

Service-Learning Student Learning Outcomes Assessment 2010-2011

Introduction

Service-Learning (S-L) is a pedagogy that combines academic learning and community service. Students do community service as part of a class assignment in order to learn course content and also intervene in a public issue. Research suggests that students who do S-L are more engaged and therefore succeed in their courses and persist in college at higher levels in comparison to students who do not do S-L. A crucial part of S-L is the end-of-semester essay in which students reflect on their S-L experience, making connections between the course and their community service, and explain how their knowledge, skills and attitudes have changed.

At Kapi'olani Community College, more than 600 students annually complete S-L requirements in 120 courses. Documentation of their service, orientations, and assistance with locating appropriate activities are organized by the S-L office. The office requires submission of a reflection essay (in addition to completion of paperwork and at least 20 hours of service), and the essay is an important assignment for the courses as well. The office provides reflection essay guidelines (including a writing prompt), and the instructors use or adapt them for their courses.

Prompt

Service-Learning successfully used a reflection writing prompt (and an assessment rubric) for a number of years, but the advent of general education student learning outcomes ([SLOs](#)) in fall 2008 required revision of the reflection prompt and rubric. The prompt needed to align with the new SLOs. In May 2009, a small group of S-L faculty and staff assessed the spring 2009 reflection essays and suggested new wording. During fall 2009, other faculty suggested further revisions, and the first draft of the prompt was presented to all S-L faculty in February 2010 for commentary. The prompt was revised six times in response to various suggestions given in various e-mail and face-to-face discussions. The [final draft](#) of the reflection prompt, with instructor's notes, was presented to all S-L faculty in August 2010 for use during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Rubric

In fall 2010, a small group of S-L faculty and staff developed a rubric to assess the reflection essays based on the new prompt. The rubric was developed using the Association of American Colleges and Universities VALUE rubrics as a guide. It was presented to a newly created campus body, the Service-Learning Advisory Board in a March 2011 meeting. During this meeting, board members piloted the [rubric](#) by scoring 10 fall 2010 reflection essays, confirming its suitability in assessing 2010-11 academic year essays.

Assessment

Preparation

The Service-Learning coordinators set up a Lulima (content management system) website for essay collection. A student submits his/her essay in a particular Lulima folder based on community partner site (Palolo Valley sites or all other sites) and by the number of credit hours the student will have completed after that semester (up to 20, up to 40, or up to 60 credits). S-L staff record the names of the students, their course, instructor, community partner site, and pathway on a master spreadsheet.

S-L faculty determined that assessing 30 essays per semester was satisfactory as long as they were chosen randomly. The 30 essays (out of about 300) were chosen using a random number generator. They were downloaded from Lulima and printed in hard copy. They were numbered 1-30. For each essay, the student's name was blacked out, missing page numbers were written in, and every fifth line was marked so important moments could be referenced more easily.

Protocol

The fall 2010 essays were assessed by board members in April 2011, the spring 2011 essays in July 2011, according to the following protocol:

1. Eight readers are split into four groups. Each group focuses on one of the four rubric questions (A, B, C or D).
2. The 30 essays are divided among the four groups in roughly even batches (8, 7, 8 and 7, respectively).
3. The readers of a particular group read each essay in their batch and determine the score for their assigned question. Each reader records his/her scores on his/her individual rating sheet (0-4, 4 highest). Each reader also notes the line numbers of evidence for the score and "aha!" moments (which may be used in assessment/promotional materials) on his/her individual rating sheet.
4. After the readers in a particular group finish scoring their batch of essays, they share scores. They discuss divergent scores and agree upon a score. Only whole numbers are permitted. If the readers cannot agree, the lower score is taken.
5. After members of a group settle on a score for each essay in a batch, they record their agreed-upon scores on a master sheet for their assigned question.
6. After members of a group finishes a batch of essays, they give the batch to the next group in this order: A-B, B-C, C-D, D-A. Each group receives another batch from another group.
7. The scoring continues in this way until each group finishes all 30 essays.
8. After the scoring is done, each group's master score sheet and each reader's individual score sheet are submitted to the faculty coordinator.

Results

Here are the averages for each reflection question based on the assessment of 30 fall and 30 spring essays (in which zero is the lowest possible score and four is the highest):

rubric question / semester	fall	spring
A. What did you learn in your course (and other courses, if applicable) that relates to your service or community site? What did you learn during your service or at your community site that relates to your course?	2.07	2.10
B. What problem(s) did you help solve, enhancing our community? How did you accomplish this?	1.87	2.70
C. How has your experience affected your thinking about the community, its problems, and the solutions to those problems?	1.06	1.07
D. What personal, academic or career goals did you achieve? How has your experience affected your thinking about personal, academic or career goals? How will you serve the community in the future?	2.93	1.70

A. What did you learn in your course (and other courses, if applicable) that relates to your service or community site? What did you learn during your service or at your community site that relates to your course?

fall	spring
2.07	2.10

This question garnered the highest consistent score. The readers suggested that because this question deals with course content, students and instructors seemed to understand it best. The score indicates that the students are making and articulating the conceptual connections between their academic learning and community service, which shows that the students are meeting the general education SLOs that this question addresses, Communication and Integrative Learning, and depending on the course, Aesthetic Engagement, Thinking/Inquiry, and/or Self and Community. Although the item may be well written, the readers thought that perhaps the different questions in the item could be synthesized into one question so that it is more understandable for students. Indeed, the readers suggested that the whole reflection prompt be worded more simply.

B. What problem(s) did you help solve, enhancing our community? How did you accomplish this?

fall	spring
1.87	2.70

The readers agreed that students did not sufficiently articulate the community problem in both the fall and spring set of essays despite the higher score in spring. The readers thought that the spring score was pushed artificially higher because a significant number of essays dealt with the same topic, language learning, despite the random selection. In order to better meet Integrative

Learning and Thinking/Inquiry, the readers suggested that the question should ask students to explain what the problem is and how they know it is a problem. As an example, a reader suggested the problem description in the MINA brochure. Readers suggested developing a handout, a survey and a Google map that would help students, instructors and the S-L student leaders define a problem, its levels, aspects and locations, including campus issues.

C. How has your experience affected your thinking about the community, its problems, and the solutions to those problems?

fall	spring
1.06	1.07

The readers agreed that the language in the question was not specific enough, and that resulted in a lower score. Students did explain how their service affected their thinking but only in superficial terms. The question was trying to elicit how their experience changed their view, or attitude in a deeper sense, about the community. Students should be encouraged to gain more knowledge about the history of the community site and also to inventory the skills working there provided them. The readers agreed that this question needs to be revised so that it would better elicit answers that would meet Integrative Learning and Self and Community.

D. What personal, academic or career goals did you achieve? How has your experience affected your thinking about personal, academic or career goals? How will you serve the community in the future?

fall	spring
1.87	2.70

The readers were unable to explain the great difference in fall-to-spring scores for this question, perhaps the easiest of the four for students to answer. One reader noted that the different semesters have different student populations, and several agreed that the spring students seemed less engaged than the fall. One wondered about the number of credit hours that authors of these essays had earned, suggesting perhaps there was a correlation between that and the score. (The majority of essays for the fall and spring came from students who will have earned up to 20 credits.) Perhaps since the question was the last in the reflection prompt, students only dealt with it briefly or in a cursory manner. In order to better meet Thinking/Inquiry and Self and Community, the readers suggested that the S-L office and outreach coordinators encourage faculty to help students make the connections between the students, the course and community. Also, this question should be addressed during the midterm reflection workshops offered by the S-L staff.

Based on this discussion, the S-L reflection prompt was revised, and the [revision](#) was distributed in July 2011 for the 2011-12 academic year.

A revised rubric based on the revised prompt is being developed for the fall and spring assessments in April and July 2012, respectively.

Discussion of assessment

The assessment protocol was developed by the readers, and generally, they were satisfied with the process and the results. Here are notes to guide the next assessment:

- In the fall assessment, four weeks separated the initial baseline norming and actual assessment, and that interval was too long for the readers. The initial norming needs to be done closer to the full assessment.
- The initial norming should be done with essays that pose an interpretive challenge.
- The norming in pairs during the actual assessment was satisfactory. Perhaps the pairs should be faculty from different disciplines to encourage interdisciplinary conversation and fuller norming. Perhaps the same pairs should work on the same rubric question in both fall and spring assessments because that seemed to yield more consistent scores.
- Perhaps the readers should consider the competencies of the course in which an essay was generated to assist in the scoring.

Planning agenda

Faculty

- Develop a revised rubric based on the revised prompt.
- Discuss assessment results organized around the following community partners: Palolo Valley sites, Project Dana, Ronald McDonald House, Leahi Hospital, et al. Provide feedback to the community partners.
- Discuss assessment results organized around essays whose writers participated in the midterm reflection workshops.
- Discuss assessment results organized around essays whose writers have completed up to 20, 40 and 60 credit hours.
- Encourage faculty to help their students write the reflection. For example, faculty could assign weekly or intermittent journals or other regular low-stakes writing in which students incrementally reflect on their S-L experience perhaps by answering the reflection prompt.
- Encourage faculty to send their students to participate in the midterm reflection workshops that the S-L office presents.
- Create a resource to show faculty how to help their students write their reflections. This resource should explain the relationship between the reflection prompt and the general education SLOs.
- Survey the state of S-L pedagogy at the college. The faculty coordinator should ask all faculty to upload their syllabi, assignment sheets, and other

course materials that describe their S-L activities and assignments to the Laulima site. After reviewing the materials, the coordinator will distribute syllabus statements and best practice guidelines to the faculty. For example, some faculty offer Service-Learning as extra credit, but best practice says that Service-Learning should be integrated into the normal grading. Readers reported S-L assignments in their classes that were worth between 15 and 30 percent of a student's final grade.

- Encourage faculty to provide the reflection prompt in their syllabi or other course material to show how Service-Learning supports the general education SLOs.
- Present S-L professional development workshops, including those that would discuss the assessment results, teaching the prompt, and best practices.
- Encourage S-L faculty to participate in the place-based C4ward, which would spur faculty (and their students) to look closer at the history of the community site in which they (and their students) are serving.
- Develop a reading list aligned with pathways.
- Promote Service-Learning by presenting a showcase of projects at the convocation, new faculty orientation, THINK, and other faculty fora.

Students

- Discuss the following at the student orientation: key concepts, such as defining the problem, and the general education SLOs.
- Give students the prompt with guiding questions and the reflection rubric, so that they know early what to write and how their essays will be assessed.
- Create brochures and other materials to better market S-L to students. The pathway or community site brochures should be revised to describe key learning concepts, define the problem, and explain changes and goals.
- Expand student leadership in number and role.