Service-Learning Student Learning Outcomes Assessment 2011-2012

[Executive Summary]

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 indicates that students who participate in S-L are more engaged and, therefore, succeed in their courses and persist in college at higher levels compared 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 their course and community service, and explain how their knowledge, skills and attitudes have changed.

At Kapi'olani Community College (KCC), S-L is used to help transform communities and students. It also helps students meet course competencies and KCC's general education student learning outcomes (SLOs). Annually, more than 600 students complete S-L requirements, including the reflection essay, in 120 courses. KCC's S-L office organizes students and their placements and documents their service. KCC's S-L advisory board, a small group of administrators, faculty and staff, develop the reflection essay prompt, which align with the general education SLOs. Faculty who offer S-L in their classes use (or adapt) the reflection essay guidelines as part of a course requirement. The board assesses the student submissions in spring and summer meetings according to the process described below.

[List of participants]

Prompt
During the 2010-11 assessment (completed July 2011), the board realized the prompt confused students and did not necessarily elicit appropriate answers. The prompt was revised so that students would understand their writing task better. The parts of the prompt, which correspond to a specific general education SLO, were labeled explicitly: statement of the problem, learning, change, and future goals. Interrogatives were turned into imperatives, which were phrased simply and briefly. The board expected that the revision would generate more expansive answers that would better demonstrate achievement of the general education SLOs. The revised prompt was distributed to S-L faculty in July 2011.

Rubric
In April 2012, the board met to revise the rubric. The new rubric raised the bar on achievement for each dimension and had more specific language that would indicate achievement for each level. In addition, the board decided to create another, more general dimension to assess: affect, which is defined as empathy (not sympathy), compassion, commitment, humility, respect, reciprocity, feeling engaged/empowered, a sense of personal transformation. During the 2010-11 assessment, board members discerned sometimes extraordinary affective change in the essays, but the rubric did not sufficiently account for it. The added rubric dimension addressed that problem. The board assessed one fall 2011 essay to norm/calibrate the revised rubric, which confirmed its suitability.

Assessment

Preparation
The Service-Learning coordinators set up a Laulima (content management system) website for essay collection. A student submits his/her essay in a particular Laulima 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 credits, up to 40, up to 60, or more than 60). S-L office staff record the names of the students, their course, instructor, community partner site, and pathway on a master spreadsheet.

Thirty essays (out of about 300) are chosen using a random number generator, downloaded from Laulima, and printed in hard copy. Each essay hard copy is numbered between 1-30, and the student's name, if it appears, is blacked out. The 30 essays are divided into even batches.

Protocol
The fall 2011 essays were assessed by board members in April 2012, the spring 2012 essays in July 2012, according to the following protocol:

1. Ten readers are split into five groups. Each group focuses on one of the five rubric dimensions (A, B, C, D or E). Each group gets a batch of the essays (one batch has six essays).
2. For the essays in their batch, the readers write in missing page numbers and number every fifth line on each page on a non-continuous basis (starting over on each page).
3. The readers read each essay in their batch and determine the score for their assigned dimension only based on the rubric. Each reader records his/her scores for each essay 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 on his/her individual rating sheet (for example: page 2, line 15, or 2.15).
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 a group finishes a batch of essays, it gives the batch to the next group in this order: A-B, B-C, C-D, D-E, E-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 assessment coordinator.

Results and Discussion
Here are the averages for each reflection dimension based on the assessment of 30 fall and 30 spring essays (0-4 scale):

dimension / semester	fall 2011	spring 2012
A. Statement of the Problem: Identify the societal problem you have helped to address through your service. Describe how you have helped.	2.20	1.50
B. Learning: Describe key concepts from your coursework that have helped you do your service. Describe experiences during your service that have helped you understand the course material.	1.57	1.13
C. Change: Describe how your experiences have changed your view about the community you helped.	2.73	2.13
D. Future Goals: Discuss personal, academic or career goals that you have achieved through your service. Describe how this experience has shaped your personal, academic or career goals. Describe your plan for future community engagement.	1.60	1.77
E. Affect: empathy (not sympathy), compassion, commitment, humility, respect, reciprocity, feeling engaged/empowered, a sense of personal transformation	2.28	1.27

A. Statement of the Problem: Identify the societal problem you have helped to address through your service. Describe how you have helped.

fall: 2.20
spring: 1.50

According to the readers, the students described their service activities but did not sufficiently identify the societal problem that their service addressed. The board discussed the following improvement strategies:
- The service-learning office should ask the community partner to define the problem (as MINA does) for the students in its written material or verbally at the beginning-of-the-semester partner fair.
- Faculty and/or the service learning office should engage service-learners who may be working at different sites but addressing the same problem in discussion to define the problem. This discussion could be done face-to-face in the midterm reflection workshops or through the utilities on 'Imiloa, KCC's social media website.
- The board should discuss changing the order of the items in the prompt so that statement of the problem is at the end. In the course of writing, the student may be able to define the problem by the time she gets to that item.

B. Learning: Describe key concepts from your coursework that have helped you do your service. Describe experiences during your service that have helped you understand the course material.

fall: 1.57

spring: 1.13

According to the readers, the students did not sufficiently explain the key concepts from the course. The board discussed the following improvement strategies:

- Individual faculty should help students identify key concepts from the course that relate to the students' service. Groups of faculty members teaching the same courses and/or encouraging students to a particular site or community partner could develop a handout or pamphlet that lists relevant key concepts from their courses.
- In addition to identifying relevant course concepts, the 290 language course instructors, in particular, can more explicitly define course linkages to the general education SLOs. They can also show students the rubric so that they better understand what their essays are expected to demonstrate. S-L advisory board member and Japanese 290 instructor Linda Fujikawa agreed to discuss these improvement strategies with other 290 language instructors.
- The faculty role suggested here indicates an overall improvement strategy. The service-learning coordinators and pathway leaders should organize discipline coaches, experienced service-learning faculty, to mentor other service-learning faculty teaching in a similar discipline, department or course and lead resolution on some of these issues.
- Faculty should encourage their students to attend the midterm reflection workshops. During these workshops, facilitators help students identify key concepts from their courses and lead discussion on them with other students.
- The S-L faculty coordinator has built a Change Agent curriculum, which addresses service-learning and sustainability, in 'Imiloa, KCC's social media website. It has a series of writing activities that can help students develop their essays. The coordinator has scheduled a number of workshops to introduce the module to faculty. Faculty members should attend a workshop and consider integrating/assigning the 'Imiloa module in their classes. The service-learning office should consider integrating/adapting/leading the module as part of its midterm reflection workshop series.
- The board needs to discuss what "key concepts" in the prompt mean. Does the student have to explain several concepts? Or would explaining one concept in great detail suffice?
- When assessing learning for a paper written for two courses, key concepts for both courses need to be discussed in detail.
- The board may need to refine the language in for level 4 and 1 in the rubric.
- The board should discuss other formatting requirements to highlight key concepts. Should students have to cite their sources of information; bold, italicize or underline terminology? Should faculty or the service-learning office provide formulas or sentence starters that help to highlight key concepts?
- Faculty should require students to provide the course alpha and number on the first page of the essay. The guidelines distributed by the service-learning office ask for the following information: course and instructor; service-learning site; brief description of service-learning place; brief description of role/service performed; and number of hours served. If a faculty member adapted the guidelines, she may have overlooked this requirement. Requiring this information would allow the service-learning office to track the students better. It would also help the readers assess the essays more specifically.

- Faculty should assign the reflection essay as a requirement that figures into the course grade, which is an S-L best practice. Giving the essay only extra-credit status results in brief, cursory essays as the readers found here.

C. Change: Describe how your experiences have changed your view about the community you helped.

fall: 2.73
spring: 2.13

The readers thought the the scores for this dimension were satisfactory. The board discussed changing the more specific term "community" in the prompt/rubric to words that would encompass all the sites in which students serve. "Culture" and "ecosystems" were suggested additions, but the board will need to discuss this further during the fall semester.

D. Future Goals: Discuss personal, academic or career goals that you have achieved through your service. Describe how this experience has shaped your personal, academic or career goals. Describe your plan for future community engagement.

fall: 1.60
spring: 1.77

The readers thought that the prompt is clear and specific, but the students did not address this dimension in great detail in their essays. Extensive faculty discussion of individual goals may not be feasible in class, so perhaps the pathway student leaders can discuss this during the midterm reflection workshops or in one-to-one sessions. Another student engagement strategy might be to integrate a visualization of the rubric (like the TED Talks animations) using head/hands/heart. The board will need to discuss this further.

E. Affect: empathy (not sympathy), compassion, commitment, humility, respect, reciprocity, feeling engaged/empowered, a sense of personal transformation.

fall: 2.28
spring: 1.27

The readers thought the scores seemed appropriate for first-year students, who authored more than a third of the papers assessed, but the presentation and assessment of this dimension needs to be further developed. The board discussed informing the students that their affective change would also be assessed, either by explaining it in the guidelines or providing them with the rubric. It also discussed, alternatively, that C should be revised to ask about affect: Describe how your experiences have changed your view and feelings about the community you helped. The board was not satisfied with this revision, so it will discuss this issue in the spring 2013 meeting.

Midterm reflection workshops
One of the improvement strategies from the 2010-11 assessment called for more emphasis on the midterm reflection workshops, in which the service-learning office members assist students with

their essays in the two-workshop series. In the spring 2012 semester, several faculty participated in some of the workshop sessions. During that semester, 73 students attended the workshops. Six essays from those students were part of this assessment, which had 30 essays total.

	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
non-workshop (24)	1.50	1.17	1.88	1.71	1.21
workshop (6)	1.50	1.00	3.17	2.00	1.50

The workshopped essays show higher scores in 3 of the 5 dimensions. Lower scores in B. Learning is perplexing because the workshops specifically try to connect the course to the service. Three of the 6 essays scored 0, which lowered the overall score. The workshops remain an important improvement strategy. More faculty are encouraged to participate in them.

Other discussion topics:

The readers agreed that it was easier to assess an essay when it had explicit sections that correspond to the specific prompt dimensions. Rather than a singular 4-page essay, then, the reflection might be re-framed as a series of 4 (or 5) 1-page essays with an integrated conclusion. In any case, we should give students an example of ideal answers for the each of the prompt dimensions.

We have already established a C4ward about Teaching with Sustainability and Service-Learning led by two S-L faculty. We need to inform faculty about S-L pedagogy, assignments, workshops, rubrics and assessments. We need to communicate best practices, including requiring the reflection essay as coursework and integrating S-L with course content and curriculum. We should encourage faculty to visit placement sites to better understand student experience. We could train faculty to assess their class essays with the rubric, which will give them assessment data for their own courses. We plan on adding at least five new faculty to participate in the assessments.

We have already established new on-campus S-L option targeting developmental/FYE students in sustainability, the "Sustainability Promotion Team" integrated in all S-L pathways.

Recommendations
[briefly highlight specific improvement strategies, especially those that are already implemented for the fall, and those that seemed to have a lot of momentum, such as discipline coaches]