students who participated in a service-learning program and students who did not participate in a service-learning program. This chapter is organized by the hypotheses that were investigated in this study. The research study was conducted over the span of the spring semester, and data was collected in the form of Likert scales and actual research papers during the final two weeks of the semester. As stated in Chapters One and Three, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

Are the research papers written by students who completed a service-learning component significantly better than the research papers written by students who did not complete a service-learning component?

Is there a significant difference in student engagement, satisfaction, and motivation between students who incorporated a service-learning component and students who did not incorporate a service-learning component?

*Hypothesis #1*

There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in the area of Engagement as measured by the Academic Writing
Student Perceptions Scales.

For the first three hypotheses, there were 88 students in both the control and experimental groups, providing a total of 176 subjects for the study. The Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales was given over a period of one week during the last two weeks of school. All students who attended class the day the Likert scale was administered completed the survey to provide a 100% response rate. Both the alternative genre and service-learning versions of the Likert scale can be viewed in Appendices A and B. Twenty of the sixty questions asked students about their attitudes concerning course components in the area of Engagement by using a scale from 1 to 7 (See Appendices A and B).

On the scale, ten of the questions were stated in a positive fashion while the other ten were worded in a negative manner. As explained in Chapter Three, tabulating results on the scale required weighting of the responses. For the positively stated items, numeric values were given to the selections that are rated from 7 to 1 with the highest ratings respectively decreasing from favorable response to unfavorable ones. Thus, very much would have a rating of 7 while not at all would be rated as 1. On the negatively stated items, the weighting is reversed with the very much weighted as 1 and not at all weighted as 5. Table 2 lists the questions from the service-learning version and the mean scores obtained from each group.
Table 2

*Mean Scores of Service-Learning and Alternative Genre Students for Each Engagement Statement on the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Statement</th>
<th>Service-Learning Students</th>
<th>Alternative Genre Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Giving an oral presentation provided little to no inspiration to help me be more actively involved in the completion of my alternative genre.</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I was focused as I conducted my research because I knew it would help me develop my alternative genre.</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The time spent in discussing my alternative genre with my peers was meaningful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I was interested in meeting with the individuals with whom I would share my alternative genre so that I could discuss my project.</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I had little to no interest in preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I had no interest in meeting with other individuals to discuss my alternative genre.</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I had little desire to share my alternative genre with others.</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Discussions with my instructor concerning my alternative genre failed to help me maintain interest in the project.</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>5.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I put little effort into creating my alternative genre project.</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>5.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I worked hard to create an alternative genre that would please my intended audience.</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. I lacked interest in the creation of my alternative genre.</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Talking about my alternative genre project with my peers was a waste of my time.</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Discussing my alternative genre project with my instructor kept my interest in the project.</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I really wanted to share my alternative genre with others.</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I was involved in the creation of my alternative genre.</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. I did not care about creating an alternative genre that would please my intended audience.</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
52. I maintained a high level of interest when I was preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.  5.26  4.82
53. I put a great deal of effort into preparing my alternative genre.  5.83  5.34
55. Even though I knew my research was directly linked to my alternative genre project, I still had trouble focusing during the research phase.  4.95  4.50
58. I remained actively involved in working on my alternative genre because I knew I would be giving it in the oral presentation.  5.18  4.63

These patterns from the responses of students reveal that the service-learning group experienced higher levels of engagement in every area. The final results showed that individual students in the service-learning group responded to the twenty questions with a mean of 109.85 while the mean for the twenty questions in the alternative genre group was 98.99. Standard deviations for the service-learning group were 16.96 and 20.56 for the alternative genre group.

An independent samples t-test, with an alpha level set at .05, was used to determine if a significant difference in students’ perceptions of their academic writing courses existed between those who completed a service-learning course and those who completed a traditional academic writing course. As illustrated in Table 3, the results clearly indicated that there was a significant difference in Engagement, $t (174) = 3.823, p < .05$. The estimate of Cohen’s $d$ using the pooled estimate of the standard error was .6, indicating an effect size in the medium range.
Table 3

*Independent Samples t-Test for Engagement Responses by Students in the Service-Learning and Alternative Genre Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p &lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service-Learning Group</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>109.85</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>3.823</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Genre Group</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>98.99</td>
<td>20.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To understand further the differences between the groups, *t*-tests and Cohen’s *d* were calculated to detect nuances in individual items. An analysis was performed to determine specific significant differences between students’ perceptions in order to understand the way they perceived certain aspects of the course. Table 4 indicates that small significant effects in perceptions were found in students’ desire to prepare for the oral presentations, share their projects, discuss their projects with their instructor, create their projects, and discuss their projects with their peers. A larger effect difference in the responses of students was seen in the areas where the effect size was .5 and .6. Areas that demonstrated the greatest differences included the students’ ability to focus during their research and the amount of effort they put forth in creating their project to please the recipient.
Table 4

*Significant t-Test Statistics and Cohen’s d Scores of Responses in Engagement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>t-Statistic</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. I was focused as I conducted my research because I knew it would help me develop my alternative genre.</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I was interested in meeting with the individuals with whom I would share my alternative genre so that I could discuss my project.</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I had little to no interest in preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I had no interest in meeting with other individuals to discuss my alternative genre.</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I had little desire to share my alternative genre with others.</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Discussions with my instructor concerning my alternative genre failed to help me maintain interest in the project.</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I put little effort into creating my alternative genre project.</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I worked hard to create an alternative genre that would please my intended audience.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. I lacked interest in the creation of my alternative genre.</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Talking about my alternative genre project with my peers was a waste of my time.</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I really wanted to share my alternative genre with others.</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I was involved in the creation of my alternative genre.</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. I did not care about creating an alternative genre that would please my intended audience.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. I maintained a high level of interest when I was preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. I put a great deal of effort into preparing my alternative genre.</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. I remained actively involved in working on my alternative genre because I knew I would be giving it in the oral presentation.</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis #2

There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who
participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-
learning program in the area of Motivation as measured by the Academic Writing Student
Perceptions Scales.

The same 176 subjects took the Likert scale over a period of one week near the
end of the semester. Twenty of the sixty questions asked students about their attitudes
concerning course components in the area of Motivation. Table 5 lists the questions from
the service-learning survey and the mean scores obtained from each group.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Statement</th>
<th>Service-Learning Students</th>
<th>Alternative Genre Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Since I knew that I would be sharing my service-learning project with others, I was inspired to put more effort into my final project.</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Keeping the service-learning project in mind did not provide motivation for me to write my research paper.</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I was motivated to complete a well-written paper because I knew that I would be sharing my findings with others.</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I was more inspired to write my literature review because I understood its significance for my final project.</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Completing a service-learning project together with a research paper failed to inspire me to write a better paper.</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. It was difficult to take my writing assignments more seriously even though I was writing for a broader audience in addition to my instructor.</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Knowing that I would be sharing my service-learning with others did little to arouse me to put more effort into my final project.</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Creating a service-learning project motivated me to write the research paper.</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Even though I knew that I would be sharing my results with others, it did not motivate me to produce my best writing.</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>5.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I was motivated to find relevant sources about my research topic.</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. I put more effort into this course because the service-learning project gave me more motivation. 4.84 3.78

32. Pairing the service-learning requirement with the research paper actually gave me more motivation for writing a better research paper. 4.98 4.14

34. Sharing my project with others energized me to complete my research. 5.24 4.33

36. Writing for an audience in addition to my instructor encouraged me to take my writing assignments more seriously. 5.60 4.76

38. I felt the service-learning project provided an incentive for me to create a better project. 5.31 4.30

40. Determining my service-learning project beforehand provided an incentive for me as I located sources for my annotated bibliography. 5.10 3.66

47. The service-learning project fell short in providing an incentive for me to create a better project. 5.42 4.84

49. Although I knew I would be sharing my project with others, I felt that researching was an unpleasant task. 4.61 4.01

51. I lacked inspiration to write my literature review even though I knew it was important for developing my service-learning project. 5.67 4.77

54. I lacked an incentive to locate sources even though I knew how I would translate my research into my service-learning project. 5.65 5.17

Mean scores for both groups were the lowest score out of all three measures; however, the difference between the means of the service-learning group and the alternative genre group were the greatest. In the service learning group, the mean for individual students for the 20 questions that they answered was 107.60, but the mean for the alternative genre was the lowest out of all three constructs with a score of 94.25. Standard deviations for the service-learning group and the alternative genre group were 18.63 and 21.83, respectively.

To determine if significant differences existed between the groups, another independent samples t-test, with an alpha level set at .05, was calculated. The result of this t-test revealed the highest t statistic out of all three constructs. The results shown in
Table 6 clearly illustrate the significant difference between the groups in Motivation, $t(174) = 4.361, p < .05$. The estimate of Cohen’s $d$ using the pooled estimate of the standard error was also the highest at .7, indicating an effect size in the upper medium range.

Table 6

*Independent Samples t-Test for Motivation Responses by Students in the Service-Learning and Alternative Genre Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service-Learning Group</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>107.60</td>
<td>18.63</td>
<td>4.361</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Genre Group</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>94.25</td>
<td>21.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from $t$-tests and Cohen’s $d$ are given in Table 7 to show differences between responses in individual items. When compared to Engagement and Satisfaction, stronger effects are found in the Motivation responses of students as revealed by more scores in the medium to large effect sizes. Nevertheless, small effect sizes for Motivation were found in several areas. When compared to the control group, small effect sizes in Motivation occurred when students wrote their literature reviews, connected their projects with their paper, wrote for broader audiences, researched information, and located sources. Medium effect sizes emerged because students were motivated to share their project with others, their research project motivated them to create a better paper, and the broader audience motivated them while creating the project. One large effect was noted in students’ level of Motivation when writing the annotated bibliography.

Apparently, the service-learning project provided much motivation for students as they
located sources for their annotated bibliography.

Table 7

**Significant t-Test Statistics and Cohen’s d Scores of Responses in Motivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>t-Statistic</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. I was motivated to complete a well-written paper because I knew that I would be sharing my findings with others.</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I was more inspired to write my literature review because I understood its significance for my final project.</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Completing a service-learning project together with a research paper failed to inspire me to write a better paper.</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. It was difficult to take my writing assignments more seriously even though I was writing for a broader audience in addition to my instructor.</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Creating a service-learning project motivated me to write the research paper.</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Even though I knew that I would be sharing my results with others, it did not motivate me to produce my best writing.</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I put more effort into this course because the service-learning project gave me more motivation.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Pairing the service-learning requirement with the research paper actually gave me more motivation for writing a better research paper.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Sharing my project with others energized me to complete my research.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Writing for an audience in addition to my instructor encouraged me to take my writing assignments more seriously.</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I felt the service-learning project provided an incentive for me to create a better project.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Determining my service-learning project beforehand provided an incentive for me as I located sources for my annotated bibliography.</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. The service-learning project fell short in providing an incentive for me to create a better project.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Although I knew I would be sharing my project with others, I felt that researching was an unpleasant task.</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. I lacked inspiration to write my literature review even though I knew it was important for developing my service-learning project.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis #3

There will be a significant difference between the perceptions of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program in Satisfaction as measured by the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales.

Again, all 176 subjects took the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales over a period of one week, and there was a 100% response rate since all students who attended class on the day that the Likert scale was administered took the survey. Out of the sixty questions on the scale, twenty queries focused on course components in Satisfaction. Table 8 lists the questions from the attitude survey and the total scores obtained from each group.

Table 8

Mean Scores of Service-Learning and Alternative Genre Students for Each Satisfaction Statement on the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Statement</th>
<th>Service-Learning Students</th>
<th>Alternative Genre Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I was pleased with my final research paper.</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Listening to my classmate’s oral presentations was boring.</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Writing an academic paper for this course was satisfying.</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am pleased with my improvement in my academic writing abilities while taking this course</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I dreaded sharing my alternative genre project with my classmates.</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I felt that the time spent in creating my alternative genre project was a waste of time.</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I was satisfied with the final product of my academic genre project.</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>5.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. My final research paper was of poor quality.  

24. I am disappointed in the lack of improvement in my academic writing abilities while taking this class.  

29. I am content with the improvement I have made in writing academic essays.  

33. I feel dissatisfaction with my improvement in my ability to write academic essays.  

35. Completing the alternative genre project benefitted my long-term career goals.  

37. My long-term career goals were unaffected by the completion of my alternative genre project.  

41. I enjoyed listening to my classmates’ presentations.  

42. My writing skills are better because I have learned to write for a broader audience.  

44. I enjoyed sharing my alternative genre project with my peers during the oral presentations.  

56. I am dissatisfied with my writing in this course.  

57. My final academic genre project could have been better.  

59. The research paper that I wrote in this course is a better paper than others I have previously written.  

60. I believe that creating the alternative genre was a worthwhile use of my time.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean1</th>
<th>Mean2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. My final research paper was of poor quality.</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I am disappointed in the lack of improvement in my academic writing</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>5.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abilities while taking this class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I am content with the improvement I have made in writing academic</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essays.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I feel dissatisfaction with my improvement in my ability to write</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>5.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic essays.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Completing the alternative genre project benefitted my long-term</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. My long-term career goals were unaffected by the completion of my</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alternative genre project.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. I enjoyed listening to my classmates’ presentations.</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. My writing skills are better because I have learned to write for a</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broader audience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. I enjoyed sharing my alternative genre project with my peers during</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the oral presentations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. I am dissatisfied with my writing in this course.</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>6.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. My final academic genre project could have been better.</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. The research paper that I wrote in this course is a better paper than</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others I have previously written.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. I believe that creating the alternative genre was a worthwhile use of</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, although the mean for Satisfaction was the highest for both groups, the overall differences between the two groups also had the least differences in scores. The service learning group’s mean score was 117.70 and the mean for the alternative genre was 108.22. Standard deviations for the service-learning group were 17.85 and 16.90 for the alternative genre group.

An independent samples t-test with an alpha level set at .05 was undertaken to determine if significant differences existed between the groups. Results from this t-test,
shown in Table 9, reveal significant differences between the groups in the area of
Satisfaction, $t(174) = 3.61, p < .05$. An estimate of Cohen’s $d$ using the pooled estimate of
the standard error was found to be the lowest effect size of all three constructs with a
medium effect size of .5.

Table 9

*Independent Samples t-test for Satisfaction Responses by Students in the Service-Learning and Alternative Genre Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p&lt;  $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service-Learning Group</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>117.70</td>
<td>17.85</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Genre</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>108.22</td>
<td>16.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effect sizes for Satisfaction were primarily in the small to medium range. Small
differences between student perceptions existed in Satisfaction with creating the project,

improvement made in writing academic essays, and the connection of the project with

long-term career goals. Medium effect sizes were illustrated in students’ satisfaction with

the quality of their final research paper, the process of writing an academic paper, and the

improvement made in their writing.

Table 10

*Significant t-test Statistics and Cohen’s $d$ Scores of Responses in Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$t$-Statistic</th>
<th>Cohen’s $d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I was pleased with my final research paper.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Writing an academic paper for this course was satisfying.</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am pleased with my improvement in my academic writing abilities while taking this course.</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. I felt that the time spent in creating my alternative genre project was a waste of time. 2.04 0.3

20. My final research paper was of poor quality. 4.20 0.6

24. I am disappointed in the lack of improvement in my academic writing abilities while taking this class. 3.33 0.5

29. I am content with the improvement I have made in writing academic essays. 2.42 0.4

35. Completing the alternative genre project benefitted my long-term career goals. 1.93 0.3

37. My long-term career goals were unaffected by the completion of my alternative genre project. 2.02 0.3

42. My writing skills are better because I have learned to write for a broader audience. 3.16 0.5

56. I am dissatisfied with my writing in this course. 2.52 0.4

59. The research paper that I wrote in this course is a better paper than others I have previously written. 2.74 0.4

60. I believe that creating the alternative genre was a worthwhile use of my time. 2.06 0.3

Results of Essay Assessments

*Hypothesis #4*

There will be a significant difference between the quality of writing in the academic essays of students who participate in a service-learning program and students who do not participate in a service-learning program as measured by the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, which is an adaptation of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.

Determining differences between the control group and experimental group in the area of achievement of learning outcomes required a difference in empirical design. The Writing Program Administrator conducted a department-wide assessment that required
each instructor to choose one of their academic writing classes and submit all of the academic essays from that class for evaluation. A total of twenty-nine instructors taught the academic writing course, and for the purposes of this research, the writing samples were divided into two sections. One section of 52 papers would include randomly selected samples from students in the classes where the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales had been administered. The second section included 52 randomly selected samples from students who did not take the scale.

In the first section, a total of eight instructors comprised the pool of participants in the study. Out of the eight instructors, six instructors were in the control group, and these instructors sent academic papers from one of their classes to the researcher. The other two instructors in the experimental group submitted all their papers into this pool of papers, providing a total of six sets of papers for the experimental group and a total of twelve classes from which to randomly select papers. Twenty-six papers from the six classes in the control group were randomly chosen while twenty-six papers from the six experimental classes were also randomly selected to yield a total of 52 students for the second group of study. In the second section, the remaining seventeen instructors sent all of the academic papers from one of their classes to the Writing Program Administrator, and he randomly selected 52 papers for the program assessment.

On assessment day, instructors read the papers completely before assessing each trait for its relation to the degree to which the outcome of the course had been met. Eleven instructors attended the assessment session and submitted their assessment rubrics (See Appendix C) to the researcher who entered the score into an Excel spreadsheet. To determine any significant differences between the quality of writing between the experimental and control groups, the means for the two groups were calculated, and a t-
test was conducted. Cohen’s $d$ was also calculated to determine effect size of the expected differences. In essence, these calculations would reveal differences in the quality of writing and achievement of learning outcomes for the two groups. Results may also suggest a relationship between student perception and quality of production in writing.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each group in the summative scores of the individual items of the assessment to determine if differences in the scores for each group were significant. This analysis revealed that significant differences did exist between the groups while the standard deviations held constant. The average means for the service learning group and the alternative genre group were 56.23 and 41.58, respectively. Standard deviations for each group were similar, with the standard deviation for service-learning at 11.97 and 11.34 for the alternative genre group.

To determine if these differences were significant, $t$-tests were conducted. Results from the $t$-test (See Table 11) found significant differences between the groups: $t(50) = 4.53, p<.05$. Because these findings indicated a significant difference, Cohen’s $d$ was calculated to determine effect size. Results from Cohen’s $d$ for the average means of the assessment were found to be quite large with an effect size of 1.26.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p&lt;$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service-Learning</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56.23</td>
<td>11.97</td>
<td>4.532</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Genre</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41.58</td>
<td>11.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results from holistic measures were similar in scope to the total scores for the individual items. Once more, findings indicated differences between the two groups, and the standard deviations tended to hold constant again. The mean for the service-learning group was 5.38 while the mean for the alternative genre group was 4.00. Standard deviations for the service learning and alternative genre groups were 1.42 and 1.36, respectively. A significant difference between the holistic scores (See Table 12) was found when comparing the groups ($t(50) = 3.60, p<.05$). The estimate of Cohen’s $d$ using the pooled estimate of the standard error was 1.00, indicating a substantial difference. This strong effect points to significantly higher scores for the service-learning group.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p&lt;$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service-Learning</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Genre</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To understand which factors may have contributed to the differences between the groups, a deeper analysis of the traits was conducted. It was important to know if students performed significantly higher in some areas but not in others. The means for each group were calculated, and the results are displayed in Table 13.
Table 13

*Mean Scores from Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric for Service-Learning and Alternative Genre Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Service-Learning</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The source material employed is demonstrably credible</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The source material chosen is relevant to the topic of the paper and its argument</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The source material is sufficient to support the paper’s argument</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The source material is summarized in a coherent enough way to show the state of discussion on the topic</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The argument demonstrates clear planning through its organized presentation of ideas</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The argument demonstrates serious reflection on the topic through the author’s own voice and contributions to the topic (as opposed to mere summary)</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The essay is consistent in style and tone, and is appropriate for its intended academic audience.</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The essay demonstrates competence in the use of mature sentence styles that are appropriate to college level academic writing</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The essay shows competence in the conventions of standard edited American English</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The essay demonstrates the use of appropriate methods of APA or MLA documentation</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT:**

To what degree does this essay demonstrate the students’ competence in producing an effective, polished, academic essay in keeping with the major learning outcomes of WRT 202 (as described above) 5.38 4.00

In all areas, the means for individual items for the service-learning group are higher than the alternative genre group, suggesting that the papers written by the experimental groups were of better quality and met the learning outcomes more
proficiently. To further understand the differences between the traits measured, *t*-tests and Cohen’s *d* were conducted on individual items. Results from this analysis are depicted in Table 14.

Table 14

*Results of *t*-Test scores and Cohen’s *d* from Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric for Service-Learning and Alternative Genre Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
<th>Cohen’s <em>d</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The source material employed is demonstrably credible</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The source material chosen is relevant to the topic of the paper and its argument</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The source material is sufficient to support the paper’s argument</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The source material is summarized in a coherent enough way to show the state of discussion on the topic</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The argument demonstrates clear planning through its organized presentation of ideas</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The argument demonstrates serious reflection on the topic through the author’s own voice and contributions to the topic (as opposed to mere summary)</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The essay is consistent in style and tone, and is appropriate for its intended academic audience.</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The essay demonstrates competence in the use of mature sentence styles that are appropriate to college level academic writing</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The essay shows competence in the conventions of standard edited American English</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The essay demonstrates the use of appropriate methods of APA or MLA documentation</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results point to large effects in all areas but especially in the areas of choosing relevant material to support the paper’s topic and argument, serious reflection on the topic as demonstrated by the author’s voice and contributions to the topic, consistent style and tone, appropriateness for an academic audience, mature sentence styles, competence
in standard edited English, and proper usage of APA or MLA documentation. One note worth mentioning is that instructors in the control groups were able to choose their best class from which to submit their research papers, thus improving the selection pool for the random selection. However, the experimental group submitted all the papers from their six classes, which included both classes that contained more skillful writers and classes with students who are less proficient in academic writing. Given these factors, results from this analysis are even more profound as the service-learning groups included both proficient and less proficient writers.

Summary

Sufficient evidence demonstrated the significant differences in all areas between the perceptions of students who participated in a service-learning course and students who did not. Specifically, the greatest differences were found in the area of Motivation. Medium effect sizes were found between the groups, and students appeared to respond higher in this area because their service-learning project provided them with motivation as they conducted research and wrote their papers. The largest differences in Engagement appear to be due to students’ desire to focus more during their research since they would be creating a project to please the recipient. Finally, the smallest significant differences between the two groups were revealed in Satisfaction. This result could be due to the service-learning groups’ higher expectations of themselves. Since the service-learning students were more engaged and motivated, they may have wanted their final projects to be ‘perfect’ since they viewed their projects as more important due to the professional audience who would receive the projects. Therefore, the service-learning students may have not been more satisfied than the other group with respect to the quality of projects, although the service-learning group did express greater satisfaction with the quality of
their final research paper, the process of writing an academic paper, and the improvement made in their writing.

Larger effects were found in the assessments of the actual research papers as evaluated by instructors of the academic writing course. Students in the service-learning group clearly wrote higher quality papers as measured by the attainment of the learning outcomes. This finding is significant because a major goal of writing instructors is to help students improve the quality of their writing. The largest differences in the papers were found in choosing relevant sources, deeper reflection on the topic, appropriateness for an academic audience, mature sentence styles, competence in standard edited English, and proper usage of APA or MLA documentation. It would appear that not only did the service-learning students seem more engaged, motivated, and satisfied, but these students also wrote better academic essays. Implications of these findings for instructors, educational leaders, and society as well as specific recommendations are discussed in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This final chapter of the dissertation restates the research problem, reviews the major methods employed in the study, summarizes the results, provides researcher’s insights, relates the current study to prior research, discusses theoretical implications of the study, suggests implications for practice, discusses the value of service learning, offers possible limitations, and gives recommendations for further research. The focus of this study was to compare the perceptions of students who completed a service-learning component with students who did not complete a service-learning component. Additionally, this study sought to determine if variations in the achievement of learning outcomes in the academic essays existed between students who participated in a service-learning program and students who did not participate in a service-learning program. This chapter is organized by a summary of the results followed by a discussion of the findings.

Summary

Statement of the Problem

This quantitative study examined the attitudes and academic essays of college students at the end of their completion of the second course in a two-course sequence of academic writing. Using a Likert scale to measure student perceptions and a rubric to evaluate the quality of student writing, data was collected during the last two weeks of the semester. Specifically, empirical methods were employed to determine if significant differences existed in the area of perceptions and quality of writing between students who participated in an academic writing course with a service-learning component and students who did not complete a service-learning component. In this study, the answer to two core questions was sought:
Are the research papers written by students who completed a service-learning component significantly better than the research papers written by students who did not complete a service-learning component?

Is there a significant difference in student engagement, satisfaction, and motivation between students who incorporated a service-learning component and students who did not incorporate a service-learning component?

**Review of Methodology**

As explained in Chapter One, the study discussed here used a quasi-experimental design with static group comparison to compare twelve groups of students enrolled in a college academic writing course. This group of twelve classes was equally divided into two groups: the experimental group that incorporated service-learning and the control group that did not use service-learning. One area of comparison was student perceptions of the course, which were measured through the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales. The second area of comparison was to measure the quality of writing in both groups through Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, which is a local adaptation of specific national outcomes, to evaluate the academic essays of students.

Two weeks before the close of the spring semester, the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales was administered to 176 students and academic essays were randomly selected from the same pool of students. In the experimental group, all of the essays, which included both proficient and less proficient writers, were compiled into the pool for selection of papers. In the control group, instructors chose one of their classes in which to include the research papers, and these papers typically were selected from the strongest pool of writers. In order to ensure confidentiality, students were assigned a number to use for identification of their responses. The researcher scored the scales and
entered the results into an Excel spreadsheet. For the academic essay assessment, eleven instructors of the academic writing course evaluated the essays using the rubric. These scores were also entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Once scoring of the scales and academic essays were completed, SPSS was utilized to compute descriptive statistics, t-tests for independent samples, and the effect sizes in order to determine any significant differences between the groups.

**Summary of the Results**

In all areas of student perception and in the assessment of learning outcomes, there were significant differences between the service-learning group and the alternative genre group. The total means for Engagement, Motivation, and Satisfaction were significantly higher for the service-learning group, although the effect size for each area varied somewhat in strength. Out of all the measures of perceptions and student outcomes, the effect size for the assessment of student outcomes was the greatest as large effects were demonstrated in the quality of writing produced by the service-learning group.

In the area of student perceptions, Motivation was found to have the greatest difference out of all three constructs. The service-learning project seems to have provided students with greater motivation as they conducted research and wrote their papers. Engagement was the second strongest effect, and the greatest difference between the groups can be attributed to students’ desire to focus more during their research since they created a project to please the recipient. Finally, the smallest effect size between the two groups was the area of Satisfaction. The greatest differences in Satisfaction were found in students’ satisfaction with the quality of their final research paper, the process of writing an academic paper, and the improvement made in their writing.
Larger effects were found in the assessments of the actual research papers, indicating that papers written by the experimental groups were of higher quality. The largest differences found in the students’ writing were essays that contained deep reflection on the topic, appropriateness for an academic audience, mature sentence styles, competence in standard edited English, and proper usage of APA or MLA documentation. From the results of all the hypotheses, it could be determined that not only did the service-learning students seemed more engaged, motivated, and satisfied, but that these students also wrote better academic essays.

Finally, a variety of projects were created for the service-learning recipients to meet their individual needs. These projects varied in scope and size and included websites, brochures, surveys, executive reports, flyers, advertisements, videos, radio ads, PowerPoint presentations, letters to the editor, a safety presentation, a fundraising event, proposals, executive summaries, research, public relations survey research, newsletters, informational booklets, and grant letter writing. Some students worked together to create group projects while others completed theirs singularly. Either way, students were given the choice to choose a group or an independent project, which was empowering because they could select a method that best fit their learning style. Although not formally assessed in this study in an experimental fashion, comments from the recipients and other students suggested that the projects were thoughtfully created and fit the intended purposes very well.

Discussion of Results

This study sought to develop constructivist strategies that incorporated problem-solving processes, community learning opportunities, and service-learning components into a writing course as the base for the bridge. As students researched their chosen
problems and built their essays, one brick at a time, the structure of the bridge took form. However, as the bridge acquired its shape, the beauty was not in the aesthetic features of the bridge itself but instead in its ability to provide interaction between the two bodies of land. This writing course sought to produce the same goals—to use student research to solve a problem that would eventually link the student with a community to pave the way for communication, collaboration, unique writing opportunities, and new ideas to be shared.

Although not without its glitches, this model of writing instruction appeared to be largely successful in its ability to incorporate interactive strategies into an academic writing course where students created useful academic essays and projects that held meaning to themselves and their audiences. This process also seemed to engage, motivate, and satisfy students and assist them in writing quality academic papers. Although it is clear that this model worked quite well with this particular population, understanding why such positive results occurred is a more delicate matter since a number of factors interacted as students went through the process. A look at the empirical results along with comments given by students and recipients is necessary for interpretation of the results to maintain accuracy.

*Engagement*

An examination of the results from both the means and *t*-test statistics revealed that the alternative genre was the main force behind student engagement. In Table 2 (see page 102), the highest scores for Engagement were linked to the effort students put into creating their project, student desire to please the recipient with the project, opportunities to share the project with others, and time spent in discussing the project with both the recipient and instructor. Table 4 (see page 105) revealed that the service-learning
students also differed significantly from the control groups in these very same areas. Understanding why students were more engaged can be gleaned through their own words in their reflection essays.

*Real world applications.* One theme that emerged from analyzing student comments was that engagement was a result of designing projects for real world applications. Linking research to an actual project was viewed as valuable:

My service-learning experience allowed me to apply research to a real world experience. Education comes from more than just textbooks, it comes from real experience.

I believe projects like this really prepare students for when they get into the real world and are doing this on their own.

These comments reveal the importance students place on pragmatic applications in which information can be applied to a real world problem. Additionally, it seems that students desire experiences that prepare them for meeting new challenges in their field upon graduation. Having a living, breathing audience that would receive the project gave further purpose to its creation, giving engagement more opportunities to thrive:

I put more effort into the project knowing that it wasn’t just another grade and that it was actually going to be something people used as a reference tool.

I was terrified at first that we were supposed to produce something that was actually going to be put to use and not just graded on and forgotten. Once I started, I really got into it. I enjoyed it so much that I have suggested to other students to take this course with Professor Johnson.

Apprehensiveness that seemed to initially grip some students turned into wholehearted engagement once they poured their energies into the project. Some students
were surprised by this change of heart and encouraged others to tread the same path they had trod. In addition to initial feelings of apprehensiveness were also preliminary beliefs that a core general education course held little value to their future careers. This change of heart took place once the projects were birthed:

The service learning project was a big contrast compared to what I was used to doing. It directly related a class I had originally thought of as useless to my major. My educational values have slightly changed because now I find ways that I can relate what I am doing in classes to my intended career path. Relating what I was doing in classes that I thought of as useless directly to my major made it enjoyable.

This comment illustrates the importance of providing connections to real world audiences that are related to students’ future profession. Along this vein, students seemed to benefit from interactions with expanded audiences. In fact, surveys conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project have indicated that teens are motivated to write when relevant topics, high expectations, an interested audience, and opportunities to write creatively are presented (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008). According to this report, when teens are challenged by instructors, offered interesting curricula, and given feedback, they are motivated in their work. If students write for a canned audience instead of for authentic writing purposes, then student engagement could wane and they may not put forth their best effort in an academic writing course. Students seem to want to write for a specified person or persons to create a needed product because it gives them experience in tasks that they will eventually be doing once they graduate. This process makes great sense to students as the activities relate to their majors, preparing them for
tasks they will face upon graduation. Service-learning appears to bring a sense of meaningfulness to an academic writing course.

An added benefit to tailoring service-learning projects to real world applications was that students wanted to put more time and effort into their work to please their recipients and meet the needs of the organization. A real purpose in the project helped students to work toward crafting a polished product:

I learned that I do have the ability to complete a difficult task and do it well. With previous projects I would just rush to get it finished, but with this project I actually took the time to do it well because I care about how others view my work. I want the [name omitted] College community to read a detailed, thorough, and attractive brochure, not one that was thrown together in thirty minutes.

I believe our product to be of excellent quality. Many hours were put in to reach a product that we believed would work the best for the organization.

I took a much more active role than I have in the past. I have higher standards for research projects now.

Students were well aware of the extra effort they put forth into constructing a valuable product. Surely, this energy was released because an important purpose undergirded the need for the project:

I really learned that it is easier to do work when you have a purpose. Knowing that I had an obligation to [name omitted] made me do well on the project.

Students readily admitted that they spent more time on their service-learning projects than they had on similar assignments in the past because the purpose for completing the project was rooted in a real world need. What is striking about these admissions is how some students have raised their personal bars to expect more from
themselves. Although good student effort in the projects was hypothesized to take place, carryover of expectations into future projects was not anticipated. For some students, long-lasting effects from the experience of service-learning may linger into new projects.

*Community engagement.* The high value students placed on community involvement, both on campus and in the local community, became apparent through reading student comments concerning the course. Solitary experiences in a classroom may be less successful in initiating student engagement when compared to activities which require students to tap into the community outside the classroom doors. Becoming involved in a community seems to challenge students, yet engage them in ways that bring issues to life.

The whole service learning experience was very new to me, and I must say I like it. From a student’s perspective I liked this writing project because it involved more than just the typical research project cycle. It challenged me and required me to go out and above my comfort zone.

Finally, this project was interesting and fun to do, because it made me feel like I was more involved with the operations on campus.

Even though students seemed to be challenged by the demands of service-learning, it appears they enjoyed the experience. In this light, students may associate a positive mindset concerning active engagement on campus. Engagement with the community also seemed to generate a sense of responsibility on the part of students, which seemed to make students feel like valued, contributing members:

I learned my responsibilities as a member of a community. I realized that I have the responsibility to help businesses and organizations in my community that are
in need. I also learned that as a single individual I can make a huge impact on a community of thousands of people with a simple service learning project.

Community involvement also provided students with interactions with professionals in their field. Such interactions give students practice in communication skills and working toward meeting a need in the organization. For the target college, this outcome fit nicely into its ethos of promoting professionalism and comprehensiveness to its student body. A student described this experience quite well:

The most worthwhile aspect of this project was working with the counseling department. Through this aspect I not only developed better writing skills but also better communication skills and computer skills. I had to learn to effectively communicate with my contact person, but I also had to learn to make a brochure on the computer.

Since deeper communication and connectedness to the recipient developed, a desire to please the recipient emerged. As a result, students seemed to engage more in the service-learning project:

This has really helped me to concentrate and work hard on something. I felt as if my contact person will be [sic] very happy with my final project and it was all worth working so hard on!

Pleasing their recipients seemed to bring a certain joy to students, making the extra time and effort put into the project worthwhile. Helping others was viewed as a rewarding engagement that was possible through the fusion of an academic assignment with a community project:

Writing a paper isn’t the only way to enact your projects. You can bring your research to life through helping others as well.
Finally, as a citizen, I think that I did a better job to help others, instead of just going to class and doing work for myself alone.

Creating a project for an organization required the development of a relationship. Students had to get to know the recipients and develop a relationship with them in order to discover the specific requirements needed for their project. When positive connections are forged through a service-learning component, purposes appear to deepen and encourage active engagement.

I feel like we connected more with the community and actually helped an organization out in a writing class, that is something that I’m not used to doing. I think I value education in a new way than I did before. Mostly because I am not used to actually working outside of the classroom and I really feel like I did make a difference, which is a change.

Frankly, embedded within many individuals is an intrinsic need to make a difference in the lives of others, and providing opportunities where students can enrich the lives of others appears to improve engagement. However, finding ways to make a difference is not always easily attained, and guiding students into ways they can reach outside of themselves and make a mark on their world can be a valuable use of time in an academic writing course:

I definitely think my educational values and expectations have increased from this project. From now on I expect projects to be this in depth and have the same results as a service learning project. I don’t think people/students realize how much of impact we can have on organizations.

Student engagement did not simply enhance educational purposes; this kind of engagement watered growth in a holistic manner to generate development in areas that
encompassed emotional, social, and intellectual constructs. Students seemed to care about pleasing the recipients, enjoy the social connections, and rise to the challenges presented by the service-learning component. Although the value from growth in these areas may not be clearly evident through empirical measures, one can be fairly certain that students were changed by the experiential learning offered through service-learning applications.

**Motivation**

A look at Table 5 (see page 106) reveals that Motivation scores were highest in statements that discussed sharing the paper and projects with others. Clearly, if students put effort into their writing, they want to share their ideas and hard work with others. A solitary audience of one teacher may not be enough to motivate students. This concept makes sense. Undoubtedly, many individuals record their thoughts and ideas in journals or private medium, but the vast amount of writing that people engage in involves the sharing of ideas. Why should classrooms be any different? If sharing one’s writing with individuals in addition to an instructor is a motivating factor for students, then perhaps research writing courses should focus more on writing for a broader audience.

Other high mean scores in Table 5 also pointed to the project’s influence on gathering sources for the paper and project and writing the actual research paper. Apparently, identifying the service-learning project and recipient before writing the paper helped motivate the student to search for solutions to the problems. In actuality, this was not easily performed; however, in the workshops conducted in the computer labs, students were given guidance in locating articles and reputable sources so that they could write their annotated bibliographies. Thus, even though locating sources for amateur researchers was not an easy task, it did not daunt their motivation to find answers and
worthy material to write about. Challenges do not necessarily deconstruct motivation as long as support is there to provide encouragement and guidance.

An examination of the results from Table 7 (see page 109) that provides the significant $t$-Test statistics reveals similar findings with an unexpected twist. The largest difference between the service-learning group and the control group was in the area of research. A strong effect size was found in the groups when it came to the area of identifying the project before beginning the search for research sources to include in the annotated bibliography. Evidently, the project gave students a focus for research so that they were driven in their quest for information instead of floundering during the research process. Another strong effect size was found in students’ perceptions concerning the actual service-learning project. Students seemed to feel that the project motivated them to put more effort into the course and to create a better project. One more large difference was found in motivation factors related to sharing the paper because the service-learning students felt that they wrote better papers and created better projects due to the nature of the service-learning component. Enlarging the audience by giving a needed project to a recipient and sharing that same project with the community of learners proved to be great motivating factors.

*Purposeful research.* These findings are supported through students’ writing in their reflection essays. The largest difference between the groups occurred in the area of compiling the annotated bibliography. Students in the service-learning course attributed the service-learning project as a greater motivator for writing the annotated bibliography than students who did not complete a service-learning project. Some students discovered that research could be an enjoyable process. This enjoyment may have been due to the
interest students had in pursuing a topic of their choosing along with the need to investigate solutions for their service-learning project:

While some people may find research boring, I realized that I enjoyed delving further into my topic.

Many individuals have experienced the thrill of the search when seeking out new information to an area of interest. This investigative spirit can contribute to a better researched paper that can lead to a quality product. After their research papers were written, some students took great pride in their work and were anxious to share it with others:

I wrote an extremely long research paper. I believe that this is the best work I have ever written, and I am very eager to show it off to my parents.

Showing a research paper to one’s parents is somewhat atypical for a freshman college student, but because there was pride and satisfaction with the academic essay, the student wanted to share her work with her family. Individuals often desire to share items of importance to others so they can share the joy and provide feedback. It is possible that students were motivated to put concentrated effort into their research because the task required a specified purpose:

This experience was different then [sic] other writing classes because it put purpose to the research and writing. Because you were doing it for someone else other then [sic] yourself, it put more emphasis on performing at your greatest abilities and more meaning on the completion of it.

By focusing on pleasing an audience that would use the project, a deeper focus provided energy for the research. This marriage of project and paper did not serve as an
 incidental relationship; knowing the project to be completed beforehand spurred research that would ground the paper:

I liked how the project corresponded with the paper. It made it much more interesting to write the paper when I had a project that I had done to write about. The research into nursing continuing education was the most worthwhile part of our project.

Although it may initially seem surprising that freshmen students would actually enjoy the arduous process of research where sifting, evaluating, reading, annotating, and synthesis are required, relevance made the search worthwhile. Implementing a service-learning component can help generate meaningful assignments:

I learned something new and useful to my nursing major while providing a service for someone else at the same time. It was much more meaningful than just wring another research paper for a grade and then throwing it away at the end of the semester.

Students seemed to enjoy learning information that can be connected to their major and then using it for a functional purpose. Applying learning to real world venues through a service-learning project can sometimes impact students’ future careers:

This service-learning experience was very different than any other classroom writing experience I’ve had. With this project, I was able to apply my research to more than just a paper. My educational expectations have been greatly altered because I now see the value of working in real life situations. I think this project has impacted the way I will teach in the future. I hope that someday I can incorporate service-learning into my lesson plans.
In a nutshell, purposeful research was realized in this study because students had an identified project in mind before starting research. Furthermore, since the research was tied to their majors, involved a real world application, and would be useful to an organization, students were intrinsically motivated to conduct concerted research for their papers.

*Influence of the project.* Since students had a project in mind before starting their research on the topic, they seemed to have more motivation to put more effort into the course and create a quality paper. Having a schema for the project gave purpose to the research and writing of the paper, resulting in happier students since their work would appear to have lasting value:

What I really liked about the service learning project was actually creating a project out of the paper that we wrote. I don’t like writing papers and then turning it in for a grade that no one is ever going to need or use. With creating a project off of the paper that we wrote, it allowed me to create something that will be useful to someone else and help the organization I worked with. I would have to say my educational values/expectations of myself have become much higher compared to past years. I have now seen the kind of paper I can write when I take the time to do it as well as creating a professional looking document. After this class, I will not expect anything less of myself.

Although this study predicted that improved writing might occur through the process of completing a service-learning project, it came as an unexpected surprise that engaging in a service-learning component would result in a self-initiated raised bar for individual expectations. Students involved in the service-learning course found they were capable of better writing and project creation than previously believed. Perhaps knowing
that their hard work would be put toward worthwhile purposes gave students more motivation to develop their papers and projects:

The most worthwhile part of the project was actually creating the flyers. Not only did we write a paper, but the paper helped us to create the needed project that was going to help an organization. I like the fact that the paper wasn’t being written just because we had to do it for the class, but it was also helping someone out.

Again, students felt good about helping out individuals, which seemed to provide motivation for the papers and projects. Yet, the motivation to help an organization was not the only factor that fueled students in their ventures. Having a problem to untangle served as a weather vane by pointing students in a direction to explore. Proponents of problem-based learning would not be surprised by students’ thoughts on this aspect:

I learned that writing based on a problem that I had background on gives more of a connection to what you are writing, and I took more time to complete the project well because it had more importance to me.

An approach that confronts students with a problem to solve seems to motivate them to put their energies into solving it. Of course, students’ interest in the problem plays a major role, so care must be given in courses to allow investigations in a diversity of topics to sustain strong student interest. Because of this, instructors who wish to incorporate service-learning will have to spend time locating willing participants in a number of fields to ensure a range of available topics.

The power of a broad audience. Sharing the project and paper with others motivated the service-learning students to create better products. Large differences between the groups were shown in these areas. Perhaps since the recipients were anticipating a polished product, students rose to the occasion in order to please them.
Students also admitted that they worked harder because their final project would benefit others:

I learned that you work harder when things mean more to you, which makes sense. I also feel that you work harder when you are doing something that could benefit other people and not just yourself. I want to be a dedicated hard worker person and I feel I have shown this through this experience.

This student also found that this experience proved his ability to work hard to accomplish his goals. Through this comment, one can see that he felt that the service-learning initiative provided good work experience for his future career. Completing this project also helped students to gain a sense of responsibility, which motivated them to provide a quality product:

I felt the final project to be excellent because I knew at the start that I wanted to work hard to complete this and because S. was relying on me to make this brochure for her committee. I was not going to just put half my effort into it, I was going to put all my effort into it.

I learned that it is important to be responsible in everything you do because someone is counting on you to present to them an excellent, finished project. Even though more work was required in the development of a service-learning project, few students complained about the extra time needed for completing the service. Instead, students felt motivated by the challenge and enjoyed the giving aspect of the project:

I would choose to be involved in a similar project basically because I enjoyed it so much and had such a good time doing it and it motivated me to become a better writer and to give more back to the community. It also helped me to be more
connected with the community and more professional. It was all around a great project.

Connections with the community were forged, which could strengthen students’ connectedness with the college, and students also gained experience in professional interactions. Thus, the power of a broad audience provided a motivating force because their projects would benefit others and provide valuable experience for their future careers. Even though the service-learning project required a strong work ethic and responsible behavior, enjoyment from serving others resulted from the experience.

Satisfaction

As Table 8 (see page 110) implies, Satisfaction was rated the highest out of all three student perceptions. In the service-learning group, several mean scores were near or above the six rating, suggesting high satisfaction with the course. Only three scores fell below the five rating, yet even these scores were very close to the five rating. The greatest satisfaction was found in the actual research paper. Students were highly satisfied with their final research paper and their improvement in their academic writing abilities. Most English teachers would be gratified to know that their students have done their best and are greatly satisfied with the effort put forth in writing an academic essay.

Second in line to the satisfaction experienced with writing their research papers, students were also very satisfied with the final projects they completed. Students must have viewed their projects as a valuable endeavor, and they rather enjoyed sharing their hard work with their classmates. If instructors are going to require projects in their course, they should carefully consider the lasting value of a project in the students’ eyes as students do not want to spend a great of time on projects that hold little value for them.
These savvy students want projects that are meaningful with an intended purpose and audience.

Significant differences between the control and experimental groups were discovered in the area of Satisfaction. Table 9 (see page 112) illustrates the large difference in the area of the final research paper and student improvement in academic writing. Students in the service-learning group were much more pleased with their final research papers and improvement in academic writing than their counterparts. Again, the second difference was the level of satisfaction with the creation of their projects. Service-learning students were more pleased with their projects than those who did not complete a service-learning component.

Students wrote prolifically about their satisfaction from the course. Their comments on their satisfaction with their writing confirm the results from the Likert scale. An analysis of their comments provides clarity to their experiences.

*Usefulness of the project.* Students seem to want to take courses that have practical value for their future careers or personal development. The target college also seeks to provide students with a comprehensive education. Students found this course to be useful due to its pragmatic nature and applicability to their lives. For example, some found the course useful in improving their writing skills and helping them to define their direction for their major. In many instances, students appreciated the usefulness of this course:

This was much more interesting and applicable to my life. Now, I do not take classes that offer no real world examples as seriously. This is so much more valuable and will be useful to me in the long run. Now THIS is a course that makes my tuition worthwhile.
I believe that the idea of using service-learning in Academic Writing classes should be continued. This course was much more useful than the previous writing class I took at college, and taught me a lot more about writing.

I would do a project like this in the future. I would do this because this project gave me great direction about what I want to do with my future. It also gave me great hands on experience. In the beginning I thought this project was going to be horrible but now looking back I know I was completely wrong and really enjoyed doing service learning.

*Fun.* Although providing a course that is *fun* is not linked to the learning outcomes, it sure does make working toward the learning outcomes more enjoyable. Even though the instructors were not seeking to make the course fun, because students were working on projects correlated to their majors and interests, fun naturally resulted. The instructors were more focused on providing a course that held pragmatic applications for students, so the resulting fun that students experienced was a nice by-product. Students seemed to attribute the fun in this course to its ability to link the course with their interests, participate in experiential learning, and work with organizations outside the classroom:

I definitely had more fun writing this paper then [sic] any other paper I have written before. I always enjoy getting the chance to experience new things and observe things... I think a good education value would be for all teachers to think about peoples [sic] passions and interests and help make writing fun.

I actually found education fun for once. I feel it is truly higher education to incorporate service learning and I am at an advantage to those who have not had
it. Classroom learning is no longer enough, I want to get out there and be part of it.

I really liked getting the chance to work with organizations outside of the classroom. It was a real experience for me and I looked forward to coming to class.

*Good feelings.* Research has stated that students experience a good feeling from helping others (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997; Bordelon & Phillips, 2006). Satisfaction with their projects was quite apparent in their reflection essays. This satisfaction appears to be due to the good feeling they experienced from providing a need. Again, good feelings are not related to course learning outcomes, but good feelings could contribute to retention efforts at the college and its purpose in helping students develop a sense of social responsibility:

I learned that one student can make a difference on campus. Even though I did not make a huge difference, I felt that I had helped the chorale in promoting the concert and at least trying to increase attendance to the show. It was a good feeling.

This project was great because I feel like I helped a great cause, and I learned a lot along the way. There is a great sense of accomplishment once you are done and you see a smile on the face of the people you helped.

I also learned that as a part of the community, helping someone else who is in need of something really is a good feeling. I learned that I can take out some of my time and help out an organization or a person in need, and when the final product or project is completed, it is a great sense of accomplishment.
Pleasing the recipient. Service-learning projects expand audiences, so pleasing more individuals becomes necessary. One would think that students would shy away from more demanding tasks, yet this aspect was one of the factors that improved satisfaction among students. This satisfaction might be due to students wanting to please a professional that is connected to their major where their interests lay. At any rate, pleasing the recipients with their projects made their work worthwhile:

The most worthwhile part was seeing Mr. K’s gratitude toward our work on the project. He really seemed to like our brochure and that made all the work worthwhile.

The most worthwhile thing about this project was hearing the response of the advisor. She was very pleased with the outcome of the project and was excited of my hard work.

Satisfaction with the essay and service-learning project. Of course, writing quality academic essays is a core learning outcome and a major tenet of the academic writing course. Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters (1997) have stated that service-learning can provide academic skills because students learn to function as writers. Results from this study have shown that students’ writing met the learning outcomes quite well, and they were very pleased with their projects and papers. Some students raised their personal expectations from this process and realized that they were able to create better products than they originally thought possible:

I did not think that at the end of this semester I would be happy with my project or my paper. But I can definitely tell you that it is the best project/brochure, and paper I have EVER written!
The expectations I have for myself have become much higher through the service learning project process.

I learned a lot about myself during this project. Mostly the fact that when I work hard on something; I'm proud of myself towards the end because I realized how hard I worked and that whenever I put my mind to something I can achieve great things.

From these comments, it appears that the service-learning students were harder on themselves, and therefore, may account for smaller significant differences between the two groups when comparing the level of significant differences to Engagement and Motivation. The service-learning group seemed to possess higher expectations of themselves because they may have wanted their final projects to be of excellent quality since their projects would be presented to a professional audience.

Anonymous Student Observation Forms

Comments included in the previous sections were taken from students’ reflection essays at the end of the semester. These comments were part of an assignment in which students evaluated and reflected upon a number of aspects in the course. Students were encouraged to put down their honest reflections and assured that negative comments would not impact their grades. Very few negative comments were received, and those that were not positive expressed concern over a lack of interest in the topic they chose or the difficulties they had in contacting or meeting with their recipient. However, the general tone for the reflection papers was overwhelmingly positive.

In order to determine whether students wrote positive comments on their reflective essays just to please their instructor and to make sure that their recorded sentiments were authentic, a review of the anonymous course evaluations was conducted.
These student observation forms are administered to one instructor’s class each semester by a different instructor who is not teaching the class. Students are asked to appraise the course and the instructor, and their responses are completely anonymous. Instructors are not allowed to view student comments until after the final grades have been submitted for the semester.

A review of the comments on the observation forms indicated that their anonymous responses correlated highly with the reflection essays. Students gave very favorable responses, with only two students suggesting that the project should be started a little earlier and one suggesting that the service-learning component be dropped because “it causes lots of problems with time and other classes and allotting time to them.” Nevertheless, one negative comment out of thirty-one assessments indicates high satisfaction among students in the courses. Below is a sample of student responses concerning the service-learning component:

Great class, with a different take on writing. Definitely made it seem more useful by relating it back to how it can be used in everyday writing. I loved that our project had real meaning and a beneficiary.

I really enjoyed this course. I learned a lot about writing, especially APA style. I think the service-learning project was an excellent part of this course because I got to apply my knowledge to a real life experience. I feel this type of project should be required for a WRT 202 course because it really shows how you can apply knowledge to help an organization.

I enjoyed this class very much. The service-learning project was a good way to get involved with the community while benefitting my writing skills. I very much enjoyed the research and completion of my project.
This class was excellent. The greatest English course I have ever taken. The course itself was great, and I really feel that the service-learning project was beneficial.

At first, the service-learning project seemed overwhelming, but to complete it was an extraordinary learning experience.

Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric for Program Assessment

As the results from the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales have shown, the service-learning component had a positive impact on student perceptions in the academic writing course. However, writing instructors are also concerned with student attainment of learning outcomes for their courses. In other words, if academic essays are not well written, then alternative pedagogies are unfruitful. Results from the \( t \)-tests indicated a large significant difference and effect size for both the individual item assessments and the holistic assessments. Evidently, the service-learning component positively impacted the quality of writing produced by the students.

Analyzing the individual areas for trends and comparing them to the Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales is helpful for interpreting the results. The greatest differences that contained strong effect sizes between the groups were in the areas of demonstrating a better understanding of how to develop an APA-style argument and in using mature sentence styles appropriate for college level academic writing. These two areas are meticulous in nature and often the result of careful editing and attention to detail. Students who do well in these areas often take their time writing the essays, and they surely proofread and edit several times to perfect their papers. Evidently the service-learning students cared greatly about the final product as they spent a great deal of time in polishing their papers.
Closely following the highest scores are two other areas that focused more on the type of writing produced. One item rated students’ ability to give serious reflection through their own voice and contributions to the topic while the other item rated the style and tone. Students may have scored higher in these areas because they were more engaged and cared about what they were writing. Their essays had meaning and purpose, and perhaps this helped them reflect more and develop a scholarly style and tone. Some recipients wanted to read the students’ research papers, so perhaps the expanded audience contributed to students’ efforts to write well.

Two scores that were also slightly less than the previous ones included students’ ability to competently apply standard edited American English and choose relevant material for their topic. Again, the standard edited English was probably the result of planning and spending time proofreading and editing their work. However, the strong results on choosing relevant sources for the topic of the paper and its argument may be more due to motivation. This result correlates well with the results on the Likert scale in the area of Motivation. As previously stated, it appears that identifying the project before beginning the research and writing for the annotated bibliography helps students to be purposeful in their research and selective in their choice of resources. This focus for research may have driven students in their quest for specific information and helped them to choose their sources well. In addition to this feature, students may also have made better choices because they were looking for specific, real solutions to solve real world problems. Thus, meaningful searches could ensue because organizations were depending on the students to find answers for them.

The next skill rated students’ ability to use source material to sufficiently support the paper’s argument. Students in the service-learning classes scored significantly higher
in this area, and this difference may be due to students’ good understanding of the topic.

Students in the service-learning group made meaningful connections outside the classroom in which discussions about the topics took place. Course assignments required students to field questions and request additional resources from recipients, which could have provided students with deeper understandings about their topics. When recipients were able to lead students to good resources, it helped students to find applicable resources that would fit the paper and project. It is possible that the real world problems increased student engagement and motivation to weave sources into their argument.

Three areas had the same lowest scores, although the all the effect sizes were still quite strong for these items. The first item rated students’ ability to employ demonstrably credible material into the paper. These students undoubtedly took the time to locate scholarly journal articles and reputable websites that would provide solutions to the problems they had been given. Since students had identified the problem they were trying to solve, structure may have already been somewhat formulated, providing students with a rough outline in the initial stages. Also, as the results from the Satisfaction scores demonstrated, students wanted to write quality papers so that their research would help them create the project. This desire to produce a good project may have encouraged deeper thought as they worked their sources into their papers.

The last two items are closely linked to the manner of writing the academic essay. One item rated student papers on the coherence of their summaries from source materials in order to lead discussion on the topic while the other item rated the organized presentation of ideas in the argument. Both tasks require concerted planning and preparation on the part of students, and to effectively carry out this writing assignment, students must know their topic well, be motivated to present it in the best form, and
remain engaged in the task. Perhaps the service-learning students felt that this process was worth the effort since a real purpose existed in writing the paper. Since the paper would help develop the project, students instinctively knew that their writing needed to be well done so that a good foundation for developing the product could be set.

Recipient Evaluations

Results have shown that students gained much in the way of positive attitudes and outcomes, but if their projects did not fit the needs of the organization or if the recipients were not supportive of this process, then pursuing this type of venture would be futile. In essence, both parties need to find this experience gratifying and useful for continued efforts to build on this foundation. If recipients are not able to use the generated projects or build professional relationships with students, then students could view the service-learning component as busy work or an unfruitful endeavor. This aspect would dampen student perceptions and could adversely affect the attainment of student learning outcomes. On the contrary, responses from the recipients concerning the projects were overwhelmingly positive with most recipients rating the projects as either excellent or very good. These sentiments can be better understood through their comments on their rating of the students’ projects:

I would qualify it as excellent. He was given a pretty large task that we had divided up between many teachers and accomplished it well. The final product needs some final tweaking but he definitely did more than we expected.

Excellent. We went through several edits and consultations and ended up with great results.

Excellent—great layout, encompassed all information requested

Excellent, exactly how I envisioned the presentation
The final project is of excellent quality. I asked K. to create an interesting brochure that would appeal to students, as this is the intended audience. K. created a document that is visually interesting and used language that was appealing to students. Additionally, it is evident that K. took time to research alcohol and drug education. He considered what students think about them and adapted his message.

Usefulness of the project was important for the recipients because they did not have extra time to spend on projects that produced little value for their organization. Virtually all of the recipients found the students’ projects useful to their organization, and many were quite pleased with the results. Some projects were used in the form given to them by the students and other projects needed to be refined. One of the features that many recipients seemed to appreciate was student proficiency in using graphics, perhaps an area where recipients may not have been skillful. Evidence of their satisfaction with the usefulness of the product is illustrated through these comments:

We will be using the document in its entirety as well as recycling parts of the final product in several future efforts.

S. used graphics and minimal wording to produce a very readable and inviting product. The heart in hands graphic she used for the cover is a real eye-catcher. It was helpful to get a different perspective on the business from someone who is not involved in the day-to-day activities.

It is quite useful because when I have all the ideas from all the students, we will have a product made by students for students. It should be much better than if I alone put it together.
The student’s research confirmed some of the concepts that had been discussed regarding the competitive environment for health education in the worksite. They pointed out some inefficiencies with the website and I’m happy to say we launched a new website on April 27th.

One recipient was so pleased with the service-learning program that she not only wrote the instructors a note to express her gratitude, but she also wrote a thank you note to the classes. New relationships with the community were successfully built through these interactions:

I enjoyed working with the students. They ALL were so very kind and helpful. I will send you a thank you letter to give them, and if you don't mind, if you could please forward it to them. I would love to do this Learning Service Project again next year.

One of the most important factors for success in producing the project was communication. Students who communicated frequently with the recipient and did not procrastinate in completing requirements at the last minute were better informed. It appeared that the more contacts were made between students and recipients, the better the results. In other words, frequent communication helped students to create projects that fit the intended purpose and gave students a clearer picture of the recipient’s expectations so they could please the recipient with their work. Additionally, preparation for meetings was found to be crucial too. Students who came prepared with materials and questions set a precedent for establishing productive encounters and forged stronger relationships with the recipients:
A. definitely acted like a professional. In the meetings I had with him he really had a lot of useful information for the presentation. He came in dressed as if [sic] was one of the teachers and was always organized.

We met 5 times throughout the semester and H. was always prepared and appropriate. I believe it was easier for her to meet each time paperwork was needed and it allowed us to stay in contact which was beneficial. She stayed in contact, provided drafts to get my reaction and feedback and incorporated both into her final products. In addition, she was never rushed or running too close to a deadline, she planned very well – my kudos to a job well done!

Meetings were productive, student brought samples, laptop and edited as we talked. She sent updates and made recommendations according to her research about layout design.

She provided a rough draft of questions and asked for my feedback. She accepted my constructive feedback when she moved off target, and adjusted appropriately. She also demonstrated strong initiative by seeking out additional information.

These responses are very encouraging for the target college since the actual audience expressed satisfaction with the final product, illustrating that a service-learning component can help meet the learning goals. As the college works toward focusing more on experiential learning, taking note of the results in this study could provide helpful information to administrators as they make decisions concerning programs at the college.

One of the first course assignments required students to interview the recipients only a few weeks after the semester began. This feature seemed to be crucial for building the relationship and discussing helpful resources, purpose of the project, expectations of the organization, and the goals that need to be achieved. Success occurred when students
followed the guidelines for the interview in the guidebook and carefully read the proposal before setting up the first meeting:

Our initial meeting entailed a general discussion about the project, her rationale in choosing alcohol/drug education and wellness for a focus and what she hoped to gain from the project. In our second meeting we discussed the specifics of her ideas for the brochure and paper. I shared resources with her that she used in her paper and brochures.

At our first meeting, J. appeared prepared. She was appropriately dressed, had pen and paper, and presented a personable image. She admitted right up front that she was not at all familiar with the concept of merit pay, but seemed excited to learn.

In the guidebook, students were also instructed to act professionally and responsibly in all interactions with recipients. Additionally, students were advised to communicate frequently with their recipients, strictly meet the deadlines for each step of the project, and to plan well so that their project would be well constructed and timely in completion. When students followed these guidelines, their actions helped contribute to the success of the project and meet the learning outcomes:

The students conducted themselves in a professional manner. They represented our store to the public when they conducted their survey. I observed their interactions with the other students and felt very comfortable with their level of proficiency when dealing with patrons. They progressed at their own pace and contacted me with any questions that they had. In this way they learned that to do a project consists of getting the desired
results and progressing to that end using their own ideas and fitting the work scope into a pre-determined time frame.

**Hindrances to Meeting Learning Outcomes**

Some students experienced difficulty in achieving learning outcomes. The main problem faced by students was their poor planning. For instance, some students did not follow the timelines set forth in the syllabus and were behind in their communications and deadlines for projects. When a signature or approval from a recipient was needed, some students expected a quick reply from the recipients. Students had to be reminded that professionals maintain a busy schedule, so it was their responsibility to complete assignments ahead of time so that recipients were given approximately a week to respond.

Another hindrance to meeting learning outcomes was failure to maintain good communication with recipients. A few students did not maintain communication as required, and the lack of communication precipitated confusion between the recipient and student. Students who did not communicate as required produced products of poorer quality. Perhaps this situation could have been averted by spending classroom time discussing with students how to meet with recipients. Additionally, one recipient suggested that it might be a good idea for students to set all of their meeting dates at the first meeting so that they form deadlines and a plan for completing the projects.

Students’ lack of professionalism found in their reports and projects was another hindrance to meeting learning outcomes. One recipient noted that the wording of a report could have been a little more professional but conceded that this skill comes with experience in the business world, which the students lacked. However, this recipient was generally satisfied with the report and especially liked the creative cover page that was
developed. To offset the lack of professionalism that can result from students’
inexperience, instruction on this genre of writing could have been covered in the course
and students could also conduct research on the type of writing they are completing,
whether it be executive summaries, brochures, flyers, websites, surveys, advertisements,
radio ads, proposals, PowerPoint presentations, letters to the editor, newsletters, booklets,
or grant letter writing. Also, recipients needed to be reminded that the student population
was primarily freshmen with a small number of sophomores enrolled in a general
education course, so these students may or may not have specific knowledge about a
business or subject. Recipients were supposed to help provide background knowledge
about their profession and direct students to resources that could help them understand
the nature of the project more clearly, but it is unclear whether this occurred in all cases.

Finally, outside factors seemed to hinder a few students from ending the class on
a positive note. One student stopped attending class when the first major assignment, the
reading log, was due. Another student started off the project enthusiastically, but for
some unknown reason, lost her drive and did not complete the project in its intended
form. However, these few instances appeared to be the exception rather than the rule.
Sometimes, some students will encounter difficulties beyond the scope of instructors’
abilities to address.

Relationship of Current Study to Prior Research

The results of this study support Prestine and Nelson’s (2005) premise that a
constructivist base provides an effective conceptual framework for teaching. Since
constructivist practices in the academic writing course encouraged students to learn from
exploration and discovery, benefit from community activities, experience academic
growth while exploring applications to proposed problems, develop practical skills
through participation in real-life scenarios, and produce unique and varied creations, further credence was given to these tenets proposed by Alesandrini and Larson (2002). These broad tenets have been shown to be effective in an academic writing course. Using constructivist practices in a course that teaches research writing has been viewed positively by students and has helped them achieve the learning outcomes. Constructivist practices continue to make good pedagogical sense for teaching an academic writing course.

Problem-based learning (PBL) strategies were found to be an effective means for promoting research and projects for students in the service-learning courses. The claim that students experience overall satisfaction in a course (Chapman, 2002) seems to be confirmed by the results of this study. Chapman’s claims that PBL strategies enable students to define a rhetorical problem and write for different purposes, audiences, perspectives, and disciplines was also supported by the findings in the program assessment. PBL strategies in this course also supported the claims made by Flower (1998), which maintain that a problem-solving approach can help writers develop better ways to complete the undertaking of writing. Since the proposals that contained a researchable problem seemed to help students have a tangible focus for their research, it appears that this method helped them complete higher quality papers and even enjoy the process of research. Finally, the claims made by Gonzales and Nelson (2005), which state that there is improved student collaborations and leadership skills as well as more satisfied instructors of PBL courses, were supported by this study. Students engaged in collaborative activities needed to employ leadership skills in order to complete their projects. As an added note, both instructors also experienced high levels of satisfaction from teaching the course.
Studies on learning communities have suggested that a number of positive outcomes result from this type of classroom structure. Results from this study support the premise that students were dynamically engaged (Carnell, 2007), characterized by active participation (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002), involved in collaborative activities (Gonzales & Nelson, 2005), more responsible (Brown, 1994; Carnell, 2007), open to sharing information (Brown, 1997; Carnell, 2007; Moxley, 2008), engaged in dialogue (Brown, 1997; Carnell, 2007), focused on learning inquiry (Adler-Kassner, 2003; Carnell, 2007), and involved in communities outside the college (Adler-Kassner, 2003; Bosch et al., 2008). By expanding learning opportunities to venues outside the classroom, students were able to enjoy richer learning experiences and apply their learning to real-world issues.

Watters and Ford’s (1995) studies on service-learning concluded that students in service-learning courses are more engaged, careful to obtain more accurate and timely information, and concerned about producing polished pieces of writing. Empirical results from this study confirm all of their findings. Watters and Ford’s assertion concerning student engagement were confirmed through the Likert scales, and the fact that their final papers were shown quantitatively to be of high quality also gives credence to these claims. Watters and Ford’s statement that firsthand experiences stimulate the research while the research enhances student knowledge of the issues appear to be supported by the findings in this study. Since students’ papers were rated significantly higher in their ability to utilize credible and relevant sources and incorporate them in ways that plait the threads of reason into a good argument, support for Watters and Ford’s claims regarding the production of polished pieces of writing has also been shown.
In the model crafted by Hugg and Wurdinger (2007), students, agencies, and faculty experienced satisfaction from the service-learning project. Results from this current study verify that carefully planned service-learning projects can provide satisfaction for all participants. Hugg and Wurdinger also found that students felt that the course was meaningful since they contributed in a real way and found rewards in the process and results. Comments from students in this study confirm the conclusions formulated by Hugg and Wurdinger’s study.

Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters (1997) have also found that instructors leading a service-learning program feel a greater sense of purpose and meaning because tangible results from projects emerge. Their studies have found that instructors become more of a facilitator for student directed and collaborative writing projects, and because of this, students feel a greater sense of responsibility and accountability. A review of the instructors’ journals confirmed these observations. First of all, both instructors experienced a great deal of satisfaction while working with students during the course. Although both instructors encountered challenges in working out individual problems, the satisfaction of watching students put great effort into their papers, presentations, and projects was found to be incredibly gratifying. Second, evidence of the responsibility and accountability students exhibited was discovered in the quality of the papers, presentations, and projects. Both instructors felt that these products were the best ones they had seen in years, which they believed to be a testament to the experiential learning and the fact that the projects were created for real clients.

Concealing failure has been noted to be more difficult with service learning (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters, 1997). In this particular model of service-learning, this feature has been shown to be true. Proof of this element was demonstrated by the fact
that none of the six service-learning classes experienced incidents of plagiarism for the first time since both instructors began teaching at the college. The unique requirements of assignments would have made plagiarism difficult, and perhaps since students found fulfilling purposes in assignments, the temptation to plagiarize was reduced. Frequent classroom discussions where students provided updates with their research, papers, and projects would also have made it uncomfortable for students who had not been keeping up with assignments.

Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters (1997) have stated that students attending college are learning to transition to a fuller participant in a larger social world, and the college experience is important in shaping that participation. They believe that service-learning brings together individuals with common causes that foster communication and social bonds, which can be particularly important for composition classes since this is one of their first courses in the college realm. Results from this study confirmed that students formed good relationships within the classroom and the college and local community. Student relationships were forged in the classroom because engaging discussions were realized not only through in-class discussions, but relationships were also strengthened through discussion board posts and small group meetings both during class and outside of class. Discussion board assignments appeared to help students discuss their problems, and several students freely gave suggestions to other students. Students also became fuller participants into a larger social world because they ventured outside the classroom and into the community while working on their assignments. Even though these engagements may have seemed daunting at first, students grew to enjoy these activities.

Student choice has been stated to be essential for service-learning programs (Wittmer, 2004). Wittmer’s study found through a review of a variety of service-learning
courses that a key component for success was student choice. In this study, students were allowed to choose their own project from a list of available recipients or create their own service-learning proposal along with an approved organization. Students who chose recipients in line with their interests greatly enjoyed their projects. Also, students could choose to complete their project on their own or within a group. This situation helped students to make selections based on their learning preferences. It must be noted, however, that although students were free to make their selections, some chose recipients out of pure convenience and not based on interest. When reviewing student comments and levels of satisfaction, it was found that those students did not experience the same level of satisfaction as those who made selections based on their interests or major course of study.

Lenhart’s et al. (2008) studies on factors that motivate writing were confirmed by the findings in this study. Their claims that motivation is stimulated by writing that is public, relevant, and challenging were found to be true in this study. Of prime importance, their finding that students state that writing for people is their single most important motivator seemed to be confirmed by the findings in this service-learning study. As shown by the significant differences in Motivation scores and statements made by students concerning the effort they put into their papers and projects, it was evident that creating a project for a specific person or persons seemed to motivate students to create a quality produce. These opportunities for sharing research and projects with real audiences seemed to improve students’ motivation and level of concerted effort.

The claim that service-learning strategies tend to engage students and increase their motivation for learning (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997; Amare & Grettano, 2006; Arca, 2005; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Dorman & Dorman, 2005; Flower, 1998;
Hutchinson, 2005; National Commission on Service Learning, 2002) has been shown to be true in this study. Two complimentary means of measurement provided rich data to validate engagement and motivation. The Likert scales revealed quantitative data of this construct while the reflection essays supplied qualitative measures via students’ own words.

Previous studies (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003; Brack & Hall, 2005; Deans & Meyer-Gonclaves, 1998; Dobrin & Weisser, 2002; Eble & Gaillet, 2004; Essid, 2006; Hafer, 1999; Heilker, 1997; Himley, 2004; Lester et al., 2003; Mortensen, 1998; Watters & Ford, 1995; Yancey, 2004) conducted on the importance of writing topics situated in real rhetorical situations, which encompass real people, real problems, and real audiences, are supported by this study. Part of students’ engagement, motivation, and satisfaction seems to be embedded in the rich rhetorical problem they are seeking to solve. Furthermore, Heilker’s (1997) claim that “writing teachers need to relocate the where of composition instruction outside the academic classroom in order to offer real rhetorical situations” (p.71) was strengthened by the results of this study. Support for Heilker’s statement was illustrated by the positive attitude students had toward the course along with the effort they put forth to write better papers. Lastly, Watters and Ford’s (1995) conviction that writing for interested readers outside the classroom gives students a real stake in writing was also found to be true as a number of students stated that they pushed themselves to write better because they desired to please their recipients.

Finally, one of the most important aspects of an academic writing course is the ability to meet the learning outcomes. Arca (2005) found that students in service-learning courses wrote richer, complex papers with varied sources. She also discovered that the service-learning experience profoundly changed them. This study confirms those
statements as the service-learning students met the learning outcomes better than the control group. These results seem to suggest that a service-learning component may help students to write better papers. In regard to her statement that the service-learning experience profoundly changed students, comments from student reflections support that changes did occur in a number of areas. Some of the changes students experienced included improved confidence concerning their abilities to create better work than previously thought, enjoyment of the experience even though some were initially unenthusiastic about service-learning, and higher expectations of themselves in regard to the quality of work they are able to produce.

Theoretical Implications of the Study

The wealth of literature promoting a constructivist framework for teaching has again been confirmed by this study. Alesandrini and Larson’s (2002) tenets have been shown to work well in a college classroom where lecture-based instruction is common. Teaching an academic course in writing should incorporate elements of exploration and discovery, community activities, real-life problems, and a variety of unique and creative renditions of research papers. Constructivist practices seem to help students view writing more positively, so efforts to continue building constructivist pedagogies into writing classrooms should be continued as positive attitudes toward writing appear to be linked to higher quality of writing.

The use of PBL strategies in an academic writing course is found to be an effective means for promoting research and projects for students in the service-learning courses. These findings confirmed the claims made by Chapman (2002), Flower (1998), and Gonzales and Nelson (2005) and help to build a stronger case for using a problem-based approach in a service-learning course. Although the level of collaboration and
leadership skills was not measured empirically, instructors noted that their students engaged in rich dialogues and had to employ leadership skills to accomplish their service-learning projects.

Another benefit of using PBL strategies within an academic writing course is that the proposal provided by the recipient helped students gain a specific focus for their research before they began the research process. This focus seemed to result in sufficient credible and relevant research for their academic paper. In addition to this, knowing that their project would be shared with the organization was no doubt a motivating factor and encouraged students to work hard to please the recipient. Because students had a real-life issue to work on, relevancy was created, helping students view their writing as purposeful. The PBL component provided motivation because students could see that their research could benefit organizations while expanding their knowledge of their intended major. As a result, relevance to their personal goals and good will to others worked well in this academic writing course.

Setting up learning communities inside and outside the classroom was shown to produce a number of positive effects and should be considered by writing teachers. Since this study authenticates claims that students appear to be more engaged (Carnell, 2007), active participants (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002), collaborative (Gonzales & Nelson, 2005), responsible (Brown, 1994; Carnell, 2007), interactive in dialogue (Brown, 1997; Carnell, 2007), and focused on learning inquiry (Adler-Kassner, 2003; Carnell, 2007), instructors should consider ways to implement learning communities when planning instruction. For some students, providing a professional community in addition to the classroom community made a large impact on the attitude, papers, and projects that were fashioned since real-world issues were at stake. By expanding the scope of learning
to include the local and college community, richer learning experiences occurred as real-world applications to broader realms branched out to settings beyond the classroom.

Watters and Ford’s (1995) guidebook has remarkable value in helping to get a beginning service-learning program off the ground. This resource guide was helpful in planning this study’s service-learning program because it explained the process and provided a method for structuring a service-learning program. For writing programs that seek more student engagement and higher quality papers and/or projects, this study guide can be a start in helping instructors initiate a service-learning program.

In these trying economic times when institutions of higher education are feeling the pinch from the economy, a desire to provide an education that satisfies students begins to take precedence on college campuses so that student retention remains stable. Although improving college retention was not a main goal of this study, offering courses that students view as satisfying could be a complimentary by-product of a service-learning program. Because students in this study experienced higher levels of satisfaction when compared to students in the traditional courses, schools seeking to improve retention rates might want to consider implementing service-learning initiatives. Hugg and Wurdinger’s model experienced similar results to this study, thus building a case for tying service-learning strategies into courses in higher education. As a final point, identifying components that lead to student satisfaction can also help program administrators justify the need for funding and supporting these programs.

It is no surprise that student choice rates high among college students and is decidedly valued by them. Student choice was found to be essential in this investigation. Just as Wittmer (2004) found student choice as a vital component, this study also found that when students were matched with an organization that fit well into their interest or
major, the research writing and projects proceeded nicely. However, this researcher had difficulty getting proposals from some disciplines such as the sciences and music departments. Despite this setback, some students were able to connect with professors in their majors to jointly develop a proposal, and those students did quite well in all areas of the course. A few other students floundered a bit and were unable to find a proposal that truly fit their interests, and as a result, were less favorable about the service-learning component. As previously mentioned, some students chose recipients out of mere convenience instead of interest, and their papers and projects did not reflect the same high quality as students who made choices based on interests or their major. Therefore, this study has indicated that an array of options should be offered for students involved in service-learning programs.

One of the major findings of this study was the empirical corroboration with the claim that service-learning strategies tend to engage students and increase their motivation for learning (Adler-Kassner et al., 1997; Amare & Grettano, 2006; Arca, 2005; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 2005; Dorman & Dorman, 2005; Flower, 1998; Hutchinson, 2005; National Commission on Service Learning, 2002). Success in this area may be due to a number of reasons that could include the following underlying principles: students had a relevant purpose for conducting their investigation; there were real audiences and real world applications; community interactions with professionals introduced students to issues in their majors; students were required to translate their writing to public forums; service-learning options allowed students to link the project to their majors or interests; serving others yielded satisfaction to the giver; and varied collaborations kept student interest and provided a forum for an exchange of ideas.
Which one of these influences made the greatest impact is unclear; nonetheless, engagement and motivation were found to be greater in the service-learning groups.

Implications for Practice

*Applications of Service-Learning in Academic Writing Programs*

Originally, this study was conducted to enhance the academic writing program at the college. While researching for methods to develop the program, service-learning studies emerged to offer viable methods to address these items. Within these studies, claims surfaced that students in service-learning programs were engaged, motivated, and satisfied in the course. This researcher sought to improve the academic writing program while trying to determine if service-learning strategies truly engaged, motivated, and satisfied students more than students who did not complete a service-learning component. Applications of how service-learning addressed the areas of concern along with implications of the results of this study will be presented in this section.

In the Writing Program Assessment Report of 2007-2008 (Delli-Carpini, 2008), some instructors expressed concern that students appeared to need guidance in finding appropriate, reasonable research topics that motivated them since suitable topics are the key to conducting solid research. The service-learning program addressed the need for helping students find research topics because the instructor had gathered real-world problems from the college and local community. Proposals were garnered from every discipline offered from the college, and if students could not find one that interested them, they were encouraged to pair up with an organization that they had an interest in. As a result, meaningful problems were presented, and projects took on relevance because students offered solutions that would actually be used. Heilker’s (1997) advice that writing teachers should relocate the where of composition instruction outside the
classroom should be well taken. If instructors of English composition can offer rhetorical situations positioned outside the classroom where students can connect with professionals in their prospective fields, academic essays can be improved while students tend to view the process in a favorable light.

Closely tied to students’ ability to select appropriate, reasonable research topics is motivation to investigate new and challenging topics. Instead of stretching their skills to delve into challenging subjects, some students at the target college had been choosing simpler, familiar topics (Delli-Carpini, 2008). Again, the service-learning project appeared to deter simplistic topics because students were provided with important, authentic rhetorical situations from the community that required investigative searches for new ideas and solutions. By getting the college and local community to provide the sources for research, the likelihood of simplistic topic selections was reduced, nudging students toward more challenging topics. Perhaps instructors of writing courses can help students in this process by contacting organizations and asking for topics requiring research that would benefit the organization. This extra step of calling and emailing organizations will take more effort and time on the part of an instructor, but student results from this action can be quite gratifying for all parties.

Deeper levels of student motivation and engagement found in this study should also be of interest to administrators at the college. Retention efforts are important to the college’s administration, so since student engagement may improve retention, it is possible that presenting the results from this study could lead to more administrative support. In order for this service-learning program to continue, more administrative support is necessary to help instructors run the program more efficiently.
Results in this study also reveal the important role motivation plays in writing programs. These findings seem to suggest that students produce better written compositions when their motivation is piqued. Instructors of composition programs should incorporate features into their assignments that can build upon students’ interests by offering choices in writing assignments situated in rhetorical situations that students deem as valuable. Students are more motivated to put their best effort into writing tasks when the purpose for writing is meaningful and can be practically translated to real world applications. Since motivation is an important component of writing, care should be taken to design assignments that can motivate students to invest their time and effort into writing projects.

At the college, some instructors have been concerned about continued incidents of plagiarism and have been looking for solutions to curb it. Although this study was not designed specifically to eliminate plagiarism, that is precisely what happened. No submitted logs or academic essays exhibited any signs of plagiarized work for either instructor, although other instructors teaching the academic writing course still had incidents of plagiarism. Even more compelling is the fact that this was the first time that both service-learning instructors did not have any instances of plagiarism. It appears that students were genuinely interested in what they were doing and truly wanted to please the recipients.

Another reason why incidents of plagiarism did not arise may be due to their perception that the assignments held value, and these assignments were not standardized ones that would be easy to plagiarize. In fact, even if students did want to plagiarize their final papers, doing so would have been rather difficult due to the unique nature of the assignment. Also, as the 2008 Pew Report on “Writing, Technology and Teens”
indicates, teens who view their writings as pleasurable, instrumental in purpose, relevant, challenging, and public are motivated to write, hence reducing the temptation to plagiarize. The report also states that teens become motivated when their writing has broader impact through publically sharing it in class, in person, in print, or on the internet because writing for real people is teens’ single most important motivator. Given all these factors, perhaps this model of instruction for academic essays holds promise in improving incidents of plagiarism. At any rate, if instructors desire to decrease plagiarism in their classes, they could design instruction that has a meaningful final project in mind—one that produces an item that is viewed as valuable to the creator and useful to those to those for whom it is prepared.

An additional area instructors sought to improve was student depth of research. It appears that some students had failed to go into depth with their research and settle for superficial findings. In this study, student papers were rated substantially higher by a panel of instructors not participating in the service-learning program. Additionally, the instructors of the service-learning program were pleased with the deepness of research contained in the academic essays. Again, it appears that a real purpose drove students to find answers for problems they were trying to solve, demonstrating their engagement and enhanced motivation in the process. Having a real purpose also required students to engage in deep investigations into unfamiliar, varied resources in order to draw in full nets of new types of knowledge. Due to the fact that their final project had a real-world audience, students were focused on meeting the needs of an organization. Instructors can encourage deeper investigations by using service-learning to graft real-world problems from the community into their writing classrooms.
The final area that instructors at the college were trying to address was how to incorporate effective measures to help students address topics tied to their major or career interests since many students require help on considering how to integrate topics related to their major. It was believed that if students could link career interests to their academic essays, then engagement, motivation, and satisfaction could also be improved. This study presented a practical way of addressing that need by offering proposals in a variety of fields. In this way, students could experience some of the facets associated with their future careers and understand their particular career options more acutely. Additionally, trying on career hats helped students to determine whether or not they wanted to continue pursuing their degree in a particular major or whether they should change their course of study. Several students commented in their reflection essays that either they definitely wanted to pursue their major or that the project helped them realize that a particular career choice no longer interested them. This study has shown that to help students link their academic essays with their future career choice, providing opportunities for students to interact with professionals in the field can play a powerful role in helping students effectively write about topics linked to their major of study.

*Value of Service-Learning*

Service-learning requires a good deal of time to develop, produce, and manage; nevertheless, the outcomes appear worthy of the time investment. In this study, it was clear that students were significantly more engaged, motivated, and satisfied than students in the alternative genre group. Positive student perceptions are important because students who view their work favorably tend to gain more from their academic endeavors. The most meaningful learning experiences are ones where students are actively engaged and participating in the learning process. Identifying strategies that
increase student engagement, motivation, and satisfaction while enhancing academic skills is important to educators, so finding ways to integrate a service-learning component into a course can provide a three-party benefit to students, recipients, and instructors.

However, composition instructors not only want students who view a process as valuable and meaningful; their top priority is to guide students into writing well written essays in order to meet the learning outcomes for a course. This study revealed that a service-learning component could improve the attainment of learning outcomes when compared to students who did not complete a service-learning project. The effect size of the difference was strong, giving credence to the inherent value of a service-learning component, yet the papers were not the only improvement noted by the service-learning instructors, the projects and presentations were excellent and some of the best the instructors have experienced while teaching this course. In a nutshell, the learning outcomes were better achieved by the service-learning group, sending a strong message that service-learning and an academic writing class can co-exist extremely well.

In this study, theory was linked with practice because students learned to write for different audiences and how to grapple with real rhetorical situations. Within this model of service-learning, students learned how to write for instructors, their peers, and professionals. Experience in adapting writing for meaningful exchanges gave students practice in writing for varied audiences, especially those in the professional world. Gains in academic writing were also achieved. Students are often accustomed to a drive-through society where information is quickly retrieved at the window and speedily consumed. Contemplation needed to design and weave logical arguments in order to create a rhetorical argument takes time and effort. This study tried to find ways to make this process enjoyable and thought-provoking so that students are fully equipped to excel in
their careers upon graduation.

Empirical research designs on service-learning programs in composition courses are very sparse. Of those that do exist, most empirical studies are limited to descriptive statistics that do not use control or experimental groups. This experimental study design is unique because it used experimental and control groups to study differences between the two methods. While causal conclusions cannot be drawn from this study, perhaps these results can help guide practitioners and policy makers in the practice and implementation of service-learning. In any case, this investigation has revealed a number of positive effects that took place in a service-learning composition course.

In this era where mastering mandated learning outcomes receives an extraordinary amount of weight, authentic learning experiences that apply to real world situations may be lost and result in unsatisfying learning experiences. Freshmen students need to get involved in their majors early on to affirm their career choice or disconfirm it so they do not lose valuable time or money in pursuing a major that will not fit their abilities and interests. Additionally, students need to gain proficiency in their academic writing skills so that they can carry these skills all the way through their higher education years.

Students seem to want to relate what they are learning in the classroom to the world outside the classroom. Perhaps we as educators should take note. If opening the door to applications beyond the classroom walls appears to help students conduct better research and write better papers while enjoying the process more than those who are confined to classroom-dominated pedagogies, then educators need to consider methods that can rejuvenate this process, which can be accomplished through service-learning initiatives. The attractiveness of this process is that meaningful learning can take place while helping a needy organization. Many students stated that they were positively
changed from this experience. Few students can walk away dissatisfied with learning when they have demonstrably assisted someone, for joy truly comes from giving.

Limitations

Limitations should be noted since this is a preliminary study conducted with a new kind of service-learning model. Additionally, during the semester, areas of ways to improve the delivery of the course were also noted and can be found in Appendix H. For the results of this study to be confirmed, replication needs to take place since this is one of the first studies that incorporated a service-learning model where academic writing students could select proposals directly related to their major. Additionally, causal conclusions cannot be made from this study, although differences in perceived value in the course and academic growth resulted. However, results from this study could serve as a baseline to determine if these results could be generalized to other populations.

The selection-treatment interaction is not readily transferrable to all college and university academic writing programs since this method is exploratory and needs replication to validate its results to all writing programs. Also, since this is an average-sized college in a medium-sized city that lacks a diverse student population, the effects may not be easily transferrable to larger populations or ones with a diverse student body. Currently, the majority of the student population consists mostly of white middle-class students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since the results in this study were strongly in favor of service-learning pedagogies, replication of similar programs such as this one would be necessary for evaluating consistency across different populations in higher education. These studies should focus on empirical measures since there is a lack of data in this area. By moving
beyond the qualitative realm, grounded theory can be more solidly built on the impact service-learning plays in composition courses. Specifically, it should be established whether or not the learning outcomes of courses are consistently met better through a service-learning model. Moreover, in addition to evaluating perceptions and academic essays, the quality of projects produced by students should be evaluated as well. The projects in the service-learning group were not compared with the groups that did not complete a service-learning component.

To further understand the factors that influence student perceptions and quality of essays and projects, studies should seek to determine which factors related to service-learning have the greatest impact on student perceptions and quality of work. If these factors can be identified, service-learning models could be better developed and implemented. Such research could also explore methods on how to integrate service-learning initiatives with course objectives.

A number of students stated that the service-learning component helped them to determine a career path. Some students indicated a change in their intended major while others stated that they discovered that the chosen major was not a good fit for them. To determine if this model did provide direction over the course of students’ studies at the college, follow up interviews could be conducted to determine long-term effects from the interaction with professionals during the course.

Another recommendation for future research would be to measure students’ perceptions of the course two years subsequent to the service-learning course in which they participated. It would be interesting to know if the service-learning program affected their career path or general education studies. Furthermore, contacting students prior to graduation to ask them to describe how this course prepared them for their future careers
could also shed insight upon this model. Perhaps it could be determined if long-term
effects existed from the service-learning project.

Finally, a need for more experimental research in composition should be
conducted. Studies in composition have circumvented experimental designs for far too
long. This empirical study provided new insights on the impact that a service-learning
component had on the quality of student writing and students’ perceptions of the process.
Many more pedagogical approaches in composition have yet to be evaluated through
experimental measures to determine the effectiveness of teaching practices. While
qualitative studies and anecdotal evidence certainly have value in composition studies,
these approaches only paint a partial portrait in subdued gray hues. By incorporating
experimental designs into the muted color scheme, more color to the portrait can reveal
fascinating forms that were previously veiled. Scientific research can offer a rigorous
approach to improving our understanding of practices and perhaps energize practitioners
in the classroom. To truly determine effective strategies, composition models should be
tested empirically along with qualitative and anecdotal measures. By artfully mixing the
qualitative and experimental components, a vivid portrait can emerge with the potential
to inform writing instructors of effective approaches in composition.

Final Thoughts

Giving to others while learning is a powerful model for educators to consider
since the satisfaction it brings to the learner appears to serve as an inward force that
compels them to delve deeper into gaining knowledge and applying their learning. This
model yielded remarkably significant learning experiences as the experiential
components positively interacted with the academic requirements. It is unknown whether
the benefits reaped from this program will have long term effects on students’ careers or
educational paths, but one can be fairly certain that students have learned in novel ways. Service-learning in an academic writing course has demonstrated the ability to fashion an experience for students that they will not soon forget.
References


The WPA as Advocate for Engagement. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.


1. I was pleased with my final research paper.

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2. Because I knew that I would be sharing my alternative genre project with others, I was inspired to put more effort into my final project.

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3. Listening to my classmates’ oral presentations was boring.

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4. Giving an oral presentation provided little to no inspiration to help me to be more actively involved in the completion of my alternative genre.

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5. Writing an academic paper for this course was satisfying.

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6. I was focused as I conducted my research because I knew it would help me develop my alternative genre.

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7. I am pleased with the improvement I made in my academic writing abilities while taking this course.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

8. Keeping the alternative genre in mind did not provide motivation for me to write my research paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

9. The time spent in discussing my alternative genre with my peers was meaningful.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

10. I was motivated to complete a well-written paper because I knew that I would be sharing my findings with others.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

11. I dreaded sharing my alternative genre with my classmates.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

12. I was interested in meeting with the individuals with whom I would share my alternative genre so that I could discuss my project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

13. I had little to no interest in preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

14. I was inspired to write my literature review because I understood its significance for my final project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much
15. Completing an alternative genre together with the research paper failed to inspire me to write a better research paper.

Not at all somewhat very much

16. I felt that the time spent in creating the alternative genre project was a waste of my time.

Not at all somewhat very much

17. It was difficult to take my writing assignments more seriously even though I was writing for a broader audience.

Not at all somewhat very much

18. I had no interest in meeting with other individuals to discuss my alternative genre.

Not at all somewhat very much

19. I was satisfied with the final product of my academic genre project.

Not at all somewhat very much

20. My final research paper was of poor quality.

Not at all somewhat very much

21. Knowing that I would be sharing my alternative genre with others did little to arouse me to put more effort into my final project.

Not at all somewhat very much

22. I had little desire to share my alternative genre with others.

Not at all somewhat very much
23. Creating an alternative genre motivated me to write the research paper.

Not at all somewhat very much

24. I am disappointed in the lack of improvement in my academic writing abilities while taking this class.

Not at all somewhat very much

25. Discussions with my instructor concerning my alternative genre failed to help me maintain interest in the project.

Not at all somewhat very much

26. Even though I knew that I would be sharing my results with others, it did not motivate me to produce my best writing.

Not at all somewhat very much

27. I put little effort into creating my alternative genre.

Not at all somewhat very much

28. I was motivated to find relevant sources about my research topic.

Not at all somewhat very much

29. I am content with the improvement I have made in writing academic essays.

Not at all somewhat very much

30. I put more effort into this course because the alternative genre gave me more motivation.

Not at all somewhat very much
31. I worked hard to create an alternative genre that would please my intended audience.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

32. Pairing the alternative genre requirement with the research paper actually gave me more motivation for writing a better research paper.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

33. I feel dissatisfaction with my improvement in my ability to write academic essays.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

34. Sharing my project with others energized me to complete my research.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

35. Completing the alternative genre project was meaningful because it benefitted my long-term career goals.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

36. Writing for an audience in addition to my instructor encouraged me to take my writing assignments more seriously.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

37. My long-term career goals were unaffected by the completion of my alternative genre.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

38. I felt the alternative genre provided an incentive for me to create a better project.

Not at all  somewhat  very much
39. I lacked interest in the creation of my alternative genre.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

40. Determining my alternative genre project beforehand provided an incentive for me as I located sources for my annotated bibliography.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

41. I enjoyed listening to my classmates’ oral presentations.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

42. My writing skills are better because I have learned to write for a broader audience.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

43. Talking about my alternative genre project with my peers was a waste of time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

44. I enjoyed sharing my alternative genre project with my peers during the oral presentations.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

45. Discussing my alternative genre project with my instructor kept my interest in the project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

46. I really wanted to share my alternative genre with others.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much
47. The alternative genre fell short in providing an incentive for me to create a better project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

48. Creating the alternative genre kept my attention.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

49. Although I knew I would be sharing my project with others, I felt that researching was an unpleasant task.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

50. I did not care about creating an alternative genre that would please my intended audience.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

51. I lacked inspiration to write my literature review even though I knew it was important for developing my alternative genre project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

52. I maintained a high level of interest when I was preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

53. I put a great deal of effort into preparing my alternative genre.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much
54. I lacked an incentive to locate sources even though I knew how I would translate my research into my alternative genre.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

55. Even though I knew my research was directly linked to my alternative genre, I still had trouble focusing during the research phase.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

56. I am dissatisfied with my writing in this course.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

57. My final academic genre project could have been better.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

58. I remained actively involved in working on my alternative genre because I knew I would be giving it in the oral presentation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

59. This is the best research paper I have ever written.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

60. I believe that creating the alternative genre was a worthwhile use of my time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much
Appendix B: Experimental Group Academic Writing Student Perceptions Scales

Reflect upon your experiences in your WRT 202 course, and then read each question carefully and rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the number for each question. Note that there are not any correct or incorrect responses, but please carefully choose your answer in an effort to accurately portray your views.

1. I was pleased with my final research paper.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all somewhat very much

2. Because I knew that I would be sharing my service-learning project with others, I was inspired to put more effort into my final project.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all somewhat very much

3. Listening to my classmates’ oral presentations was boring.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all somewhat very much

4. Giving an oral presentation provided little to no inspiration to help me to be more actively involved in the completion of my service-learning project.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all somewhat very much

5. Writing an academic paper for this course was satisfying.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all somewhat very much

6. I was focused as I conducted my research because I knew it would help me develop my service-learning project.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all somewhat very much
7. I am pleased with the improvement I made in my academic writing abilities while taking this course.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

8. Keeping the service-learning project in mind did not provide motivation for me to write my research paper.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

9. The time spent in discussing my service-learning with my peers was meaningful.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

10. I was motivated to complete a well-written paper because I knew that I would be sharing my findings with others.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

11. I dreaded sharing my service-learning project with my classmates.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

12. I was interested in meeting with the individuals with whom I would share my service-learning project so that I could discuss my project.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

13. I had little to no interest in preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much
14. I was inspired to write my literature review because I understood its significance for my final project.

Not at all somewhat very much

15. Completing a service-learning project together with the research paper failed to inspire me to write a better research paper.

Not at all somewhat very much

16. I felt that the time spent in creating the service-learning project was a waste of my time.

Not at all somewhat very much

17. It was difficult to take my writing assignments more seriously even though I was writing for a broader audience.

Not at all somewhat very much

18. I had no interest in meeting with other individuals to discuss my service-learning project.

Not at all somewhat very much

19. I was satisfied with the final product of my service-learning project.

Not at all somewhat very much

20. My final research paper was of poor quality.

Not at all somewhat very much
21. Knowing that I would be sharing my service-learning project with others did little to arouse me to put more effort into my final project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much

22. I had little desire to share my service-learning project with others.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much

23. Creating a service-learning project motivated me to write the research paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much

24. I am disappointed in the lack of improvement in my academic writing abilities while taking this class.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much

25. Discussions with my instructor concerning my service-learning project failed to help me maintain interest in the project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much

26. Even though I knew that I would be sharing my results with others, it did not motivate me to produce my best writing.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much

27. I put little effort into creating my service-learning project.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much

28. I was motivated to find relevant sources about my research topic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Not at all somewhat very much
29. I am content with the improvement I have made in writing academic essays.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

30. I put more effort into this course because the service-learning project gave me more motivation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

31. I worked hard to create a service-learning project that would please my intended audience.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

32. Pairing the service-learning requirement with the research paper actually gave me more motivation for writing a better research paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

33. I feel dissatisfaction with my improvement in my ability to write academic essays.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

34. Sharing my project with others energized me to complete my research.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

35. Completing the service-learning project was meaningful because it benefitted my long-term career goals.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

36. Writing for an audience in addition to my instructor encouraged me to take my writing assignments more seriously.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much
37. My long-term career goals were unaffected by the completion of my service-learning project.

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<tr>
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<td>very much</td>
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38. I felt the service-learning aspect provided an incentive for me to create a better project.

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39. I lacked interest in the creation of my service-learning project.

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40. Determining my service-learning project beforehand provided an incentive for me as I located sources for my annotated bibliography.

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41. I enjoyed listening to my classmates’ oral presentations.

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42. My writing skills are better because I have learned to write for a broader audience.

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<tr>
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43. Talking about my service-learning project with my peers was a waste of time.

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</table>
44. I enjoyed sharing my service-learning project with my peers during the oral presentations.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

45. Discussing my service-learning project with my instructor kept my interest in the project.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

46. I really wanted to share my service-learning project with others.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

47. The service-learning project fell short in providing an incentive for me to create a better project.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

48. Creating the service-learning project kept my attention.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

49. Although I knew I would be sharing my project with others, I felt that researching was an unpleasant task.

Not at all  somewhat  very much

50. I did not care about creating a service-learning project that would please my intended audience.

Not at all  somewhat  very much
51. I lacked inspiration to write my literature review even though I knew it was important for developing my service-learning project.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

52. I maintained a high level of interest when I was preparing for my oral presentation at the end of the semester.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

53. I put a great deal of effort into preparing my service-learning project.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

54. I lacked an incentive to locate sources even though I knew how I would translate my research into my service-learning project.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

55. Even though I knew my research was directly linked to my service-learning project, I still had trouble focusing during the research phase.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

56. I am dissatisfied with my writing in this course.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much

57. My final service-learning project could have been better.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all somewhat very much
58. I remained actively involved in working on my service-learning project because I knew I would be giving it in the oral presentation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

59. This is the best research paper I have ever written.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much

60. I believe that creating the service-learning project was a worthwhile use of my time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all somewhat very much
Appendix C: Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric

Student: ______________________________

**WRT 202 Assessment Criteria**

To what degree does this academic essay demonstrate the following outcomes? Rate on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being a full demonstration of that competency and 1 suggesting no evidence of that competency.

1. The source material employed is demonstrably credible
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

2. The source material chosen is relevant to the topic of the paper and its argument
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

3. The source material is sufficient to support the paper’s argument
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

4. The source material is summarized in a coherent enough way to show the state of discussion on the topic
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

5. The argument demonstrates clear planning through its organized presentation of ideas
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

6. The argument demonstrates serious reflection on the topic through the author’s own voice and contributions to the topic (as opposed to mere summary)
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

7. The essay is consistent in style and tone, and is appropriate for its intended academic audience.
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

8. The essay demonstrates competence in the use of mature sentence styles that are appropriate to college level academic writing
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

9. The essay shows competence in the conventions of standard edited American English
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1

10. The essay demonstrates the use of appropriate methods of APA or MLA documentation
    7 6 5 4 3 2 1
HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT:
To what degree does this essay demonstrate the students’ competence in producing an effective, polished, academic essay in keeping with the major learning outcomes of WRT 202 (as described above):

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Assessment Instructions

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRT 202 ASSESSMENT SESSION

Thanks so much for agreeing to act as a reader for our assessment of Academic papers for WRT 202. In order to make our session as expeditious as possible, I wanted to send you all the protocol for the assessment in advance.

We’ll begin at noon on WEDNESDAY, MAY 20th IN HUM 10. I’ll have lunch, coffee, and snacks delivered to the room by about 11:30 to keep us going.

When we begin reading papers (you’ll each be assigned about 10-11 papers in an electronic format), I’ll ask that you:

• Read each paper all the way through, including the works cited or reference page, before filling in assessment data; that is, we’ll be using holistic reading method

• After reading each paper, you’ll be asked to evaluate the degree to which each paper demonstrates 1) specific traits directly related to our course outcomes and 2) the degree to which it, in sum, the paper suggests that the major outcomes of the course have been demonstrably met. You don’t need to look back at the paper as you fill out the assessment sheet unless you want to check a particular item.

• Remember that the assessment should be based on observable facets of the paper

• Differences in the papers that seem to be based upon variances in the assignment given to them should NOT be taken into account; try to consistently base the assessment on the specific learning outcome listed and the degree to which it was fulfilled. (Remember that you are NOT grading the student, but simply assessing the paper in front of you; we’ll account for differences in assignments through another facet of our assessment.)

• As you complete each assessment sheet, you will turn it in to Karen Johnson, who will start to tabulate the scores.

• If you have any questions, let me know.
WRT 202 Service-Learning Guidebook

Professor Johnson

Spring 2009
A Different Approach to Academic Writing: Integrating Service-Learning Projects with an Academic Writing Course

Learning to write research papers through a service-learning requirement yields a number of benefits for college students. Not only does providing a much-needed service for local organizations bring a special kind of satisfaction for the writer, it also stretches authors to different types of composing that is particularly suited to unique rhetorical situations. Through service-learning initiatives, students are challenged to build and refine their writing and collaborative skills while maintaining active engagement in the projects. Finally, providing a service to organizations that are related to students’ potential careers refines career goals, confirms or dispels choices of majors, and builds knowledge and interest in sought-after professions.

This course requires students to take on challenging reading assignments, complete sophisticated writing assignments, and compose and translate a research project into a meaningful product for an organization. Such activities promise to create innovative learning experiences through field work and collaborative engagements so that students become more effective writers while gaining new understandings of real life expectations in professional careers. Through such a marriage of research writing and service-learning, students may become more effective citizens because they have expanded their knowledge and skills while making a difference in an organization that matters to them.

Learning Outcomes

Fulfilling the learning outcomes of this course will be accomplished through researching unique problems embedded within organizations and meeting with individuals in order to generate possible solutions that satisfy identified needs. Clearing the path to reach this goal will occur through incremental steps where instruction in conducting research, learning how to locate and evaluate sources, developing the ability to summarize and synthesize reliable information, writing in academic form, engaging in prewriting activities, compiling a reading and research log, and learning how to revise and polish one’s writing is carried out. Linking writing projects to meaningful and real life situations gives students a sense of working toward reaching tangible audiences, feel more responsible in devising practical solutions, develop collaborative skills, consider varying rhetorical scenarios, utilize critical and analytical thinking, build competence and self-esteem, learn how to adapt to public discourse, create an alternative genre for publication, and merge different disciplines into writing projects devoid of simplistic renditions of dry, pat solutions. Simply put, service-learning expands students’ learning through hands-on experiences in the real world where quandaries exist in multivariate forms.
Past Voices of Student Service-Learning Providers

Varied responses from students who have participated in a service-learning project have shed light upon their perspective of this activity. Read the perspectives of some of the students who have participated in this type of learning:

My service-learning experience contrasted with my previous classroom and writing experiences because this project forced me to take a more “hands-on” approach and to apply what I had been taught. The project gave the students a chance to implement many different aspects of their schooling toward creating a final product. Also, it was a different learning experience because it required the students to use previous knowledge, new knowledge, and their skills and to combine them all together.

I learned that to participate in a service-learning project is one of the most fulfilling ways to obtain knowledge and experience.

Honestly, at first I was not too excited about writing a research paper, but in the end I really enjoyed writing it. I learned so much new information that I can use in my career as a teacher and just as a student in my future classes. Also, it was really cool being able to help out an organization here at York.

In all previous classes I just wrote essays based on research from the internet and the essays were never used anywhere outside of the classroom. In this class the service learning project has taught me that there is a use for the things that I am learning in my major. It shows that an education is useful outside of school.

I learned that I am actually capable of producing better quality work than I previously thought. Through this project I have helped this college and proved that anyone can make a difference if they work hard.

The final project was definitely useful to my future career. Researching how my major can help someone in the community solve a problem was fun and rewarding. It made me feel useful and involved. Creating the application project was by far my favorite part and I look forward to doing similar activities in my job in the future. Doing this project only cemented my passion for entering the field of PR.

I’ve never had to do a comprehensive process in a class before, so it was a refreshing change to the usual research process where you only write to please the teacher. This process exceeded my expectations when I found out that the project I made will actually be used and not just done for the sake of the class. It was really nice to feel like I’ve done something for a real purpose in the classroom. I’ve also learned that I can create something useful to others and that the talents I have are appreciated.
It was great! I really felt a personal connection to my work. I felt that this was actually an important thing that people were counting on, that students were counting on. I always have had high expectations; this is just one of the few times they have actually been met.

I learned a lot. I have solidified my personal values. I have found that as a member of a learning environment it is important to contribute your utmost best for the best of the other learners and educators. My community needs people to give back in whatever way they can; otherwise it does not function to its potential. I am giving back to it what it has given me.

The Possibilities

After researching a particular problem and composing a review of literature on the topic, the possibilities for designing solutions are limitless. Final renditions can take the form of proposals, brochures, news releases, radio advertisements, a letter to the editor, newspaper articles, posters, fliers, postcards, newsletters, blogs, websites, commercials, videos, montages, artwork, PowerPoint presentations, technology support, educational materials, drama, or music. The key to developing useful products is to choose an organization that piques your interest. Included in this guide are proposed projects that you can investigate; however, this list is not exhaustive, and if you have an organization that you would like to work with, then discuss this with your instructor to determine the feasibility of working with your desired contact.

Course Description

There are several aims of this academic writing course. The first main objective is to write a well written academic paper that is purposeful and solidly researched. Within the parameters of this task, students will need link the research process to a service-learning component. Students will learn about service-learning and what it entails so that direction to the research project is illuminated. Investigations into service-learning will take place through perusing articles and websites, and follow-up written responses will be required. Once students have chosen an organization to work with, they will gather background information about the posed problem. All rhetorical problems have a history, and a good researcher will unveil the ideas that others have contributed in the development of ideas on the proposed topic. Research in the real world always requires an understanding of the problem before formulating a solution. This work will require learning how to locate and evaluate materials from a variety of research sources and then evaluate them for credibility and relevance. Once these sources are located, time will be spent compiling a reading and research log that contains well-written summaries and responses on the topics. Reflecting on these activities is vital as students will have to consider their own ideas in light of other points of view. From these responses and summaries, a review of literature will be written by synthesizing the information on the topic. During this process, students will prepare a proposal for the project that justifies
the direction your project is taking. Your fellow students will offer input in order to improve upon your plan. Throughout the writing and proposal process, writing for varied audiences will need to be taken into consideration, and flexibility in language choices for writing in writing in an academic form and for public discourse will need to be demonstrated. Finally, once the paper and project have been completed, a final oral presentation will be given to the class.

A major part of this course requires active involvement with an organization where students will visit, gather background information, collaborate, and exchange ideas. Students will need to research the organization’s history, the problem, and possible solutions. Once a project has been completed, meetings with the organization will need to take place in order to receive feedback on the appropriateness of the alternative genre and then make revisions as directed.

Participation in classroom discussions and completion of homework assignments is crucial to success in this class. Attendance is a must as discussions that will help students will occur throughout the semester. Students who miss more than three classes generally do not do well in this course and risk failing the course. Following the course calendar that is posted on Blackboard can keep students on track and help them to plan for long term projects.
Student Guidelines for Service-Learning Project

1. Call or email the contact person for your chosen organization as soon as possible. Identify yourself as a student in the WRT 202 course who is completing the service-learning component. Then make an appointment for a meeting and record this information in your service-learning log.

2. Before meeting with the contact person, review the “Service-Learning Project Proposal,” “Service-Learning Agreement,” and the organization’s description of the needs and proposed product because the first meeting with the contact person is very important. During this meeting, you will get to know the individual you will be working with and seeking to understand the organization’s needs and problems. Your contact person will possess a wealth of information in which to get you started and can provide you with research sources to initiate your searches, which can make the research investigations go more smoothly. Without this base to start from, your research will lack purpose. Use this meeting to learn what expectations are required and to work out an assignment that will please the organization as well as meet the goals of this course.

Remember, your interactions with your contact person provide a wonderful opportunity for you to learn how professionals work in your community. Do not be timid in these interactions. These organizations have volunteered to participate in this endeavor and look forward to working with you. Enjoy these community engagements and seek to grow and learn from the meetings.

As you work with your contact person, remember to act professionally and responsibly in all your interactions. When you need assistance from your contact person, get in touch with him or her as soon as possible. Do not delay your projects or try to pull it together
at the last minute. Finally, do not ask for extensions on the project. Plan well, and your final project should be completed in a timely manner.

3. As assignments are completed, fill out the “Service-Learning Log.” You will keep an electronic copy of this and turn it in on the designated due dates. A copy of this log follows this document.
Student Log of Required Benchmarks

*Student instructions:*
*Fill out this log and the completion date as benchmarks are accomplished. Give your instructor a copy each time a benchmark is completed.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Contacted the organization to set up initial interview</td>
<td>1/29</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. When and where should the first meeting take place?</td>
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<td>2. Interviewed the contact person</td>
<td>2/10</td>
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<td>1. What is the problem or dilemma that needs a fresh solution?</td>
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<td>2. What kind of document, written product, or solution is needed?</td>
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<td>3. Who will read it?</td>
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<td>4. How will it be used?</td>
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<td>5. How long should it be?</td>
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<td>6. What format should it follow?</td>
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<td>7. Where are good sources of information that can help me in finding solutions?</td>
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<td>8. Where can I find the history of this organization and on this problem?</td>
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<td>9. What is the best way for me to get feedback from you on your evaluation of my project? (By email or face-to-face meetings?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Feedback from the first draft of service-learning project</td>
<td>4/23</td>
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<td>What elements need to be changed or refined?</td>
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<td>Have all the necessary components been completed?</td>
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<td>What suggestions do you have for improvement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Due Date</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Discussion Board Posting</td>
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<td>Answer the following questions on the Discussion Board:</td>
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<td>1. What practical snags are you running into?</td>
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<td>2. What specific writing problems are you having?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. How have you adapted your writing, dictation, tone, and style to your intended audiences?</td>
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<td>4. What new insights, discoveries, or problems have arisen while carrying out this project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Final Draft of Project Due</td>
<td>4/30</td>
<td>When you presented your final project to the contact person, what was their reaction or response?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Service-Learning Evaluation for Student</td>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>Fill in the response sheet and turn it in by the due date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>What innovative techniques are you going to employ in your final presentation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Service-Learning Project Proposal

Instructions for Student

During your interview with the contact person, fill out this form. When the form is completed, keep an electronic copy for yourself, and then give one copy to your instructor and one copy to the service-learning recipient.

Date: _________________________________________________________________

Student: _______________________________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________________________

Email: _________________________________________________________________

Organization: __________________________________________________________

Contact Person: _________________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: _________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: _________________________________________

1. Describe the project to be undertaken. Include the following information: The problem that needs to be addressed and the project’s purpose, intended audience, topic, and length or breadth of project.

2. How will the project be used?
3. Where will you locate your primary and secondary sources of information? What specific sources will you utilize from the databases and will you use interviews to gather information?

4. When is your next scheduled meeting with your contact person?
Service-Learning Project Agreement

Instructions for Student

Fill out this form shortly after your interview with your contact person. Once it is completed and signed by your contact person, turn in a copy of the proposed project to your instructor by 2/24.

Date: ___________________________________________________________________

Organization: ____________________________________________________________

Contact Person: ____________________________________________________________

Student: ________________________________________________________________

Instructor: ________________________________________________________________

Project Proposal

1. Problem to be investigated:

2. Specific topic or area for project:

3. A brief description of what the final project will look like:

4. Estimated length/breadth of project:

5. Specific goals to be accomplished in the project:
6. Audience for whom the project is intended:

7. Genre for project (brochure, poster, radio advertisement, etc.):

Signatures

Student ___________________________________________________________

Contact Person _____________________________________________________
Service-Learning Audience Awareness Worksheet

Instructions for Student

Touch base with your contact person in order to answer the questions to this worksheet and turn in a typed, hard copy to me.

1. How large of an audience will the project reach?

2. How diverse is the audience in terms of their gender, age, economic, political, and social background? What distinguishes them as a group?

3. What does the audience value?

4. In what ways will the audience be interested in your project/subject?

5. How will the project benefit the audience?

6. How are you planning on garnering subjects’ interest in your project?

7. Will the audience need background knowledge in order to understand the project? Are there any technical terms or concepts that need to be defined?

8. Can you anticipate any objections that the audience might have to your project? If so, how are you planning on addressing these issues?
Service-Learning Project Update

Instructions for Students
Fill out this form and send it to your contact person. After they have signed it and returned it to you, give a copy of this form to me.

Date: ________________________________________________________________

Organization: __________________________________________________________

Contact Person: ________________________________________________________

Student: ______________________________________________________________

Give a brief description of your project:

1. Explain your progress to date.
   - What has been completed?
   - What is still in progress?
   - What needs to be completed?

2. Describe any problems that have arisen:

3. How are you planning on dealing with the obstacles?
4. How can your organization or contact person help you in this project?

5. What steps do you need to take in order to meet your deadlines?

Student signature: _________________________________________________________

Contact person signature: _______________________________________________
Service-Learning Project Evaluation

Instructions for students:

Please fill out this form completely and email to: kjohns10@ycp.edu no later than May 7, 2009.

Name of Contact Person: ___________________________________________________

Name of Organization: _____________________________________________________

Student: ________________________________________________________________

Please answer the following questions and give a fair evaluation of each area.

1. Give a brief history of your project, revisiting the joys and trials and critical incidents.

2. Do you feel that your project will be useful to your organization? Why or why not?

3. What was most worthwhile about your project?

4. What new educational experiences did you gain from this course?

5. What did you learn about writing that you might not have learned in a traditional writing classroom?

6. What did you learn about the importance of communicating to varied audiences in this course?
7. What snags did you experience while trying to develop your service-learning project? How did you deal with these issues?

8. What new insights or discoveries did you gain while completing your research and service-learning project?

9. How did the project contribute to the intended purpose, or in other words, how was your project useful to the organization or contact person?

10. Did you consider the final project to be of excellent, good, fair, or poor quality? Please explain why.

11. How well did your organization or contact person work with you? Please explain your answer.

12. Do you consider the developed project as useful to your future career?

13. Did performing this project help clarify the direction you might want to take in your career? Why and in what ways?

14. In what ways could the process for carrying out this service-learning project be improved?

15. What advice would you give to future students who need to complete the requirements for this course?
16. **How did your service-learning experience contrast with your previous classroom and writing experiences?** Have your educational values or expectations been altered in any way? Please explain your answers.

17. **What did you learn about yourself—your personal values, responsibilities as a member of this campus, your community, or as a citizen of this country?**

18. **In what ways did the readings, writing, and discussions that you did for our class help you to complete this project?** What could have been improved?

19. **Would you choose to be involved in a similar type of project in the future?** Why or why not?
Service-Learning Project Evaluation

Instructions:

Service-learning recipient: Please fill out this form completely and email to: kjohns10@ycp.edu no later than 5/7/09.

Name of Contact Person: ___________________________________________________

Name of Organization: _____________________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________________________

Email address: ___________________________________________________________

Collaborating Student: _____________________________________________________

Please answer the following questions and give a fair evaluation of the student.

1. Approximately how many times did you meet or talk with the student in the development of this project? Were these meetings fruitful? In what ways?

2. In your estimation, did the student act professionally and knowledgeable about the subject matter? Please provide reasons for your answers.

3. How did the project contribute to the intended purpose?

4. Did you consider the final project to be of excellent, good, fair, or poor quality? Please explain your selection of quality.
5. Was the writing, which includes the diction, tone, and style, suitable for the intended audience? In what ways?

6. Do you consider the developed project as useful to your organization? Why and in what ways?

7. In what ways could the process for carrying out this service-learning project be improved for future students?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation. Your input is very valuable and helps to determine the effectiveness of this project.
Appendix F: Recipient Informational Packet

Service-Learning Recipient Informational Packet
To Whom It May Concern:

Your department has been selected as a possible candidate to participate in a unique learning initiative known as service-learning. Students from six different academic writing courses will be connecting with community organizations in an effort to translate a research paper into a meaningful product for these organizations. The goal of this partnership is to create student-centered learning experiences through fieldwork and community engagements so that students become more effective writers while gaining new understandings of real life expectations in professional careers. Through such a union of research writing and service-learning, students may become more effective citizens because they have expanded their knowledge and skills while making a difference in an organization that matters to them.

To determine if this joint venture is one that would interest you, consider whether or not you have a need for updated documents, novel means of advertisement, or alternative forms of communication or presentation. Past service-learning projects have included proposals, brochures, news releases, radio advertisements, letters to the editor, newspaper articles, posters, fliers, postcards, newsletters, blogs, websites, videos, montages, artwork, PowerPoint presentations, technology support, educational materials, drama, or music. This proposed list is not exhaustive, and if you have a different proposal, then please feel free to make a suggestion that fits your needs. The key is to choose a project that can present a doable challenge for students within the time frame of the spring semester. This two-fold partnership allows college students who often have fresh perspectives on cultural issues to take on a writing-related task and breathe new life into a project that directly benefits an organization.

If you are interested in participating in this undertaking, then check out the information in this document to make sure that you wish to participate. Although there is not a great time commitment on your part, in addition to meeting with your student three or four times throughout the semester, you will need to complete a few short forms. These documents are included on the next few pages along with a description of the expectations for the service-learning recipients. After you have determined whether or not if this would interest you, then choose three or four suggestions for projects. Once you have made this decision, use the document, “Service-Learning Proposal” that follows this letter to write a short proposal for each suggestion that details the project that you would like to see accomplished. Within this one-paragraph proposal, explain the problem
to be solved, the desired product to be developed, and any other expectations that you have. Students will choose one project to tackle but do not expect every project to be chosen. As part of the process, students will first conduct research on the topic and write a review of literature before developing the project. After the product has been completed, students will be sharing their projects with their fellow classmates at the end of the semester. If you wish, you are welcome to attend this final presentation with your student.

To be included in this initiative, you will need to email your proposal to [email omitted] by 1/15/08 so that I can compile this information in a guidebook for students. This guidebook will include all the requirements and deadlines for the projects along with the proposals compiled from a range of organizations. The informational section of the guidebook that is given to students is included in this email in case you would like additional background on the program. On the first day of the spring semester, the final version of the guidebook will be given to students. Timely proposal submissions for the guidebook are crucial so that students have enough time to choose a project and meet with the contact person. Therefore, it is important to send a proposal by January 15th if you desire to get involved.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this learning initiative. I believe that you will find this undertaking interesting, valuable, and refreshing. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Karen Johnson
[Name Omitted] Writing Instructor
Requirements for Participating Organizations

Becoming a service-learning recipient can provide mutual opportunities for both parties. Students gain the experience of working in real world venues while the recipients can gain satisfaction from mentoring and receive a valuable product or application in the process. There is a specified process to this project, so you will need to be aware of the benchmarks that will need to be documented along the way. A log sheet that spells out the whole process follows this explanation so that you can understand the deadlines that the students must meet.

Your main requirements are to guide the student in developing a project that you would like to see accomplished in your organization. Along the way, you will need to carry out the following tasks:

- Fill out the initial proposal form (included in this packet)
- Sign the project agreement form provided by the student
- Answer student questions about the intended audience
- Sign the project update that is given to you by the student
- Complete the service-learning project evaluation form (included in this packet)

The time spent in filling out these forms and checking student progress will not require a much time, but these documents are important for both the student and instructor. Your first priority will be to fill out the proposal form so that students are clear on the expectations of the organization and email it to me by 1/15/08 so that I can compile the information into a guidebook.

Students are responsible for setting up an initial meeting with you. They are provided with a description of the project proposal that you submitted so they will be familiar with the goals of the project before contacting you.

During the initial meeting, students will fill out the “Service-Learning Project Proposal” with you. Make sure that you clearly lay out the details for the student so that they have a clear focus on the intent of the project. This first meeting will set the tone of the project and afford an opportunity for you to clearly lay out the expectations for the project such as the following: the type of project, the audience, purpose, length, and resources that will guide the student in obtaining information. Familiarizing the student with the history and mission of your organization will greatly guide the student along with the suggestions you provide on how to carry out the project.

Once students have begun researching the problem, they will come up with a more concrete and tangible form for the project. At this juncture, you will be presented with the “Service-Learning Project Agreement.” When you sign this form, you are giving
your stamp of approval with the direction that the project is going. If you see changes that need to be made, please direct the student at that time. The student must make those changes before you sign the document.

After the student has worked on the project for several weeks, please review the “Service-Learning Project Update” and, if you agree with the assessment, sign the document. Again, if you feel that changes need to be made, direct student to make changes before signing the document. This is a good opportunity to redirect the student if needed so it is a good idea to carefully assess the project to avoid future issues.

When the project is completed, you will need to complete the “Service-Learning Evaluation” for the student. Your input will be important in assessing the progress of the student and the quality of the project, and your evaluation will be used to help determine the student’s grade for the project.

A schedule of due dates can be found on the next page, and this log illustrates how a major portion of the time that students spend on the project is concentrated near the end of the semester. Although staying on top of the project is the student’s primary responsibility, it is fine if you want to remind him or her of upcoming deadlines. When students do contact you, please try to respond to your student in a timely manner so that he or she has sufficient time to complete a quality product.

Finally, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. Together, we can not only help set the stage for meaningful student learning, but we can also provide a solution for your organization. Collaborations such as these are at the heart of learning, and I am excited to see how this process contributes to students’ educational experiences, future career aspirations, and connection to community organizations. Thank you for your interest and willingness to help get this initiative up and running.
Student Log of Required Benchmarks

Student instructions:
*Fill out this log and the completion date as benchmarks are accomplished. Give your instructor a copy each time a benchmark is completed.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Contacted the organization to set up initial interview</td>
<td>1/29</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. When and where should the first meeting take place?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Interviewed the contact person | 2/10 | | Answer the following questions within this document and email the answers to me:  
10. What is the problem or dilemma that needs a fresh solution?  
11. What kind of document, written product, or solution is needed?  
12. Who will read it?  
13. How will it be used?  
14. How long should it be?  
15. What format should it follow?  
16. Where are good sources of information that can help me in finding solutions?  
17. Where can I find the history of this organization and on this problem?  
18. What is the best way for me to get feedback from you on your evaluation of my project? (By email or face-to-face meetings?) |
<p>| 3. Turn in “Service-Learning Project Proposal” form | 2/17 | | Answer the questions on the “Service-Learning Project Proposal” form and turn in a hard copy by the due date. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turn in “Service-Learning Project Agreement” form</td>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>Answer the questions on the “Service-Learning Project Agreement” form, have the contact person sign it, and turn in a hard copy of the form by the due date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete the “Service-Learning Audience Awareness Worksheet”</td>
<td>3/19</td>
<td>Answer the questions on the “Service-Learning Audience Awareness” form and turn it in by the due date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete “Service-Learning Progress Update”</td>
<td>4/16</td>
<td>Answer the questions on the “Service-Learning Progress Update”, have your contact person sign it, and turn in a hard copy to me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Feedback from the first draft                                       | 4/23     | Answer the following questions, type up the responses, and turn it into me:  
  What elements need to be changed or refined?  
  Have all the necessary components been completed?  
  What suggestions do you have for improvement? |
| Discussion Board Posting                                           | 4/28     | Answer the following questions on the Discussion Board:  
  5. What practical snags are you running into?  
  6. What specific writing problems are you having?  
  7. How have you adapted your writing, dictation, tone, and style to your intended audiences?  
  8. What new insights, discoveries, or problems have arisen while carrying out this project?  |
| Final Draft of Project Due                                          | 4/30     | When you presented your final project to the contact person, what was their reaction or response?                                         |
| Service-Learning Evaluation for Student                             | 5/7      | Fill in the response sheet and turn it in by the due date.                                                                                  |
| Final Presentation                                                  |          | What innovative techniques are you going to employ in your final presentation?                                                               |
Documents to be Completed by Service-Learning Recipients
Service-Learning Proposal

Fill out one form for each project and email it to kjohns10@ycp.edu by January 13th.

Organization: ____________________________________________________________

Contact Person: __________________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: _________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: __________________________________________

5. Explain the problem to be tackled:

6. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose
   b. Intended audience
   c. Topic
   d. Length of document or breadth of project
   e. Organization of product
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project

7. Explain how the final product will be used.
8. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
9. Explain the best way for students to contact you.

10. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project?
Service-Learning Project Evaluation

Instructions:

Service-learning recipient: Please fill out this form completely and email to: kjohns10@ycp.edu no later than 5/7/09.

Name of Contact Person: ___________________________________________________

Name of Organization: _____________________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________________________

Email address: ___________________________________________________________

Collaborating Student: _____________________________________________________

Please answer the following questions and give a fair evaluation of the student.

2. Approximately how many times did you meet or talk with the student in the development of this project? Were these meetings fruitful? In what ways?

2. In your estimation, did the student act professionally and knowledgeable about the subject matter? Please provide reasons for your answers.

3. How did the project contribute to the intended purpose?

4. Did you consider the final project to be of excellent, good, fair, or poor quality? Please explain your selection of quality.
5. Was the writing, which includes the diction, tone, and style, suitable for the intended audience? In what ways?

6. Do you consider the developed project as useful to your organization? Why and in what ways?

7. In what ways could the process for carrying out this service-learning project be improved for future students?

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation. Your input is very valuable and helps to determine the effectiveness of this project.*
Appendix G: Proposals from Participating Organizations

Proposals from Participating Organizations
Suggested Projects According to Majors

Accounting .........................................................................................................................27
Art ......................................................................................................................................27, 32, 34
Behavioral Science & Psychology .................................................................10, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 32
Business ........................................................................................................3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 23, 27
Computer Sciences ..............................................................................................17, 21, 22, 32, 34
Criminal Justice ...........................................................................................................30
Engineering .................................................................................................................27
Education (Elementary, Secondary, & Special Ed.) ........................................5, 7, 9, 22, 23, 25, 27, 32, 34
English & Professional Writing .............................................................................22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34
Finance .........................................................................................................................14, 27
Graphic Design ....................................................................................................13, 15, 19, 25, 27, 29, 32, 34
History & Political Science ..................................................................................22, 30
Informatics & Information Systems .................................................................13, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 32
Management ........................................................................................................17, 19, 23, 27
Marketing ..................................................................................................................3, 5, 7, 10, 17, 19, 23, 27, 29, 32, 34
Mass Communication ..............................................................................................19, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34
Mathematics ............................................................................................................11, 13, 15, 22, 27
Music ...........................................................................................................................27
Nursing .........................................................................................................................11, 13, 15, 22, 27
Philosophy ..............................................................................................................22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 32
Public Relations ..................................................................................................22, 23, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34
Recreation and Leisure Administration .........................................................22, 27, 29, 32
Sciences-Biology, Chemistry, Clinical ..........................................................11, 13, 15, 29, 32
Sociology .................................................................................................................17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 32

This list is not comprehensive and some majors that are not included in a project may very well work with your major. The key is to choose a project that interests you or to use the proposal sheet to find a recipient who would like to participate. All proposals must be approved before you can begin working on your project.
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center

Contact Person: ________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: ________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: ________________________________

1. Describe the desired project with the following information:

a. Purpose

The goal of the project is to determine where the Susan P. Byrnes HEC is positioned in the worksite wellness market versus the competition. Also to identify the types of services employers and community groups are seeking as well as the relevant price points for the services. Opportunities for the BHEC to partner with other organizations will also be an option. This project will assist the BHEC in developing strategic plans for the department.

b. Intended audience

The audience will be businesses of all types within the York, Harrisburg, Lancaster and Baltimore area. Also to be included are other organizations which could provide employee wellness programs such as school districts.

c. Topic

Worksite wellness programs which may also be called health promotion services or preventive health services. The goal of our programs is to educate people of all ages to make healthy choices to avoid the incidence of chronic diseases.

d. Length of document or breadth of project

Project will include information on the market in York, Harrisburg, Lancaster and Baltimore areas and will look at trends out 5 years (to 2014).

e. Organization of product
Final report should include an executive summary with background, findings and recommendations. Appropriate charts, graphs or statistics and resources should be included as attachments.

f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project

Depending on the time allotted it could take a semester for completion of the project. If started in January expectation would be to have information by May but this is flexible.

11. Explain how the final product will be used.

As a non-profit organization funds for marketing research are very limited and yet research is necessary to keep the organization growing and providing services that are sought out by businesses and community groups. The findings which come out of this project will be used to determine the services the BHEC will provide as well as the organization structure to support those services. It is also important to price services in such a way as to cover operating costs.

12. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.

- The Chambers can be a source of information
- Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA)
- Interviews with local businesses
- Department of Health
- Insurance companies
- Centers for Disease Control

Explain the best way for students to contact you

The student should contact me by e-mail and time can be scheduled for meetings or telephone conversations. I would prefer to try to get the group together to come as a unit if at all possible, so if you can email me individually, we can try to set up a time for a group meeting.

Several students can participate in this project.
Service-Learning Proposal.

Organization: Community Progress Council, Inc. Head Start

Contact Person: __________________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: ______________________ _____________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: ____________________________________________

1. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose
      To develop, design, and implement a positive public relations campaign to increase community awareness of the significance of quality early childhood education in preparing at-risk children for success in school available through Head Start of York County
   b. Intended audience
      Community at large, civic groups, churches, businesses, school districts, community agencies, local, state and federal governments, medical and dental professionals
   c. Topic
      Growing Successful Children for a Productive Future
   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      Research to support public relation claims
      Development of flyers, news articles, power point presentations, public service announcements, etc.
   e. Organization of product
      Using factual documentation, the student will create attention-getting medium to deliver the message
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
      Spring semester

2. Explain how the final product will be used.
   Head Start of York County will implement a media blitz to increase public awareness of the significance of quality early childhood education in preparing at-risk preschool children for success in school
3. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
   Internet
   Interviews with present and past parents and children, staff, and early childhood professionals

   Explain the best way for students to contact you: email
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Community Progress Council, Inc. Head Start

Contact Person: ________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: _________________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: _________________________________

1. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose
      To research studies focused on the life-long impact of a positive male role model on the lives of preschool children
      To explore the availability of grant opportunities to fund a systematic program to incorporate into Head Start of York County services to children and families.
      To select and write a grant application

   b. Intended audience
      Grant sponsor
      Active males who are involved and/or who would like to become involved with preschool, at-risk, low-income children and their families.
      Civic organizations, churches, businesses, community groups

   c. Topic
      Men of Head Start, Creating Positive Beginnings in the Lives of Young Children

   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      Research paper will provide the student will research-based knowledge to support the project.
      Exploration of grant opportunities will produce a myriad of possibilities followed by critical analysis to determine which grant fits the needs of the program
      Writing the application will be the culmination of the project.

   e. Organization of product
      Research paper supporting the life-long impact of a positive male role model on the lives of preschool children.
      Selection of grant opportunities to fund implementation of program.
      Completed grant application
f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
   Spring semester

2. Explain how the final product will be used.
   a. Submission of grant application.
   b. If grant is awarded, implementation of the program

3. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
   Internet research

   Explain the best way for students to contact you: email
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Community Progress Council, Inc. Head Start of York County

Contact Person: __________________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: ____________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: ____________________________________________

1. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose
      To research the concept of merit pays and analyze the advantages and
disadvantages of developing a merit pay system for Head Start employees

   b. Intended audience
      Head Start Leadership Team, employee workgroup, HR Director, Policy
Council, CPC Personnel and Finance Committees, CPC Board of
Directors

   c. Topic Analysis of Advantages and Disadvantages of Merit Pay

   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      Research existing information on merit pay
      Analyze the advantages and disadvantages
      List prevalent criteria used to determine establishment of merit

   e. Organization of product
      Research paper

   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
      Spring semester

2. Explain how the final product will be used.
   Head Start Leadership Team will use information to reach decision regarding the
development of merit pay system for employees.

3. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help
   them complete the project.
   Internet, questionnaire for local entities to determine prevalence of merit pay
   systems locally

   Explain the best way for students to contact you: email
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: __Counseling Services___________________________

Contact Person: ____________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: _______________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: ________________________________

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: We have a tri-fold brochure that lacks appeal, is outdated and may not clearly communicate what students/faculty/staff need to know about our offices and services we offer.

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose: Improve our print media to YCP community
   b. Intended audience: students, faculty, staff, parents
   c. Topic—YCP Counseling Services
   d. Length of document or breadth of project—tri-fold brochure on 8 ½” x 11” paper—we would need prototype and would have copied/published ourselves.
   e. Organization of product  ????
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project—less than one semester

3. Explain how the final product will be used. YCP Counseling Services will use the brochure as follow up to presentations, phone calls with interested parties and for student/parent information packets given to prospective students and students who attend orientation.

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project. Researching other college counseling center literature if possible. Researching what will attract attention of college aged population when it comes to emotional support/mental health needs. Talking with current staff about services we offer. Contacting YCP communications department for collaboration.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.—phone or email
6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project?
The next three proposals will involve group work in which the members will need to collaborate with each other in order to complete the three projects.

Service-Learning Proposal

Fill out one form for each project and email it to kjohns10@ycp.edu by January 20th.

Organization: ___Community & Professional Development

Contact Person: ________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: __________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: __________________

1. Explain the problem to be tackled:
   Review/Determine what the regulation states regarding the new requirements for Nursing C.E.U’s, what qualifies as a C.E.U and how does an organization qualify as a provider.

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose
      To determine if we want to create/offer these courses
   
   b. Intended audience
      Nurses

   c. Topic
      Any that qualify for C.E.U’s

   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      Need to answer the number 1 question

   e. Organization of product
      YCP

   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
      40 hours
3. Explain how the final product will be used.
   This information will play a very large role in determining whether we
   Develop/offer these courses

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to
   help them complete the project.
   State Regulatory web-site and phone calls to this same group.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.
   E-Mail:

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this
   project?

   This project could be completed in a timely way by one student
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Community & Professional Dev.

Contact Person: _______________________________

Contact Person’s Email: ________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: ________________

1. Explain the problem to be tackled:
   Need for Nursing CEU’s in the greater York and surrounding area. Are some Organizations offering their own classes? Is there still a need?

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose
      Determine if a program is needed in the area to satisfy this educational need
   b. Intended audience
      Nurses located/working in the area
   c. Topic
      To be determined
   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      Breadth of project is when all local/surrounding facilities have been contacted and the information collected.
      Length of document perhaps 3 – 4 pages.
   e. Organization of product
      Listed by facilities and their response
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
      Thirty hours

3. Explain how the final product will be used.
   It will be used to determine if more courses are needed and which ones

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
   The internet – to locate facilities and their contact information
5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.
   E-Mail:

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project?

   One student could complete this task. Two would be the maximum
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Community & Professional Dev.

Contact Person: ________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: _________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: _________________

1. Explain the problem to be tackled:
   Create a brochure listing the Nursing CEU courses available at YCP

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose
      Create a brochure that would be attractive and contain the information necessary to complete registration for the course(s).

   b. Intended audience
      Nurses

   c. Topic
      To be determined

   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      A double fold brochure is the most likely

   e. Organization of product
      By dates of offering

   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
      Twenty-five hours

3. Explain how the final product will be used.
   To market and register attendees
4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project. We will have the information collected by those persons doing the data collection.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.
   E-Mail

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project? One student could do this well. Two students working on it would add another perspective.
Service-Learning Proposal.

Organization: Nonprofit Management Development Center

Contact Person: ________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: _________________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: _________________________________

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: We facilitate strategic planning with local nonprofit organizations. We have not been able to follow-up with clients to find out how well our services and the resulting plans have served them.

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose: Collect information on the value of our services to our clients – and document clients’ degree of success in implementing their plans.

   b. Intended audience: We will use the information ourselves to find clues on how to improve our services. We will also use it to report on our work to our key stakeholders.

   c. Topic: Program performance

   d. Length of document or breadth of project: In terms of the breadth of project, we could survey up to 20 clients, depending on the number of students involved. I would expect the length of the document to be about 8 pages.

   e. Organization of product. To be determined. Ideally, there will be a consolidated report, and an associated powerpoint presentation.

   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project: Approximately 15 hours per student, depending on the number of clients researched. We can manage the workload to match expectations of the service learning component of the class.
3. Explain how the final product will be used. We will use it to identify ways to improve service to our clients. We would also like to use it as a kind of “report to the community” on the return on their investment in our Center.

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project. 1) Agreements with our clients that describe the nature of our services (we will provide copies of these); 2) Strategic plans developed by the clients (we will provide copies of theses); 3) Client assessment of our services and their ability to implement the plans (students will conduct phone interviews to obtain this information (approx. 30 minute interviews).

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you. Email or phone.

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project? Four students.
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: ____________ College Bookstore-Convenience Store

Contact Person: __________________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: ____________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: ____________________________________________

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: The Convenience Store sales have declined for the fall semester 22% or $28,400, due to the Off Campus Flex Card Implementation. The store needs to protect the business in the future and look for opportunities to expand.

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose-How can the Convenience Store regain this business? What incentives could be put in place to compete with Rutter’s, Sheetz, Tom’s, and CVS? How can the Flex Card be promoted for evening and weekend business?

   b. Intended audience-Student Flex Card purchases are the main focus. Secondary, would be the college employees-staff, administration, & faculty.

   c. Topic-Marketing(assortment/pricing), Advertising & Promotions

   d. Length of document or breadth of project-Project would probably take two-three months. A marketing plan or proposal could be developed that includes promotions to regain the loss of sales. Students could be surveyed to understand their needs and what would bring them back to purchasing at the Convenience Store. How do we compete with off campus stores?

   e. Organization of product-Research needed/Review breakdown of where business has gone outside of campus. Student input needed to determine How to get the business back on track-their needs and desires. A marketing plan including media ideas, in store signage/promotions, and any other ideas formulated from gathering the information.

   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project-Semester Project
3. **Explain how the final product will be used** - The Convenience Store Manager will implement all ideas/plans approved by the director during and after review of this project takes place.

4. **Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project** - Sampling/survey of student uses, habits and desires. Review current assortments compared to competition and compare to student college needs. Work with Convenience Store Manager, Tom Smith during the project and Lynn Ferro, Bookstore director. Discuss data and planning.

5. **Explain the best way for students to contact you** - Phone: ___ Email: ___ Preset any meetings in store one week in advance.

6. **What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project?** I would think a team of two could accomplish this proposal.
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization:   Career Services Center

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s Email:

Contact Person’s Phone Number:

1. Explain the problem to be tackled:
   How to attract and engage more 1st year students with Career Services events, services and resources

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose: Marketing and Outreach
   b. Intended audience: First year students
   c. Topic: How to attract and engage first year students in the concepts of career development and personal strategic planning
   d. Length of document or breadth of project: see below
   e. Organization of product: Develop 3 different products, recommendations or methods to reach students more effectively. Possibilities include but are not limited to: emails, newspaper articles, marketing campaign, powerpoint presentation targeted for first year students.
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project: 10 hours

3. Explain how the final product will be used.
   One or more of the products will be implemented during the 09-10 year

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
   Review of CSC webpage and visit to office to learn about offerings, as well as meeting with me to better understand breadth of office.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.
   Email or phone

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project? 2
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Career Services Center

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s Email:

Contact Person’s Phone Number:

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: Gain more substantial information from York College students who study abroad

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose: To develop survey tool for students returning from a study abroad experience which will include learning outcomes as well as practical and experiential information.
   b. Intended audience: York College students who have studied abroad
   c. Topic: The Value, Benefits and Learning Outcomes of Study Abroad
   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      A survey document which may be sent electronically or hard copy that will take 10-15 minutes to complete.
   e. Organization of product
      See above
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
      15 hours

3. Explain how the final product will be used.
   Implement for students who return from study abroad during the Spring 2009 semester and beyond.

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
   NAFSA website, previous study abroad survey, CEA website.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.
   Phone or email
6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project? 3
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Career Services Center

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s Email:

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: Convey importance of transferable and professional skills employers want students to have when they complete college.

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose: To share importance of transferable and professional skills employers seek in addition to a college degree.
   b. Intended audience: Juniors and Seniors
   c. Topic:
   d. Length of document or breadth of project
      A power point presentation to be given in 15-20 minutes outlining the skills as well as how to develop or fine tune them during your college experience
   e. Organization of product
      See above
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project
      15 hours

3. Explain how the final product will be used.
   Power Point be utilized during the 09-10 academic year in Class Presentations

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
   NACE Job Outlook (available through Career Services Center) as well as other research information.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.
   Phone or email
6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project?
   2
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: College Career Services Center

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s Email:

Contact Person’s Phone Number:

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: Assist Undeclared students in their major choice and selection process

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose: To increase awareness and involvement of undeclared students in their own major choice process, and the resources and services available to assist them.

   b. Intended audience: Undeclared students

   c. Topic: Helping students get closer to declaring a major, and a major appropriate to their interests, skills and goals.

   d. Length of document or breadth of project

      Two newsletters (ideally that could be delivered both electronically and hard copy) to undeclared students each year. Each newsletter would include opportunities, services and resources available that semester on-campus to assist students, and be comprised of at least 3-4 articles

      Determine best timing for these newsletters to be disseminated.

   e. Organization of product

      See above

   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project

      15 hours

3. Explain how the final product will be used.

   Newsletter content will be utilized during the 09-10 academic year

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.
Career Services Website, undeclared brochure from Admissions Office, background from other colleges & universities and how they reach out to undeclared students

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.
   Phone or email

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project? 2
Service-Learning Proposal

Fill out one form for each project and email it to kjohns10@ycp.edu by January 20th.

Organization: Walnut Grove Therapeutic Equestrian Center

Contact Person: __________________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: __________________________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: __________________________________________

1. Explain the problem to be tackled:
   Grant Writing, brochures, advertising, fundraising

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose - Fundraising for the building of a therapeutic riding center and assistance on design of the center
   b. Intended audience - Surrounding community
   c. Topic - same as stated in 1.
   d. Length of document or breadth of project - No specific length
   e. Organization of product
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project - semester should be sufficient enough

3. Explain how the final product will be used.
   - To produce donations to the Therapeutic Riding Center
   - To help design new buildings on the recently acquired property
   - To research music that enhances the performance of a variety of riders such as those with autism, Downs Syndrome, or other physical or mental limitations
   - To employ artwork or color schemes that would enhance the visual sphere within the center and the physical grounds of the center

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project. I will help them with each of these areas individually.
5. Explain the best way for students to contact you. By phone or email

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project? No limit, this facility is going to be a rather large project for an excellent cause and I would like multiple students involved.

7. Other projects that could be worked on are how to educate the public on the benefits of therapeutic riding for special needs individuals.
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: County SPCA

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s Email:

Contact Person’s Phone Number:

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: Lack of SPCA Satellite Shelter in the Hanover Area

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:
   a. Purpose: To Acquire a Satellite Shelter in the Hanover area.
   b. Intended audience: Animal Lovers
   c. Topic: To bring awareness of the York county SPCA
   d. Length of document or breadth of project: N/A
   e. Organization of product: To be determined
   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project: 12 Weeks

3. Explain how the final product will be used: A Satellite shelter in the Hanover area will reach an audience that is not within our immediate vicinity.

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project. Hanover directory and map.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you: e-mail

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project? 4
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and Amnesty International (joint project)

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s Email:

Contact Person’s Phone Number:

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: PA continues to use the death penalty, even though it has been shown to be biased as to race and class, as well as the fact that over one hundred people in the USA have been exonerated after being sentenced to death, including York’s own Ray Krone.

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose: To prepare compelling appeal to PA elected officials urging them to eliminate the use of the death penalty in PA

   b. Intended audience: Elected PA state officials (cc’ing Gov Rendell)

   c. Topic: Abolition of the Death Penalty

   d. Length of document or breadth of project

   The open letter will need to be short enough to meet newspaper LTE guidelines, unless the students can convince an editor to run it as an Op Ed piece. All information/arguments made must be fully cited, although these full citations will not be included in what is submitted for publication, rather it will be submitted to the targeted elected official(s) and posted on web.

   e. Organization of product

   Document that specifically addresses the arguments that will be most likely to influence a particular elected official. For instance, one set of arguments might work with Eugene DePasquale (Catholic church has come out against the death penalty, Ray Krone lives in his district) while another set of arguments would be effective with another representative.
The final product will include an open letter to the representative which
would be sent directly to the official as well as published in local media or
via blogs, facebook, myspace, etc. as appropriate.

f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project

Flexible, depending on hours expected by instructor.

3. Explain how the final product will be used.

Appeal will be sent to targeted PA elected official(s) as well as submitted to
newspapers and blogs for publication. In addition to the above, the product may
be used later as the factual basis for a video, audio or other medium.

4. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to
help them complete the project.

There is a wealth of information on this topic, including films, podcasts, books,
scholarly and mainstream articles. I can provide material already prepared by
PADP, AI, PA Prison Society as well as other anti DP organizations. Much of
this information is readily available on the web.

5. Explain the best way for students to contact you.

Email.

6. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this
project?

I’d like to have a small group of students collaborating on this project,
especially at the beginning. I would like them to brainstorm different
approaches before they then split into teams that will work on a
regional/county plan. County/district will certainly be targeted. I need to
do a bit more research before naming the second district/county.
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Student Affairs Wellness Committee and the Alcohol and Drug Education Coordinator

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s Email:

Contact Person’s Phone Number:

1. Explain the problem to be tackled: There is a need to create a brochure, booklet or other related material describing the purpose of the committee as well as the areas of wellness and how college students can strive for wellness.

2. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose: The purpose of the literature is to market the committee but also to educate students about wellness.

   b. Intended audience: The audience would be York College students.

   c. Topic: There would be some research involved in areas of wellness, ways to best communicate the message to students, resources on campus, etc. There are quite a few colleges and universities around the country that focus on wellness and have some kind of informational resource.

   d. Length of document or breadth of project: To be determined

   e. Organization of product: To be determined

   f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project: one semester

   g. Explain how the final product will be used. This information would be provided to new students during orientation and could be a marketing tool for the committee. Eventually, I'd like to put this information on our website.

3. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project. Will give this information at the interview.

4. Explain the best way for students to contact you. Email or phone.
5. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project?
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: York Country Day School

Contact Person:

Contact Person’s email:

Contact Person’s Phone number:

1) Explain the problem to be tackled:

We need to put together a newsletter that will be relevant and interesting to current parents and alums. Our goal is to have be a color, six page folded piece, printed with both copy and photos.

2) Describe the desired project with the following information:

The purpose of the newsletter is to reach out to both parents and alums to tell them what neat things are happening here at school – for parents they can see what students are doing in other divisions – for alums what has changed and what has stayed the same since they were here. We are especially looking for the newsletter to be the first of a series that will reconnect alums to YCDS.

We have compiled a number of topics that will each make a small column in the newsletter. They highlight events and faculty in different divisions, they also include both a faculty and alum spotlight. We anticipate the piece to be a six page newsletter.

If they are interested, students can also help with photo choice and layout of the publication.

The project will be organized by the Director of Admission and the Director of the Annual Fund (Kelly Arcieri x 6713 and we hope to have it completed by late March/Early April.

3) Explain how the final product will be used:

We will send the newsletter out to all current parents, prospective families and alumni.
4) Describe the primary sources of information that the students will need to locate to help them complete the project.

The students will work with the DOA and the DOAF to compile the information they will need to write each article.

5) Explain the best way for students to contact you.

Both of us are available by both phone and email. We will probably also need a couple of in-person meetings, particularly if the students are interested in helping with the layout work.

6) What is the maximum number of students you would like to have work on this project?

We do not really have a maximum or minimum number of students in mind.
Service-Learning Proposal

Organization: Campus Safety

Contact Person: _____________________________________________

Contact Person’s Email: _________________________________

Contact Person’s Phone Number: _________________________________

8. Explain the problem to be tackled:

Ernie has agreed to create a promotional brochure for our department that will inform readers of our blue-light emergency call boxes that are located throughout campus. He is going to explain what they are, detail how they work and create a map of where they are located.

9. Describe the desired project with the following information:

   a. Purpose

      To inform the campus community of the purpose, function and location of our emergency call boxes.

   b. Intended audience

      All members of the campus community

   c. Topic

      A Guide to York College’s Emergency Blue-light Call Box System.

   d. Length of document or breadth of project

      A single tri-fold or similar brochure that will include a map with the location of call boxes on campus.
e. Organization of product

Ernie will do most of the work with materials and information supplied by my department.

f. Estimated time it will take to complete the project

Several weeks

10. Explain how the final product will be used.

The final brochure will be available in our office, in the Campus Information Center and at information tables we set up at various campus events. The brochure will educate our students about our emergency call box system so they are familiar with their locations and use. This has the potential to help someone who may someday rely on a call box to report an emergency.

11. Describe the primary sources of information that students will need to locate to help them complete the project.

I will supply E. with the materials he needs to create the brochure.

12. Explain the best way for students to contact you.

The best way to contact me would be via email.

13. What is the maximum number of students that you would like to work on this project?

One student is all that is needed for this project.
Appendix H: Methods to Improve Delivery of Service-Learning Programs

In carrying out a service-learning project, a number of insights were gained concerning ways to improve delivery of a service-learning program. First, it is important that ample time is allotted for recruiting recipients so thoughtful proposals are written and recipients do not feel rushed to send in proposals. Sending out requests for proposals a month before classes begin can give recipients enough time to reflect on projects or problems that need to be addressed. A well thought-out proposal can bring clarity to both recipient and providers.

Second, students typically have difficulty getting started in the project because working with professionals is a brand new venue for them, but once recipient contact has been made, student enthusiasm seems to ensue. Instructors will need to keep this in mind when introducing service-learning opportunities. At the beginning of the semester, instructors could bring in a recipient to share their experiences with students. This real-life individual could add depth and meaning to the project before it would begin and perhaps evoke excitement early in the course. Also, instructors may want to discuss professionalism in communication and assure students that once they meet the recipient, the process usually becomes an enjoyable journey. Finally, sometimes scheduling a time when the student and recipient can meet for the first time is the hardest part of getting started. Students need to know that it may be difficult to schedule meetings, so they need to try and be flexible when scheduling their first meeting so they can quickly get started in the program.

Third, classroom brainstorming sessions and discussion board talks helped students solve problems and create a community of learners. Using a variety of ways to encourage students to communicate among themselves can help students to share trials,
problems, and accomplishments. One of the most rewarding aspects of this study was watching students provide solutions for their fellow classmates. Allowing time for in-class and discussion board dialogues can offer venues for dialogues. Providing opportunities for these kinds of dialogues to take place help create a community of learners’ atmosphere and pave a way for meaningful conversations to take place.

Fourth, expect challenges and unexpected problems to spring forth. Keep in mind that instructors will not always have the answers to these challenges; however, these quandaries allow rich discourse to emerge within the classroom and show students the power of collaborative thinking. Several times during the semester, a student would encounter a road block in either finding applicable research sources or ways to complete a project. When this occurred, the problem was opened up for discussion to the class via a brainstorming session. Almost every time, peers were able to offer solutions to their fellow student to help solve the problem. When this did not work, students were directed to call their recipients and ask for help. Valuable lessons emerged from this process, and students learned how to solve real-life problems in effective ways.

Fifth, quality of writing in the projects could also be improved by having students conduct peer reviews of the actual projects. Peer reviews are required for the research paper and work quite well for helping students improve their writing. If peer reviews were also completed for the projects, students could improve the quality of their projects while enjoying the opportunity to see what their peers are accomplishing in the course. These peer reviews could even take place electronically and do not necessarily need to be completed in class. However, it is essential to give students guidelines in carrying out this process so they are clear on the purpose and procedures of this activity. After the peer reviews are completed, it is essential that students comply with the course requirement to
have their recipients to review the first draft of the project so that the projects are monitored for clarity, style, and the intended purpose of the project.

Sixth, student choice of organizations is crucial. Students must be adequately advised to choose their recipient wisely by making sure that the organization matches their interests. Some students in this study chose organizations close in proximity, such as those on campus and as a result, were not quite as pleased with their projects as others who made choices based purely on interests or linkage to their major. Assist students in finding transportation if necessary since a semester is a long time to work on an uninteresting project.

Seventh, communication between recipient, provider, and instructor is vital to developing the project correctly. If students do not follow the guidebook and contact their recipient, it is possible that the project may suffer. Deadlines and forms included in the guidebook have a specific purpose in meeting benchmark assignments throughout the semester. Instructors can help students stay on track by posting reminders on Blackboard or by sending email reminders.

Finally, two students at the end of the semester expressed concern about the amount of time it took to complete the project. Although there were only two students out of six classes who expressed this concern, it is important for instructors to be mindful of this possibility. Even though the actual time spent with the recipient is only two to three hours, the project could take a great deal of time to complete. Student engagement in specific projects will vary, so students can inform their recipient if they have a specific time constraint and let the recipient know a definite amount of time that the student can spend on the project. Also, it is important to allow workshops during classroom meetings
so students can work on their projects and collaborate with their colleagues and instructor.