

**Community Based Learning at Stonehill College  
A Case Study**

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## **Introduction**

In response to the following request from the Dr. Corey Dolgon, Director of the Office of Community Based Learning at Stonehill College, Professor Dwight Giles, Dr. Elaine Ward and their students in the doctoral course in Case Studies in Higher Education, researched the history and the establishment, and the current status of the Office of Community-based Learning at Stonehill College.

## **Stonehill College Request**

Stonehill College is a small Catholic Liberal Arts School with a devout commitment to a curriculum infused with community service, civic engagement and social justice. Over the past five years, faculty's interest in service learning and community-based learning led Academic Affairs to seek Carnegie classification as an engaged campus and Davis Foundation funding to develop an Office dedicated to enhancing both the number and the quality of community-based learning courses on campus. As the Office of Community-Based Learning inaugurates its activities this fall, the Director would like to get some assessment of how CBL has evolved on campus and get a kind of analytical baseline for where CBL is now. In particular, information about the quality of CBL faculty and community partners' experiences, their understandings of what CBL is and how it impacts student learning and service, and an overall sense of how and why CBL has evolved the way it has. Our hope is that such information will result in giving the office a sense of the baseline as to where CBL has been and is, as we embark on trying to build and shape new experiences. Combined with information we collect this year from such subjects (as well as students on campus in this year's CBL course offerings) we hope to have a longer-term strategic planning retreat this coming summer.

## **Response to Request for Research**

This report responds to the above request and presents the research in four research areas – Founders and Framers (those responsible for conceptualizing and founding the Office of Community-based Learning), Community Partners (the community organizations and members Stonehill partners with, Students, and Faculty. Each research team conducted its own research and compiled individual research reports. All four reports are compiled in this one document. There may be some overlap. Appendices are at the end of this report for all four research teams.

## *Introduction*

Recently, the academic community has paid greater attention to service related experiences as researchers and practitioners attempt to more firmly understand these programs and the impact they have on the students, faculty, and community alike. From creating a common language to describe the various forms of service, to assessing the outcomes of service work and the learning that takes place there, service related education has certainly become an important issue to be better understood.

At Stonehill College, a small selective Catholic college just south of Boston, there has been numerous opportunities for students to get involved in service projects within their local community. Consistent with the mission of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the order that founded Stonehill, service to others has always been an important part of a Stonehill education. As Father Robert Kruse, a Holy Cross priest for over 50 years so eloquently states on the college's website, "The College's emphasis on educating the whole person is remarkably consistent with Father Moreau's insistence that education of the heart is as important as education of the mind." Undoubtedly, the Congregations founder would certainly agree that regardless of what term is used to describe campus service opportunities, it is clear that they all contribute to the education of the heart.

While there have been many opportunities for students to participate in service at Stonehill, a new effort has taken place on campus to more formally move service from basic volunteerism to what Rhoads (1998) refers to as academic service learning. This movement has culminated in the creation of the Center for Community Based Learning through the aid of a Davis Educational Foundation grant.

While much effort has gone into obtaining this prestigious grant and then creating this new office, many researchable problems have emerged. In an effort to better understand the role of community based learning at Stonehill both prior to the arrival of the new office and into the current semester, the Director of Community Based Learning has initiated this case study. From the distinct lenses of four crucial stakeholders, the original community based learning framers, faculty, students, and community partners, this case study seeks to better understand the outcomes of community based learning on each of these groups.

## *Overall Design*

The overall design of this qualitative research study on Stonehill College's Community Based Learning history can be described as a single case study of a particular program on a specific campus community bounded by a timeframe (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). A qualitative case study approach is a good match with the primary research goal to determine what has happened at Stonehill College related to Community Based Learning (CBL) in the years leading up to the institution's recent establishment of a new Office of Community Based Learning. Stonehill's situation can also be described as unique which lends itself to a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2009).

### *Site Selection*

Stonehill College was selected as a research site through a combination of informed connections and specific opportunity. Since this study is a project as part of a doctoral course on qualitative case study methods, the course faculty used their connections and extensive knowledge of the research topic to identify and negotiate the research opportunity. In addition, Stonehill College operates with a mission of social justice and community service which is strongly connected to its identity as a Catholic institution and has resulted in a varied but significant history of informally and formally embedding community based learning into classroom learning and extracurricular activities. In terms of opportunity, Stonehill recently won a grant to establish a new Office of Community Based Learning as part of its Center for Teaching and Learning. These qualities and prospects made Stonehill an attractive environment to pursue a qualitative case study focused on what and how CBL activities have occurred at Stonehill prior to the establishment of this new office.

### *Course participants:*

#### **Doctoral Students**

Kate Bresonis  
Jay Carey,  
Yi Shiuan Chin  
Glenn Cochran  
Fernando Colina  
Wanda Montañez  
Kevin Piskadlo  
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#### **Instructors**

Dwight Giles, Jr.  
Elaine Ward

### **Acknowledgements**

This case study was accomplished through a partnership between Office of Community Based Learning at Stonehill College and the Higher Education Case Study course at U Mass Boston. All of us in the partnership are grateful to the students, community partners, faculty, and administration who shared their thoughts and ideas with us in formal interviews, through documents and by letting us observe classes and events. Because of research ethics, all participants in this study are anonymous but we and you know who you are and we thank you for your helpful assistance.

## **Section 1**

Founders and Framers Research Team

Yi Shiuan Chin, Fernando Colina and Joanna Ravello

## **Case Exercise Final Report: Founders and Framers Team**

### **Introduction**

This report aims to explore the purpose for establishing the Office of Community-based Learning (OCBL) at Stonehill College from the perspective of the people who played a role in establishing OCBL. These people will be referred to in this report as the “founders and framers”.

### **Conceptual Framework**

To fully understand the thinking behind the establishment of OCBL, it is important to explore the founders and framers’ motivations from individual, group and institutional perspectives. The social constructivist framework focuses on how individuals make sense of their experiences; it relies both on the participants’ views of the situation and subjective meanings they draw from it (Creswell, 2007). These experiences are influenced by the social, historical and cultural contexts in the individuals’ lives (Creswell, 2007). The assumption is that the founders and framers have their individual motivation for creating OCBL in addition to fulfilling a community and institutional need. Their experiences are likely influenced by factors such as Stonehill’s mission, leadership, institutional identity as well as their relationships with faculty, staff, students and the community.

### **Research Questions**

Given the purpose of the case study, the research questions are designed to describe the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), i.e., the establishment of OCBL. Creswell (2007) states that “qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional; restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms; start with a word such as ‘what’ or ‘how’ rather than ‘why’; and are few in number” (p. 107). Yin (2009) states that “why” questions can be asked to seek explanations in case studies, histories and experiments.

The central or overarching question is the question that drives the other questions. Maxwell (2005) defines its function as the question to explain what the study will attempt to understand about the situation. Creswell (2007) describes the central question as “the grand tour” or “tell me about yourself” inquiry. Hence, the central question for the founders and framers group is: What was the purpose for creating OCBL? The question seeks to make sense of the motivation or intention behind the creation of OCBL from multiple contexts, including historical, social, political and personal.

Creswell (2007) (citing Stake, 1995, p. 17) states that the subquestions are “intricately wired to political, social, historical and especially personal contexts” (p. 108). The subquestions for the founders and framers are designed to address the central question from historical, present-day and future perspectives. They are:

1. What events led to the creation of OCBL? This question seeks to learn the reason(s) for creating OCBL at Stonehill, understand the influences and constraints, and provide a historical background. It may help contextualize what OCBL means to Stonehill.
2. To what extent does OCBL contribute to the teaching and learning at Stonehill? This question aims to make sense of the institutional expectations of OCBL, for example, how does community-based learning fulfill the mission of Stonehill and its Catholic identity. The question may also provide insights into how the expected outcomes

were established. Moreover, the findings can potentially be used to triangulate observations gathered by the other groups.

3. What are the founders and framers' hopes and fears? This question attempts to understand the founders and framers' individual and collective expectations and concerns—the personal context. It can provide insights into the key players at Stonehill and their level of investment in OCBL. The question also seeks to learn of any challenges and constraints that OCBL may face going forward.

Maxwell (2005) cautions that the challenge in designing research questions is to avoid questions that are either too broad or too narrow. The central question is broad enough to query the phenomenon at the simplest level. The subquestions are broad but focused enough to meet the objectives of the founders and framers research group.

### **Methodology**

#### **Selection**

The participants were selected purposefully because they were presumed to have an active role in the establishment of OCBL and therefore were uniquely able to provide the information to address the research questions (Maxwell, 2005). Four participants were identified from the Davis Educational Foundation proposal and from communication with Dr. Corey Dolgon, the Director of OCBL. One individual was selected based on the individual's institutional role. These participants will be referred to as "founders and framers" in this report.

Dr. Dolgon recommended that we use snowball sampling during our interviews to identify additional founders and framers. Creswell (2007) defines snowball sampling as a method to identify "cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (p. 127). A question was included in the interview protocol, "Who else do you think we should talk to in order to find out more about the establishment of CBL?", to identify others who were involved in the process. The participants identified two additional administrators who were involved in the creation of OCBL. The authors were not able to interview these two individuals because of time constraints. The participants also recommended several faculty members who could provide historical information about community-based learning on campus or who participated in the early discussions on the need for an office to coordinate community-based learning courses during the preparation for a proposal to the Davis Educational Foundation. The names of these faculty members were passed along to the team assigned to obtain information from faculty.

#### **Data Collection**

The authors examined documents provided by OCBL and information that is available on Stonehill's website. They identified several key documents that are relevant to understanding the idea behind the establishment of OCBL from the founders and framers' perspective, including the proposal to the Davis Educational Foundation, Stonehill's Strategic Plan for 2011 through 2015, OCBL's website, and "Mission Possible" an unpublished article about community-based learning at Stonehill.

The authors also conducted semi-structured interviews with the five participants identified as the founders and framers. In order to capture individual and collective motivations as well as the social, historical and cultural contexts of this case study, the interview questions were designed based on the phenomenological approach. The



questions were broad and open-ended to allow each participant to make sense of what the event means to him or her (Creswell, 2007). The questions were categorized into three sections: the past, which focused on the events that led to the establishment of OCBL; the present, which focused on the current status of OCBL; and the future, which explore the expectations and constraints facing OCBL. (See Appendix A-1: Interview Protocol)

Dr. Dolgon sent an email to the five participants to inform them about the case study and to introduce the authors. The authors then contacted the participants by email and by phone to schedule the interviews. The day before the interview, the authors sent an email to each participant to confirm the interview and provided a sample of questions from the interview protocol to give the participant an idea of the information that the authors were seeking. An informed consent and consent to audio taping form was attached to the email (see Appendix A-2: Consent Form).

All three authors conducted the interviews and took turns serving as the interviewer and the note-taker. In each interview, two of them served as interviewers while one took notes. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewers provided a brief overview of the objectives of the interview, reviewed and collected the informed consent and consent to audio taping form, and asked if the participant had any questions or concerns before starting the interview. Audio recordings were made in four interviews. The fifth participant declined to be recorded. The audio files will be handed over to the instructors of this course and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the course or at the discretion of the instructors.

### **Data Analysis**

Data from the documents and interviews were analyzed for patterns and themes that can explain the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The unit of analysis is the interactive process that led to the establishment of OCBL. Although the unit of data collection is individual founders and framers, the purpose of the case study is to understand the reasons the founders and framers, as a group, established OCBL. The assumption is that participants make sense of a situation from interactions with others (Creswell, 2007). Hence, the analysis of the interactive process would provide information about the individual and collective motivations that led to the creation of OCBL.

The authors analyzed the documents and interviews independently. Then, they met to discuss the emerging themes for each question in the interview protocol. They discussed each question and aggregated instances from the data to find an answer or answers to the question. The findings were tabulated across the three broader categories of past, present and future. The authors also examined substantive categories or naturalistic generalizations that can be inferred from the data (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). Finally, the categorical and substantive data were analyzed to make sense of the political, social, historical and personal contexts of OCBL from the perspective of the founders and framers.

### **Validity**

To ensure the validity of this case study, the authors utilized the construct validity test to gather multiple sources of evidence, such as the Davis Educational Foundation

proposal, Stonehill's Strategic Plan, Stonehill's website, interviews, and findings by the other teams, to establish a chain of evidence so that readers could make logical links from research questions to discussion using these sources (Yin, 2009). As elaborated by Yin—when done correctly—this chain of evidence process allows the reader to follow the logical link from the research questions, through the evidence, and to the findings and vice-versa. The findings from the interviews were triangulated with the documents as well as the findings presented by the teams assigned to work with faculty, students and community partners. The triangulation among the interviewers was used to minimize errors and biases. Since the findings were generated from the same sources, there may still be potential for biases (Maxwell, 2005; Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), “Peer review or debriefing provides an external check of the process” (p. 208). All of the teams reviewed and critiqued each other's research designs as well as discussed each team's findings. Along with the course instructors, the teams provided feedback to each other at various points during the case study process.

The validity threats during the interviews included researcher biases and participant reactivity (Maxwell, 2005). To minimize the risk of internal biases that might affect the findings, the authors purposefully identified these early in their discussions so that they could be aware what these were (Maxwell, 2005). For example, one bias that emerged from the authors' discussions was that each favored community-based learning as a useful form of pedagogy. To gauge the participants' views about community-based learning, the authors included a question in the interview protocol asking the founders and framers to define community-based learning. Similarly, the authors discussed how personal values might influence their biases during the data collection and data analysis processes. For example, their perceptions about Stonehill as a religiously-affiliated institution had to be identified and taken into account in order to be sensitive to that reality. The authors consciously expressed what the possible biases may be and sought to correct for these during data gathering and interpretation (Maxwell, 2005).

Each of the three authors took turns serving as an interviewer or a note-taker. This enabled the authors to compare their field notes and their understanding of the interviews from different viewpoints. According to Maxwell (2005), in order to address possible biases on our part, we ensured that we asked the same questions of each participant, so as not to influence the quality of the evidence we gathered. The authors made every effort to follow the interview protocol as closely as possible but allowed some deviations as appropriate to the flow of the interview. For example, there were times when the authors had to change the order of questions.

### **Findings**

OCBL was established serendipitously, the result of several events converging and culminating with the financial commitment from the Davis Educational Foundation. The three-year grant provides the start-up funding to expand community-based learning initiatives at Stonehill. Stonehill will assume the full cost of running OCBL at the end of the grant, which indicates Stonehill's commitment to strengthen the connection between community-based learning and classroom pedagogy. By accepting the grant, Stonehill's administration confirms the steps outlined in the grant proposal as being both feasible and achievable.

The authors identified several major themes from the findings on the purpose for establishing OCBL: institutional missions, connecting community-based learning with classroom pedagogy, critical reflections by students, partnership with community organizations, response from the campus community to OCBL, and measuring success. Due to the small sample size, the quotes that are presented in this report will be anonymized to the extent possible. For example, the quotes will not be attributed to any specific participant.

### **Institutional mission**

Service and social justice seem to be infused in Stonehill's institutional values, as evident in its mission and policies. Stonehill's institutional mission states, in part, "Stonehill College educates the whole person so that each Stonehill graduate thinks, acts, and leads with courage toward the creation of a more just and compassionate world" (Stonehill College, n.d.-c, para. 3). Effective 2003, the Faculty Handbook includes a policy on faculty engagement in the community that states, in section A10.5, "Faculty members are encouraged to devote a portion of their time to the rendering of public services, and to represent the College in the local community." Time and time again, the participants specified that such goals were concomitant with Stonehill's adherence to social justice and its Catholic values. A participant remarked:

As a Catholic college, there is a sense of social justice, as the Catholic Church speaks in terms of option for the poor, being involved and engaged in the community. I feel there are a lot of fertile areas here that we realized we could bring it to another level, and to provide resources for faculty to do this.

The findings suggest that community-based learning at Stonehill started informally by faculty who wished to connect a service component to their course curriculum, hence connecting classroom learning to the mission of the College. The participants stated that community-based learning has expanded in the last few years since the appointment of Dr. Joseph Favazza, an expert in the implementation of service learning in educational programs, as Dean of General Education in 2005. Dr. Favazza currently serves as the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.

### **Connecting community-based learning with classroom pedagogy**

When the Office of Community Service and Volunteerism was created in the Mission Division a few years ago, a small portion of its Director's time was assigned to support community-based learning. A participant stated that part of the Director's role was to "work with faculty to help them form partnerships with neighboring non-profits." As more and more faculty became interested in community-based learning, the Office of Community Service and Volunteerism could no longer support the growing demand. A participant stated that "faculty demand was there but we are not giving them enough support." Since most of the participants were administrators, the authors questioned whether the faculty had the same perception about the need for additional resources. The findings by the team assigned to gather information from the faculty confirmed that there was such a need.

Community-based learning is defined at Stonehill College to mean "a pedagogy that connects the theoretical learning of the classroom with real-world experiences that require critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to address issues that affect the

community” (Stonehill College, n.d.-b, p. 3). A participant observed, however, that some faculty have intermittently tried connecting with the community but without, as this participant noted, “a lot of pedagogical intentionality about what they were doing”. This indicates that there was a need for better coordination and resources to support faculty who wanted to incorporate service learning into their curriculum.

As the idea to establish an office to coordinate and support community-based learning began to emerge, the participants agreed that it would make sense to move the resources for community-based learning to the Academic Affairs Division. A participant noted:

I think, for the most part, the idea of service has been important. I don’t know if people necessarily recognize the importance of that within the academic curricula as part of a course or component of a course. But I think that has evolved and the discussion of community-based learning at the school has certainly taken some pretty important steps forward in terms looking at it as a pedagogy that can engage our students.

A participant stated that having community-based learning in the Mission Division could be a barrier because the faculty might not connect it with pedagogy or that the Mission Division is a place for students and not for them. Another participant noted that community-based learning is essentially connected to pedagogy:

If you're going to invite teachers and professors to consider this as a learning strategy, it's got to advance one or more of the learning outcomes for a course. If it doesn't do that, if you can't figure out how to do that, then you shouldn't do it.

By situating OCBL in the Center for Teaching and Learning, it can more effectively provide the necessary academic support, address faculty issues, establish best practices, track courses, and help faculty evaluate student learning. As a participant noted, “I felt like that would give it the kind of legitimacy it needed in terms of our faculty.”

The participants reported that one of the hurdles that the founders and framers faced while developing the Davis Educational Foundation proposal was to convince Stonehill’s president of the importance of connecting community-based learning to the pedagogy. They reported that the president expressed the following concerns: he believed that community-based learning is part of the mission of the College and was not sure if it should not be moved to the Academic Affairs Division; he was reluctant to commit to financing OCBL at the end of the Davis Educational Foundation grant; and his focus on developing career-related curricula. In the end, the participants reported that the founders and framers were able to convince the president that, as one participant stated, “if you don’t have service learning on the academic side of things, its legitimacy... its connection to the curriculum is all in question.” In the end, the president agreed and supported the proposal. As a result, community-based learning has been incorporated into Stonehill’s upcoming strategic plan as a core educational value. The core value states, “Preparing students to be agents for social change, and particularly for putting their knowledge to service in the context of community-based learning” (Stonehill College, n.d.-a, p. 2). A participant stated, “We have this capacity now with the Office and let’s build it. Let’s really make it front and center in terms of our experiential learning opportunity.”

### **Critical reflections by students**

The participants emphasized the importance of student reflections in the service learning experience. Several of them quoted a John Dewey expression, "Service without reflection is miseducative." A participant stated, in part, "What's more troubling for me is if a student goes in with certain conceptions about the community and those conceptions are not challenged." Connecting community-based learning with the classroom would provide structured reflection and assessment throughout the semester (Stonehill College, n.d.-b).

The participants reported that students are open to being engaged in the classroom. A participant noted, "Students who are hesitant in the beginning often become engaged once they realize how much better their learning becomes". The team assigned to work with students reported similar findings. A participant told a story:

Students just gave a final project yesterday in [a] class and one of the students said that it was a life-changing experience... and she went into [community organization] and she worked [with women]. And so just interacting with the women, who often times were her own age, and she saw a lot of similarities between herself and [these] women that she didn't perhaps know before. She said after she went the first day, she went home and cried for two hours because she was just so overwhelmed with what their life experiences are and just completely out of her realm of experience.

The participant noted that such experiences can have an impact on the students' life and can validate a faculty member's decision to engage in community-based learning: "So, it's a win-win for everyone when it works well."

### **Partnership with community organizations**

The participants cited the relationship and reciprocity between Stonehill and community organizations as a significant component of community-based learning. A participant stated:

Community-based learning has got to be done well, which in my mind means that you don't do it by the seat of your pants, that you actually put resources there. You put someone that knows what they're doing and you give the support to faculty to do it and you create those opportunities to build the partnerships.

As community-based learning continues to develop, some participants expect the role of community partners to expand to become co-educators. A participant commented:

I'd say that at some point there's gonna be more and more focus on [building up the community partners] and how the community partners influence not only individual courses but also perhaps even influence our whole institution in terms of our role.

The challenge, they noted, would be to convince the faculty to share power with the community partners.

The participants reported that Dr. Dolgon has begun to explore ways to establish a Stonehill presence in Brockton, where the community partners are located, as a way to strengthen the partnership. An example that they gave was Dr. Dolgon's idea of purchasing buildings in Brockton to create a center and demonstrate Stonehill's commitment to the community. A participant remarked:

I think that's part of what it means to be a community partner and so I really see that those kinds of partnerships are going to evolve. So in five years, I'd say we are going to be... our relationship with our community partners is going to be very different.

The participants identified transportation as a significant constraint in developing a relationship with community organizations. Some participants reported that there is no easy way for students to get to their sites in Brockton. In addition, a participant reported that many students have not had the experience taking public transportation and would need to learn to navigate the Brockton public bus system, which the participant reported is unreliable. Similar findings were reported by the other three research teams. Another constraint reported by some participants is the lack of coordination among the different Stonehill programs that send students into the community for different activities, for example, volunteerism, community-based learning, and internships. It could be confusing for community partners as to which students belong to which programs and the requirements that the students would need to fulfill for their programs.

### **Response from the campus community to OCBL**

The findings suggest a mixed response by the campus community to the establishment of OCBL. Overall, the participants thought that the response has been positive although they reported hearing concerns, for example, whether it was necessary to create another administrative structure, the ambivalence about mixing service and academic learning, and the reaction from faculty who have been doing community-based learning for a long time. Several participants noted that the campus community perceived moving the resources for community-based learning from the Mission Division to the Academic Affairs Division meant a transfer of resources from a small campus division to a larger one. In addition, the creation of OCBL was perceived to add another administrative layer to the campus organizational structure.

Since OCBL is newly established, it may be too early to gauge the campus community's feelings about OCBL. A participant remarked:

It's still early in the game. I mean, it'll be easier to tell at the end of even this year, I think... when maybe we can do the kind of outreach and surveying to find out what people are thinking.

Some participants observed that people are getting to know OCBL administrators but not necessary the office itself. They felt that it would be important to develop the identity of OCBL as the center for community-based learning at Stonehill.

Moving the administration of community-based learning from the Mission Division to the Academic Affairs Division seems to have created tension within the campus community between those who believe that service learning is a part of the institution's Catholic values and therefore should be a co-curricular activity and those who believe that service learning should be a part of the institution's pedagogy. Although all of the participants agreed that OCBL needs to be based in the Academic Affairs Division, some of them seemed ambivalent about the impact on the value of community service as a co-curricular activity. A participant commented:

I get concerned about how [the students] spent time outside of the classroom in terms of their engagement with the local community, to find ways that are educationally informative and broaden their horizons. I think it's really

important... It certainly happens in academics, in service learning, but I think that it also needs to happen in the co-curricular.

Nonetheless, all of the participants agreed that community-based learning enhances student learning and expressed their hope that more faculty will incorporate community-based learning in their courses.

### **Measuring success**

A participant involved in developing the expected outcomes outlined in the Davis Educational Foundation proposal stated that these were roughly estimated because the founders and framers, as this participant noted, “didn’t have a sense of what’s possible at that point” and doubled many of the numbers that they had. They reported that Stonehill does not have any formal data on community-based learning and that the existing data were self-reported by faculty, such as number of courses and number of students. The outcomes were “fairly ambitious”, a participant noted.

Community-based learning courses are not described in the current course catalog. Hence, students risk not knowing that they are enrolling in a course that has community-based learning component. The participants reported that Dr. Dolgon has begun working with the Registrar’s Office to identify and correctly code these courses. They expressed optimism that the newly implemented ERP system (SAP Banner) would accommodate the identification of such courses and would allow OCBL to track community-based learning courses and provide the necessary data to facilitate faculty engagement in community-based learning. A participant stated:

I hope that we have better systems in place for tracking [community-based learning] and assessing it. Both so that as an office we can think about... our office's own direction but also to have that data for faculty so they can think about what they're doing and how they can do it better.

To encourage more faculty involvement, some participants recommended linking community-based learning to faculty reward. The team who worked with the faculty found that the faculty would like to be recognized for their involvement in community-based learning in the tenure and promotion process.

### **Implications**

The Garbage Can Model of organizational decision-making can be used to explain decisions that happened as a result of several relatively independent streams of events through processes that may not be rational or linear (Dee, 2009; Krumme, 1999). The theory specifies four convergent streams of events: problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities. In the case of OCBL, the problems were the lack of resources to support the increasing faculty interest in community-based learning. The solutions were to develop resources to coordinate and support faculty interest and to apply for an educational grant to support the development. The participants were people who have an interest in expanding community-based learning and connecting it to classroom pedagogy—the founders and framers—and the Davis Educational Foundation. The choice opportunities were the availability of grant funding and the option to move community-based learning into the Center for Teaching and Learning. Hence, the serendipitous convergence of these relatively independent events led to the establishment of OCBL.

The findings indicate that community-based learning is intricately connected to the mission and values of Stonehill College. The ambivalence expressed by several of the participants suggests that there is a sense that connecting community-based learning to classroom pedagogy might lead faculty and students to think of service as an academic activity rather than service to the community. In the Davis Educational Foundation proposal, Stonehill's mission is explained as follows:

Our commitment to community service challenges students to think critically about education as a response to, not separate from, the needs of the human community. In this sense, Stonehill's mission is to encourage students to view their education as a privilege that comes with responsibilities to the community rather than a commodity for personal gain. (p. 2)

Thus, OCBL can play a role to connect mission and pedagogy.

OCBL appears to have already set some plans in motion to address some of the goals outlined in the Davis Educational Foundation proposal as well as some of the challenges identified by the participants. For example, on November 16, 2009, OCBL convened a meeting of seventeen community partners to discuss ways to improve community-based learning experiences for the faculty, students and community partners. In addition, OCBL is working with the Registrar's Office to code community-based learning courses which will lead to a better tracking procedure to measure not only the progress of OCBL but the status of community-based learning at Stonehill. Some challenges remain, for example, convincing some faculty of the benefits of community-based learning. A participant stated that change happens slowly in the academic community. Another commented that people are reluctant to change because there has been a lot of change.

There were several limitations to the research. The first limitation of the study is that it is not generalizable. Merriam (2009) states, "Perhaps because a case study focuses on a single unit, a single instance, the issue of generalizability looms larger here than with other types of qualitative research" (p. 51). The authors studied the formation of OCBL at a small, Catholic liberal arts institution in the northeast where community-based learning was part of its core values, institutional mission, pedagogical approach, and Catholic identity. The findings are unlikely to be generalized to other campuses or institutional types.

A second limitation of the study is that the researchers had a limited amount of time to spend writing the case report, due to semester deadlines. As Merriam (2009) has argued, "Although rich, thick description and analysis of a phenomenon may be desired, a researcher may not have the time or money to devote to such an undertaking" (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). In addition, the authors were unable to spend a lot of time in the field interviewing and observing the participants. Due to time constraints of the course and the authors' schedules, they were only able to spend one day in the field conducting back-to-back interviews with participants. The authors were also not present to observe the initial planning and development meetings, which would have occurred more than one year ago. Minutes from these meetings were not available.

A third limitation of the study is the qualitative research experience of the authors. According to Merriam, "The investigator is left to rely on his or her own instincts and abilities throughout most of this research effort" (Merriam, 2009, p. 52).



These instincts are often informed by the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of the researcher(s). The authors had little experience with qualitative research design methods and were largely guided by several qualitative research methods texts and by the guidance of two instructors who were expertly experienced in qualitative research.

A fourth limitation of the study is the research methods. “Both the readers of the case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product” (Merriam, 2009, p. 52). Several biases emerged during the case study research. One bias was in its design. There may be certain validity and reliability tests that the authors may have been unaware. Another bias was in the participant selection. Most participants were selected because they were named in one or more of the documents. The authors assumed that those named in the documents were an integral part of OCBL. However, it was not until during one of the interviews that the authors realized that certain participants did not have a direct role in the creation of the OCBL, and therefore, did not meet the requirements of the "founders and framers" definition. Additionally, there was an inconsistency in the data collection. Not all of the interviews were recorded because one participant declined to be recorded. As a result, the authors were unable to verify specific language that was used during the interview and had to rely instead on field notes for this interview. Due to the small sample size, this discrepancy can be significant.

Every participant cited transportation as a significant barrier for developing greater connection between Stonehill and the local community. There are many factors that might have contributed to this issue, for example, Stonehill’s location, its socio-economic status, the reliability of the public bus system, and the community partners’ perception of Stonehill. Further studies about transportation issues may help facilitate partnership and collaboration with community organizations. Another area for further research is the tension between mission and pedagogy. Although Stonehill’s mission clearly specifies the linkage between education and service, they appear to be perceived as two separate values. Understanding the tension may help clarify the institutional mission and strengthen the connection between mission and pedagogy through community-based learning.

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## **Section 2**

Community Partners Research Team

Jay Carey, Wanda Montañez, Alison Rubin

## **Introduction**

Stonehill College strives to develop individual students' knowledge, skills, and character in order to meet their professional goals. In providing these skills, Stonehill is dedicated to Community Based Learning that is designed by faculty members and members of the local community with the intention that the work should benefit the community as well as the individual student (Stonehill College, 2009).

The recently created Office of Community Based Learning (CBL), led by Dr. Corey Dolgon, is attempting to discover the effects and impacts of past service learning work. Our Case Studies doctoral class embarked upon a partnership to assist the Office of CBL with assessment. Our class examined four different perspectives: Founders & Framers, Community Partners, Students, and Faculty.

Our primary goal was to assess the impact of the service provided by the Stonehill CBL students and faculty. This paper reflects the perspectives held by community partners and their experiences with Stonehill College's Office of Community Based Learning.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Because of time limitations and our need for a general assessment, the conceptual framework of our case study did not include pilot studies or in-depth theoretical background. The community group was simply interested in gathering primary sources from the CBL partners and allowing the data to reflect the occurrences during the interactions. If we were to select existing theory, then we might risk imposing ideas that might not be relevant in our case study. As our directive was solely to observe and provide an assessment of the interactions, we have reported our data and noted any patterns or themes that have emerged. Additionally, during class time, we compared and shared our information with other CBL research groups, in order to build on our collective research of the entire case study.

A significant portion of our basis for understanding this case was grounded in the literature that we read and as it pertained to the engagement that Stonehill has already had with community partners. We believed that this could give us insight into how previous community partners felt about the service learning that had been implemented at their organizations.

### **Research Questions**

As Creswell (2007) suggested, we reduced our segment of the case study to one question and several sub-questions. Our research was driven by our initial overarching research question, "What was the impact that Stonehill CBL students and faculty had on the respective community organizations?" We felt that this question was imperative for the CBL office to consider and would help Dr. Dolgon and his staff to comprehend what has occurred thus far, and would be a guide for their continued student and faculty community outreach. Because our group wanted to know, specifically, what the community-engaged Stonehill students, faculty and staff had done with the community partners, four sub-questions emerged which we wanted to examine:

- 1) What were the goals of the service learning engagement?
- 2) What did Stonehill students actually do?
- 3) What were the immediate impacts of the engagement?
- 4) What were the lasting impacts of the engagement?

These sub-questions were instrumental in developing our interview questions, which were designed to extract further information about the experiences with the community partners. Creswell (2007) identified these as issue sub-questions that “take the phenomenon in the central research questions and breaks it down into subtopics for discussion” (p 109).

### **Research Design**

The research model that we chose was adopted from Maxwell’s book “Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach,” where he presents the goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methodology, and validity of the research design in a z-shaped format (Maxwell, 2005). This design plan was organized with the research questions as the central focus, while other components of the study reacted to those questions, as well as each other. This method seemed to be a suitable approach to model our design, as the reasons for doing the study needed to be identified in the initial stage of the design, and the goals combined with the conceptual framework were used as a basis for our research questions (Maxwell, 2005). In addition to the information gathered in the one-to-one interviews with our community partners, our research team was given access to historic CBL documents.

In regards to research methods, Maxwell (2005) lays out the four components for our research: 1) the relationship that is established with our participants 2) selection of settings, participants, time and date of data collection, and other sources 3) data collection methods and 4) strategy and techniques. We followed this protocol by collaborating with Dr. Dolgon to establish an introductory relationship with the community organizations. Once the initial contact was made, our goal was to personally interview participants in a non-threatening environment. During the development of our protocol, we referred to our research questions constantly while developing our interview questions, which in turn led us to consider our methods. We were expecting to collaborate with a cross-section of organizations that reflected the vast differences of the work done by Stonehill CBL students.

### **Participant Selection**

As we further discussed our assessment and researcher’s approach to this case, we realized that there were several perspectives that would be important components in gathering useful data. We developed categories of the individuals and their role in the organizations: a) the Service Recipients - the people that the Stonehill CBL students served b) the Project Manager - the person that oversaw or coordinated the service learning component at the organization and c) the Program Director, the person overseeing the organization and who, at times, has limited contact with recipients.

By choosing three subgroups we intended to observe any variance in perspectives regarding the impact of the CBL students and faculty. By examining these viewpoints, our goal was to triangulate the findings, thus validating the data collected (Stake, 1995). We anticipated that various themes would be revealed from the analysis of our data but also understood that there might not be an absolute bottom line consensus across the board for all of the organizations we interviewed. However, we recognized that any themes that might emerge could be consistent and useful in making recommendations to the Office of Community-Based Learning at Stonehill.

In order to gain the best understanding of the research question, we wanted to interview Service Recipients who were willing to participate in the case study. We intended to allow these participants to recount their story from their own perspectives, without imposing any biases through our questions. “In interview guides, the emphasis is on obtaining narratives or accounts in the person’s own terms. One wants the character and contours of such accounts to be set by the interviewee” (Lofland, p 81).

Our goal in interviewing the Project Managers, was to gain specific information about directly supervising the Stonehill CBL students. For example, the Project Manager might have specific stories that could inform the case study about the strengths and weaknesses of the service provided, length of service, and possibly even the lasting personal impacts on service recipients or the organization itself. By obtaining data from the Project Manager, we were seeking to gain information from the person(s) that were responsible for the service learning students. This role may be actively involved in creating policy for incorporating further service learning. Or they could have a position of leverage to make major policy decisions.

Finally, when interviewing Program Directors, we needed to consider the motivation and reasoning these individuals might have displayed when responding to questions. For example, it may be in the director’s best interest to dissuade or veil the community-based learning experience as a means to protect the relationship that an organization has with Stonehill College. Directors may also filter varying impressions of Stonehill’s engagement with the organization in order to maintain a positive image, which may attract other institutions to increase their involvement. The political undertone which community organizers must often encounter may complicate the data collection process, and negatively influence the authenticity and validity of the research (Creswell, 2007).

### **Interview Protocol**

We began preparing for our interviews by creating and outlining a specific interview protocol that we all followed. Interviewing was an effective means to gather extremely important information in a naturalistic context. According to Yin (2003), interview questions are one of four major components of an interview protocol that increases the reliability of a case study and helps the researcher carry out data collection. This system included our method of outreach to the various CBL community groups, the length of the sessions, as well as the specific questions we asked of the participants.

Our group developed 18 open-ended questions for our initial interview protocol (see Appendix B). Additionally, we were prepared to utilize probing questions when we wanted to obtain further information from our participants. As Stake (1995) noted, our task as researchers was to create a flexible list of questions that could be altered as needed as we redefined the issues at hand. We wanted to take the opportunity to learn the unexpected. Because our main research question pertained to the experiences of the community partners with the Stonehill CBL program, many of the interview questions related to the actual events during programming. For example: “What did the Stonehill CBL students’ work consist of? What worked and what didn’t during this experience? With this data, we attempted to obtain a more thorough understanding of our main research question.

As previously mentioned, our intent was to interview individuals that would provide us with three different perspectives of the CBL partnership with Stonehill College. After developing our interview questions, we created an introductory letter for our prospective community partners that explained the purpose and goal of the interview (See Appendix B).

All interviewees were emailed a copy of our consent form which clearly stated that the session would be digitally recorded, as well as the objective of our research and information that allowed them to abstain from answering specific questions or withdraw from the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable (See Appendix B). We also sent our in-person interviewee an advance copy of our questions in order for him/her to reflect and feel prepared to answer. Our overall goal with this protocol was to make certain that our participants were at ease during the 45 minute interviewing process and were not made to feel uncomfortable or defensive by our questioning (Yin, 2009). In addition to our in-person interview, we were prepared to conduct an interview via email, if necessary. These participants would receive a copy of our interview questions to return to our research group. Again, our goal was to impress upon them that their viewpoint and opinions were important and valid to us.

### **Data Collection**

With suggestions from Dr. Dolgon, we identified eight community organizations that were diverse in population and mission. Through him, our group sent introductory emails to the organizational contacts, explaining our request, and included a copy of the interview questions for them to review. Of the eight groups that were invited to participate, two of them responded to our inquiry for an interview. Both respondents were Program Managers from organizations that held similar functions. Thus, we were unable to secure interviews which represented the various perspectives we were seeking, both with the interviewees and the types of organizations. We first attempted to conduct all interviews in person but due to time constraints only half of our interviews were conducted in person. The other half of our data collection was done via email. We have chosen to identify the participating organizations as Group A and Group B.

Group A is a shelter that works to support the unique needs of the homeless adult population in Brockton. This organization has a strong, long-term relationship with the Stonehill College CBL students. Group B is a center which supports at-risk high school students, and provides tutoring and life-skill learning opportunities. Academic support ranges from GED exam preparation to offering work and job placement training. The Stonehill CBL students were required to actively involve themselves and lead hands-on workshops with the student participants. Group B has had a shorter history with their CBL students.

Group A's representative participated in a face-to-face, digitally taped interview with two of the researchers. The interview questions were sent before the meeting, in order for the participant to review and feel comfortable from the onset. The interviewee signed and returned our consent form, and agreed to the digital tape recording. During the introduction, he was informed by one of the researchers that the recording would be destroyed after the data analysis and final assessment report.

Group B's representative was unable to meet with us in person, and instead accommodated our request by scanning and emailing our consent form, writing out the

responses to our questions and emailing them to one of the researchers. The participant was also informed that all electronic and hard copies of the interview would be destroyed once the final assessment findings had been presented to the Office of Community Based Learning at Stonehill College.

The risk of reactivity was always present when we interviewed participants during this case study. During our in-person interview, we tried to remain aware of the possible effects of our own outward personalities and reactions to the participant. We did not want to influence the interviewee's answer by responding physically (ex. eyes widening, verbal agreement, etc.). This was less of an issue for our email interview, however, even as we communicated back and forth, we remained aware of how the online communication could affect the answers we received to some of the questions. Although we were not attempting to create a hierarchical power structure, we had to remember that the nature of the interview process could make the participants feel as if they should "give" us the answer we wanted (Creswell, 2007). We tried to remedy this by explaining at the commencement of both interviews that we appreciated the partner's time and value of their perspective and reinforced that any information that they chose to share with us, was important.

### **Findings**

After reviewing our gathered data, we found that both Community Based Organizations felt that there was room for improvement in their relationship with Stonehill College. The data analysis was conducted using information from the two responding community partners. Due to the limited number of participants, triangulation and saturation of data was not possible. Nevertheless, four distinct common themes emerged from the data analysis.

#### ***Improved Relationship Building***

Community organizations wanted this relationship with Stonehill College in order to publicize the need and importance of the services that they provide. They felt that it was important to bring forth awareness of the issues beyond inner-city Brockton and onto a college campus that reaches the broader community. In addition, organizations felt it was important to form relationships with college students. "*College students have a gift that we want to tap into*" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2009). Our participant stated that college students are integral to building relationships with guests and that these relationships are very meaningful.

#### ***Better Student Training***

##### ***Community Issues***

CBOs are asking for students to be better trained and made aware of the life experiences that their clients encounter. The feeling is that many students are placed in a service role without fully understanding the community issues. "*Have the students prepared and know what they are getting into...preparation should be better...a lot of people don't know the severity of the problem*" (Anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2009). Organization A stated that in addition to aiding staff with case management help and teaching life skills, Stonehill CBL students developed good relationships with the clients. This, in turn, led to the students developing a greater understanding of the challenges that the clients struggle with in life.

##### ***Diversity***



Another element for a more effective partnership is to improve the student's diversity training. In this paradigm, the definition of diversity includes socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity. The CBL Office has already taken steps to address this need and is providing training for students in conjunction with other local institutions of higher education. Next, our organizations noted that there needed to be better links between the community and the Stonehill students. They expressed concern that students were not connected to the Brockton community and therefore could not fully engage themselves in the service learning. *"A lot of these students come from all over the country but many have never been into the city. They should take the B.A.T. instead of the school shuttle"* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2009). In addition, community partners felt that if the students were more involved they would get more out of their academic preparation. *"Also, it's important for the Stonehill students to get out in their local community and work with populations they learn about in their sociology coursework"* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 19, 2009).

### ***Improved Faculty Involvement***

Another theme that emerged is that faculty members need to play a more active role in the partnership communication and development. One partner had limited contact with faculty throughout the service learning time, while another had no contact at all. *"I did not meet with or speak to the faculty during the semester. I asked the students for a copy of their syllabus and tried to base our experience around that. Stonehill did not give us any contact for the faculty."* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 19, 2009). Organization B had to create an experience that would be beneficial for the students based on what they were learning in the classroom, and therefore needed to collaborate with the professor. Perhaps if faculty were involved, the experience could have been much richer for the partnership and in turn, the organization would have had clarity on what their role was. *"I think the volunteer partnership needs to be evaluated to really maximize their time and [Organization B] needs to know what expectations we should have for the student volunteers"* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 19, 2009). *"We want to make sure these students get a good experience working in [Organization A]"* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2009).

### ***Schedule Flexibility***

Finally, both organizations felt that there should be more flexibility in scheduling hours for student volunteers. *"The short amount of time the students gave (2 months total) was not beneficial."* By creating flexibility in hours it allows for more in depth service to the organization. *"Shelters are funded for 12 hours a day. It would be helpful to get students more involved during the day in order to work side by side with case managers"* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2009). In addition, the flexibility is important for logistical reasons. *"The time period for when the Stonehill students volunteer needs to be changed. It was too brief and did not work well with our school season. I would also give the Stonehill students specific deadlines and have them review their teaching material with me prior to presenting it to our students"* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 19, 2009). A flexible schedule also allows the opportunity for better community relationships and long lasting impacts of the volunteer work. *"Students get comfortable and get a sense of understanding"*

(Anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2009). *“The time the Stonehill students had with us was too brief and inconsistent to have any sort of lasting impact on the organization or our students”* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 19, 2009). This new model would provide the opportunity for students to build deeper relationships with the clients and the organization. The increased involvement with the clients could, in turn, motivate the same students to continue the service learning at the same site the following semester. *“It would be great to have the same students come back again”* (Anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2009).

### **Limitations, Validity & Implications**

Yin (2008) lays out explicit tactics to deal with various threats to research validity that include but are not limited to 1) using multiple sources of evidence and addressing rival explanations 2) using logic models 3) having individuals review draft case study reports 4) and pattern matching. How can we be sure that our results are accurate? How can we explain the threats to validity and how we dealt to lessen their impact? There are a number of limitations that we encountered while conducting this research.

Our research team received clearance to begin interviewing service participants in early November, which left us with approximately one and a half months to collect data. However, we did not receive reply messages from interested community partners until the second week of December. This created a window of approximately one and a half weeks to collect, analyze, and report the data. We contacted eight organizations to be interviewed, but given the time constraints during a busy holiday season when volunteer organizations were highly pressed for time, we only interviewed one community partner in person, and one through email correspondence. Because our case study assessment resulted in interviewing two community partners, we feel strongly that the lack of multiple sources and evidence invalidates the strength of any of our findings. In order to have a rich analysis, with many opportunities for themes to emerge, there needs to be many sources of data. Although the information collected was consistent with the findings of the other three research groups, this is not nearly enough information to reach a point of saturation. However, it is important to emphasize that despite our small amount of details and information, our findings were similar to other results from the other assessment groups. This leads us to believe that our design method was productively leading us towards answering our research questions.

Our original goal of obtaining differing points of view from within the community partner organizations could not be met. Both of the interviews conducted were with interviewees who oversaw community service projects, which we identified as “project managers.” Furthermore, in order to validate the research, we intended to collect data from different types of organizations. This would help to ensure that Stonehill College had impacted a comprehensive set of community partners. Due to lack of historical evaluations completed by community partners, we had a lack of comparative data and were unable to triangulate our findings. Thus, our analysis could not be seen as “addressing rival explanations” (Yin, 2008) or even having much depth to bring to the overall assessment of the Office for Community Based Learning.

Ultimately we believe that despite our small number of respondents, our data yielded important information. To support this belief, we discovered that the findings

and recommendations of our assessment shared many congruent themes with the other three research teams. Finally, we feel that the Office of Community Based Learning would benefit from continued research and data gathering about the perspectives of the community partner organizations.

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### **Section 3**

Student Research Team

Glenn Cochran, Kimberly Russell, Sherrod Williams

## Introduction

On September 25, 2009 doctoral students in HighEd 691: Case Studies in Higher Education engaged in a case study opportunity with Stonehill College's Office of Community-Based Learning (CBL).

In order to manage the project and involve all cohort members, four work groups were created. Each of the groups was assigned to one of the four areas to be studied. Glenn Cochran, Kim Russell and Sherrod Williams comprise the group focusing on student experiences. The balance of this paper will speak to the work of the student sub-group.

The primary goal of the student sub-group is to learn what impact and experiences CBL courses had on students during the past three academic years. While it is critical to comprehend the knowledge and experiences of the faculty and community partners, to fully gauge the impact of CBL the experiences of students must be understood.

The work done through CBL courses is personal and intentional; Stonehill hopes to enrich students' experiences past the collegiate years. In their Davis Educational Foundation grant proposal (Davis CBL Proposal, n.d.) Stonehill College cites the need to provide "educationally purposeful experiential learning" as a key component in its goal to be widely recognized as one of the top five Catholic undergraduate institutions in the nation. This campaign to "*Academic Excellence and Distinctiveness*" outlines the need to be educationally purposeful as an important goal for the Office of Community-Based Learning.

## Research Questions

Our goal was to identify a single guiding question consistent with Spradley's "grand tour" (1979, 1980 as cited in Creswell, 2007). Since the purpose of the research proposal is to clarify and state what we will attempt to understand (Maxwell, 2005), we wanted to develop a question that was neither overly broad nor constricting. We utilized Creswell's recommendation of having "a single, overarching question and several sub-questions" (Creswell, pg. 108) and developed the following research question: "What were the student's experiences related to the service component of the community-based learning course?" This central question meets Creswell's (2007) suggested criteria in that it is open-ended, non-directional and reinforces the purpose of the study with more specificity. In addition, this question is process theory oriented and the type of question that is well suited to qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005).

The sub-questions following the grand tour question include the process questions described by Maxwell (2005). Process questions "formulate what we want to understand" (Maxwell, pg. 92). The following two sub-questions emerged:

- Sub-Question 1: "How does the community-based learning service component contribute to course learning outcomes?"
- Sub-Question 2: "How did student's community-based learning experiences influence their career goals or aspirations?"

Finally, Dr. Dolgon, the Director of the Office of Community-Based Learning at Stonehill College, specifically asked whether students participated in other service

activities after participating in their community-based learning course. While this question is informational and does not rise to the level of an issue sub-question we note it here as a question important to explore to answer Dr. Dolgon's query.

### **Case Design**

In its work with the Stonehill College Community-Based Learning (CBL) case study the student team has drawn on Maxwell's (2005) interactive design model. In Maxwell's interactive design model five key components - study goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods and validity – interact and impact the research design. The relationship between and among the components allow for the type of “tacking” Maxwell (2005, p.3) describes as key in allowing the study's design to emerge. Additionally, research questions, goals, and the conceptual framework interact to make up one closely integrated unit, while research questions, methods and validity make up a second closely integrated unit (Maxwell, 2005).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The Stonehill College mission statement reads, in part: *“Stonehill College educates the whole person so that each Stonehill graduate thinks, acts, and leads with courage toward the creation of a more just and compassionate world.”* (<http://www.stonehill.edu/x1273.xml>, retrieved 10/28/2009). Accordingly, the team is drawing from the work of Rhoads (1998) and the conceptual framework supporting the development of caring citizens through service learning. Rhoads found that many students went through stages of understanding themselves better, understanding others, and developing a stronger sense of citizenship (Rhoads, p. 285). In our study, we will investigate how students' experiences mirrored, or differed from, those described by Rhoads.

Our interview questions strongly connect with Rhoads' article on students involved in service. Rhoads based his methods with the overall goal stating: “to better understand the context of community and how such activities might challenge students' understandings of citizenship and the social good” (Rhoads, p. 285). Several of the questions that we ask are within the same context as Rhoads' study as we are seeking to learning about students experience with service except we are only interviewing students who were involved with academic community based learning and not including co-curricular community service activities. We asked students questions to help us determine why students chose to get involved in the courses, did the service component affect the future involvement in community service activities, and if this service impacted the students as individuals. Additionally, our questions seek to discover if students learned about themselves, understand others, and are acting for the greater social good (Rhoads, p. 286).

Our site and participant selection methodology has adapted throughout our study, which reminds us of the need to be flexible. Originally we wanted to interview as many students as were interested or available. However, the logistics of this have been challenging and we have adjusted our approach. Staying with purposeful selection, we are contacting all participants possible as we hope to have participants from multiple classes. It is our intent to “capture the heterogeneity” (Maxwell p. 89) and have a range of participants in order to gather feedback and experiences. We consulted with Student Affairs and the Office of Community Based Learning to send out the notices to recruit students who met the criteria.

## **Data Collection**

The section explains the methods used to gather data. We used four techniques for data collection – individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation, and document review.

The team decided on utilizing the focus group interview format as the primary source for interviewing. As noted in Creswell (2007) the focus group can be advantageous in studies where there is similarity among focus group participants and when the window of opportunity to collect data is limited. Interview questions have evolved out of our research questions through significant reflection and multiple edits. This experience is consistent with evolution of inquiry described by Stake (1995). We felt that students would be more likely to interact and share their experiences together than individually. As focus group facilitators, we were cognizant to manage the room so that all students have an opportunity to speak and all voices are heard. Attention to the focus group setting, ground rules, and activities were built into the interview protocol. As we proceeded with our data collection, we were attentive to our research relationships; this is an area where we spent a lot of time discussing how we should frame our work and ourselves. Since our professional positions range from Deans to Directors, realizing the positional power that is inherent in our positions with the Stonehill students was something we needed to address. We decided it was important to identify with the students as fellow students. The focus group interview guide and protocol is included in Appendix C.

Following the focus group we also conducted an individual interview with a student recommended by focus group members. The individual interview guide and protocol is included in Appendix C.

Data were also collected through observation of student presentations on their CBL experiences made during December, 2009. Finally, through document review we learned demographic information about student participants, and student's evaluative perceptions.

## **Validity and Case Design**

Similar to how goals and conceptual framework work closely throughout the process, methods and validity also are connected. The validity section explains why the research is accurate and where it might not be. Maxwell states validity as being “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (Maxwell, p. 106). The team discussed the importance of monitoring responses to the point where we feel saturation is yielding rich data (Maxwell, 2005). Triangulation of data collected from the different interviews and through observation and document review will be considered with regard to validity. This process helped decrease the chance for biases to arise from certain populations because data were drawn from diverse groups and areas – individual interviews, focus groups, observation and documents.

## **Analysis of Data**

In data collection, we had five participants in the focus group interview. The focus group had two interviewers. Participants were videotaped by the third team member, who did not participate in the interview process. Since focus groups had a total of seven people speaking we wanted to ensure we had the right quotes attributed to

individuals so the focus group was recorded for video and audio. The focus group lasted forty five minutes total. From the focus group we received the name of an individual which led to an individual interview. One of our team members conducted a one-on-one interview using the interview protocol from the focus group.

Lastly, after consulting with Dr. Dolgon, we contacted a professor who incorporates community-based learning in the classroom. This professor allowed us to do an observation and in two classes, where we had a member of our team listen to students community based learning presentations and reflections on their service.

The last part of our research of methodology consisted of document review. In the focus group, we had students do a survey which provided us some written reflection on their experiences with community based learning. We also searched for newspaper articles to see if community-based learning were documented by students in the newspapers.

After the focus group and individual interviews, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The classroom observations were also documented verbatim. The researchers gathered to review the notes, coded the transcriptions and identified themes, and clarified notes. Throughout the process, each researcher wrote memos to capture their thoughts on themes from the data analysis.

### **Data Findings**

As we analyzed our data, we discovered that our findings could be categorized into four sections to accurately address our research questions – Challenging Their Assumptions, Overcoming Challenges, Relating and Relationships, and Realizing the Impact. Each will be described below.

#### **Challenging their assumptions.**

There were three ways that the students had assumptions challenged through their community based learning experience. These three ways include challenging their assumptions of real world experiences, the importance of direct service, and their own priorities and interests. These findings were found throughout the classroom observations, focus group, and individual interview.

Regarding the real world experiences, the students found that their community-based learning experiences challenged their assumptions. For example, several students worked at a homeless shelter and for the first time, interacted with the homeless. As one student says, “it completely changed my view of the homeless. I used to have that view of the homeless, but they really are just like any of us and they just caught bad breaks. It was very rewarding and actually very fun.”

Another way that the students challenged their assumptions was by discovering just how much they could learn through direct service. Watching how the participants acted and really getting to know them was very important. Almost every time they were there, the students had a different experience that was not what they had expected to have happened. One student explains a time when his assumptions were challenged through an observation he made while at the homeless shelter stating “this one guy who came in, he had a huge Ziploc bag of toiletries. And we didn’t know what was going on. It was kinda weird. And he said, ‘I may be homeless, but I’m not dirty.’ It just totally changed my view of the homeless.” When the student shared this experience with the rest of the



class, the observations were very telling and the other students in the class reacted in a surprised way which showed that their assumptions were also being challenged.

Finally, the last way that we found the students challenged their assumptions was through their own priorities and interests. When we asked if the students were planning on continuing the service, one student said “if you had asked me that in August, I would have said not a chance. Now, though, I would say, if I had the time, I would which I actually might be able to. You see them on a first name basis, it’s the same residents. It’s a connection.” This student surprised himself by admitting that he was reluctant to participate, and then surprised himself even more when he shared that he would like to continue his work. Allowing students to be in situations where their assumptions are challenged in a safe environment is a meaningful way to encourage student learning.

### **Overcoming challenges.**

There were many challenges that the students overcame during their experience through their community based-learning courses. There were four main challenges that students had to overcome during their community based learning experience. These challenges were site flexibility, transportation, with the sites, and improvements.

Site flexibility was a challenge for many students who participated in community-based learning courses. For one of the academic classes we observed, groups of students needed to create their own community-based learning project. After starting their service with their site, it proved to be a challenge as there were many hurdles to rise above to read to children in the hospital based on the time constraints. They then came up with the idea to do a book drive. This book drive became their ultimate project; however this project was not as smooth as they anticipated because of all the logistics they had to work through with various organizations, and sorting the books. While the site flexibility was important, the students were forced to see the administrative challenges for coordinating a service project; given the time constraints in the semester, it also proved a challenge.

Transportation was another hurdle for the students. Since the sites are in the community, the students needed transportation to get to and from their service sites in Brockton. There is a campus ministry van service available, but their resources are limited and the van is not always readily available. There is a van available in the Office of Student Activities, but students are unable to borrow it unless the project is with a club or organization. Not knowing where to go and needing to rely on other departments was a significant challenge to the students. As one student said, “It’s challenging enough without transportation issues. I wanted to go before, but I didn’t have transportation. I think that’s a big problem.”

A third challenge for the students to overcome was with the sites. Most of the situations were with the participants, not with the community partners. The students have limited time to incorporate their site visits into their semesters, so it is important for the students to be able to engage with the participants while they are at the site. One student, expressed frustration with a site that coordinated GED programs with high school dropouts. This particular student spoke about how the group would plan activities for the site participants to do, but then when she arrived, there was a “...lack of students who were there. We couldn't get a feel for who the students who were there or what they wanted to do. And then there were days that they just figured they would take it off.”

Finally, a last challenge students overcame was by reflecting on their activities and seeing how they could have been improved. This was a new experience for most students within their specific sites, so they were really figuring it out while they went around. Upon reflection, one student shared, “[I] didn’t create the most comforting and open environment with the lights off, watching a movie. We want them to use us as a resource.”

### **Relating and relationships.**

The relationships that the students were able to observe were an important to make meaning out of their experience. This was done through four different styles: observing relationships, deeper understanding through relationships, seeing their culture, and continuing on after the “assignment” ended.

Observing relationships was an important way for the students to learn about the culture they were in and to learn about the people who they were serving. Often times the students were shy when they initially arrived at the site and they were still trying to determine their role while there. This inadvertently allowed the students to observe relationships through the participants. As one student reflected, “one time when someone came in, he wasn’t very happy about the strict guidelines. And this guy who had been there a long time came up to him and put his arm around the guy and said, ‘come on, we got to stick together, no one else cares about us.’” This exchange was meaningful for the student because he was able to see how the participants tried to help each other and were not as “selfish” as the student originally predicted.

Another way relationships helped the students have a richer experience was through a deeper understanding through relationships. Students are very busy and have busy schedules in college. It would be easy for the students to feel that they just went to the site, did the work, and then left. But by seeing these relationships and really thinking about the people they were serving, they created a deeper understanding for their situation and enriched their learning experience. As one student stated, “There was this one woman, older, very sweet, and then she sat down and just started talking with herself and then yelling. I worry about her on the streets. She’s just really vulnerable. I know they need more resources for the mentally ill.” It is this reflection which indicates the student will be likely to continue service learning in the future.

Using relationships, the students could really see the participants’ culture. Having the students immersed into the sites took the students out of their comfort zones and encouraged them to see things from different perspectives. For example, one student who was at a homeless shelter shared a story about one of the participants, “Some guy had run out of money and he asked another guy for money for cigarettes. Because of the smoke breaks and the thing. If you don’t smoke, you’re almost more marginalized in that culture. He felt enough pressure in order to smoke.” Seeing this relationship really helped the student see how the culture can shape the participants behaviors. The student was amazed that this participant would ask for a cigarette so he could go outside for a smoke break when he didn’t smoke. But the student was then about to imagine how the participant did feel alienated because so many people do smoke there. It was a meaningful way for the student to see the culture’s impact.

Through the relationships that were built, continuing on after the “assignment” ended was an important finding. One student mentioned, “We are planning a pizza party

with them next Monday. We really did create a good bond with them.” Other students developed internships with their sites after the class ended. This continued service would be difficult to achieve without forming meaningful relationships.

### **Realizing their impact.**

Most students did not think that they would have an impact from their community based learning class. However, we found that the students were able to realize their impact on themselves, their impact from programs they introduced, and on the participants.

One of the lingering effects of the community based learning classes on the students was our finding of a better understanding of self. Several students commented that they were exposed to people who they had never interacted with before. However, once the students could relate with the participants from some demographic (such as age as shown below), then they had a deeper understanding of themselves. As one student said about the homeless shelter, “Some of the residents are like our age and are like kids. I just remember this one guy, he had been staying up at his Aunt’s House and he had like just turned 21 and had fun at casinos with his Aunt. But then he had to leave and had a bad situation with his parents and they made him go back. I just felt like, that could be me. He’s like actually younger than me. It just made me really think and made me grateful for the situation I’m in.”

Another finding from the theme of realizing their impact was that of “doing good.” Students really like seeing their hard work and having something tangible for their efforts. It was this sense of accomplish, which is not unusual for students with the background of Stonehill students, that helped them get this sense of doing good. As one student mentions who was working with a GED program, “I was really happy with the way the project worked out. Students got their hours in that they needed. And we made some friends along the way. It was really an eye opening experience.” The students felt good about the work that they did, knew they made a difference, and this was a way they saw their impact.

When the students were able to experience watching the people improving themselves, they saw the big picture and the impact that it was making. One student mentioned, “Other people felt they had the power to change the way their lives had gone. One of the residents didn’t have a job and then halfway through the semester ended up getting one. They were actively taking steps to make themselves better off.” This student enjoyed being there to see this growth and change as watching people in stagnant positions is frustrating for them.

Finally, through continuing service, we were able to see how the students could tell they were making an impact and that this was important to them as they wanted to continue their work. For example, one student claimed, “I’m on the basketball team and I talked to my coach about this. My coach knows that they are struggling with volunteers there. So we’re going to go. I don’t know if I’ll be able to go solo, because of the schedule. He’s definitely going to make it a team project. It’s a sobering experience. It’s a great thing.” This experience was so important to him, and he could see the impact

that it made, that he wanted to share it with his teammates. And he wanted them to experience it, which is very significant.

### **Additional findings.**

We also discerned several additional findings. One of these is that students participated in service before their CBL course and most had a service requirement in high school. These experiences ranged from scouts to church activity to teen alternative programs. We also learned that students took their specific CBL course for a variety of different reasons. No single theme emerged. One student commented “I just chose mine because it looked interesting to me. And I needed to take an LC.”

Students didn't approach service activities with any expectation of participating in planning service activity. Students did recognize that they are able to influence the type of activity they engage in by having the flexibility to select their service site. One student noted

“...at other places...it's mostly...food delivery so you don't have a lot of flexibility. So it's more...choosing where you going to be.”

Students reported that service time commitments were typically clearly defined and spread evenly over the duration of the course by faculty. A typical description included the student who said “...you went...for four hours... at least one Saturday a month...maybe two and by the end of the semester they wanted you to do like four or five times.” Students clearly felt that the CBL service component contributed to learning course content and observed that sites that had students engaged in a variety of activities added to classroom discussion and enhanced the overall experience. One male boasted “I thought it was a great integration. We really got to see firsthand everything we learned about...” while another observed “Having some flexibility makes class discussion more interesting, because you get to see what other people are doing.”

We heard loud and clear that student's CBL service experiences have had a clear impact on their future plans and/or career goals. “It made me realize that I want to work with youth even more” said one student. Finally, all students interviewed continued to participate in service activity after their CBL course or have expressed a desire to continue.

### **Validity**

Validity is an important component of qualitative research because it indicates why people should believe the findings. One way to show research validity is through triangulation. Triangulation incorporates multiple strategies so that the findings do not rest solely in just one source. We triangulated through focus groups to hear multiple sources of experiences, reading the student newspaper for pertinent information about the courses, trying to gain information from the course evaluations about the immediate thoughts from the experience, and by following up with students if more probing was necessary.

In this case researcher bias is limited because we have multiple researchers who are intentional about making independent thoughts to bring to the group. With one researcher, there is not the same ability for checks and balances that multiple researchers bring. We have all examined our researcher bias through thinking about whom we are, what we bring to this project, and sharing those thoughts with each other. This is important in increasing the validity in our research.

### **Limitations and Implications**

The primary limitation faced was the limited one semester timeframe to conduct the research. This limited the window of opportunity to conduct interviews. For example, while we would have liked to run three or four 45 minute focus group interviews with groups of six to ten participants we only had the opportunity to conduct one. While the student research team is confident in the validity of its findings the richness of the data may have been enhanced with the opportunity to conduct additional interviews.

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## **Section 4**

Faculty Research Team

Kate Bresonis, Kevin Piskadlo, Michelle Sterk Barrett

Faculty Experience with Community Based Learning at Stonehill College  
Critical thinker. Life-long learner. Commitment to service. Each of these student outcomes in one form or another can be found somewhere in the mission statements of the majority of colleges and universities across the United States. From the smallest liberal arts college to the largest research university, higher education is a place where faculty has an opportunity to shape the next generation of civic, business, and community leaders.

While it is fairly easy to agree that these are worthwhile outcomes, how to achieve them is often a lot more difficult. To this end, faculty are constantly re-evaluating their teaching, reworking syllabi and curricula, and introducing new pedagogy in their classrooms, all in an effort to create more dynamic educational environments.

The start of the academic year is a mix of emotions for most faculty members with stress, excitement, and pressure colliding in a perfect storm of anticipation. Faculty members, refreshed from their summer, cross the picturesque New England campus, prominently displaying a range of frenzied thoughts on their faces that only an astute observer can decipher. Questions about the upcoming semester, the classes being taught and the research that is to be conducted, are mixed with the cleansing sense of renewal that each new fall brings to college campuses. For Professor Alison Jones (pseudonym), these feelings are magnified by the introduction of community based learning in her course. Deciding to integrate community based learning into her class was not difficult. In fact, she was quite interested in doing so; it was a question of “when” rather than “if.” Drawn to the Stonehill campus by the Catholic college’s commitment to service and excited by the Center for Teaching and Learning, she always knew that she would incorporate a service component to her class. As an undergraduate, she spent a year deeply involved in a community based learning project in the rural areas surrounding her college. The experience, quite frankly, was transformative. It not only connected her with the “world outside,” but it impacted how she thought of herself as a student. This is the exact outcome she was looking to achieve with her own students.

At Stonehill College, faculty and administrators have committed much energy and resources to growing their service initiatives with an eye towards creating a more vibrant community based learning program. Immersing students in the local community can enliven the curriculum and offer just the right amount of cognitive dissonance that can often lead to the achievement of the aforementioned outcomes. It can, as Light (2001) found, be crucially important to students, connect their learning with their lives.

Even a cursory examination of education publications reveals that faculty in the academy are under increased pressures. They are often asked to teach more students, to publish more frequently, and to serve their community on various committees. It is a delicate balance for even the most effective faculty. Therefore, when community based learning is introduced to this mix, what is the experience of these brave faculty who take on this additional challenge?

In the case study that follows, we will share four stories of Stonehill faculty who have offered community based learning sections of their classes. Their stories will reveal the benefits and the challenges they each face as they attempt to include this pedagogy in

their classrooms in an effort to engage critical thinking, create life-long learners, and foster a commitment to service in each of their students.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

The overall design of this qualitative research study on Stonehill College's Community Based Learning (CBL) history can be described as a single case study bounded by a particular program within a specific campus during a focused timeframe. (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is used when there is a need to have a "...complex, detailed understanding of the issues" (p. 40). Stonehill's situation can also be described as unique which lends itself to a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2009). A qualitative case study approach is a good match with the primary research goal to better understand service learning experiences and culture at Stonehill in the years leading up to the establishment of the Office of Community Based Learning. In his book on qualitative research design, Maxwell (2005) shares a model of research design that we have adapted for our project. Unlike other models we examined, the Maxwell model indicates that "...the different parts of a design form an integrated and interacting whole, with each component closely tied to several others, rather than being linked in a linear or cyclic sequence" (p. 4). With a structure that allows for flexibility, this design includes the goals and research questions as well as the conceptual framework, methods, and validity.

In addressing the faculty population of CBL faculty at Stonehill, the study was guided by the following central question: What has been the experience of faculty who used CBL at Stonehill prior to the inception of the new Office of Community Based Learning? To further clarify the central question, five subquestions emerged: 1) What was the motivation for faculty members in deciding to utilize CBL in their course(s)? 2) How satisfied are faculty members with their CBL experience? 3) How, if at all, have the classroom related community partnerships influenced the educational outcomes of the course? 4) How did the implementation of CBL influence the faculty members teaching methods? 5) How has the way in which the faculty utilized CBL evolved over time?

### *Conceptual Framework*

There are many personal attributes that connect the researchers of this project to the topic of community based learning and will inform the findings. As current professionals in higher education, each of the researchers has had previous experience with service learning in a variety of different settings and levels of exposure. This includes being active participants in service learning to facilitating service learning opportunities. One researcher spent the majority of her career in the field of service learning.

In addition, each of the researchers are graduates of Catholic higher education and each of them have worked professionally at Catholic affiliated schools, including one who was employed at a school founded by the Congregation of Holy Cross, the religious order the founded Stonehill. These experiences and the unique lenses that each presents, will help the researchers more deeply understand the commitment to service that Catholic education espouses and the unique nuances that these communities present. This



familiarity explains our interest in this study and will certainly help us gain access to the community we seek to better understand.

### *Participants*

Interviews were our primary mode of data collection. Stake (1995) states, “Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case... The interview is the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64). Our hope is for the interviews to provide us with multiple perspectives on the faculty experience with service learning at Stonehill.

Since statistical generalization is not the goal of case study research, our group used non-probability sampling to determine who to interview (Merriam, 1998). In particular, we used purposive sampling which is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

The selection of the faculty interview participants was also “purposeful” in that the gatekeeper was consulted for background and suggestions to help identify which faculty users of CBL would be good interview candidates and clarify the degree to which these faculty members are engaged in CBL activities and approaches (Creswell 2007; Maxwell, 2005, p.89). According to Creswell (2007), this sampling strategy is useful when the sample size is small to minimize chances of collecting inadequate information. In addition, purposeful selection in this case allows targeting of interview participants across a broad spectrum of formal and informal CBL familiarity, experience, and disciplines.

### *Procedures*

The research design is informed by data gathering methods that directly address the overarching and sub research questions. Creswell (2007) identifies four types of research information: observations, interviews, documents and audiovisual materials. According to Yin (2009), the most common sources of evidence in case studies are “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 101). Of the sources identified by Creswell (2007) and Yin (2009), two key sets of data were gathered and analyzed for this case study including documents and interviews.

Examples of documents gathered for background and analysis include the Davis Foundation grant proposal and supporting documents, Stonehill’s strategic plan, student newspapers, alumni magazines, mission statements, course syllabi, brochures, and other campus publications. In addition to reviewing the documents and artifacts of the community based learning program and the institutional as a whole, visits to campus provided opportunities to retrieve additional documentation as well as early opportunities for observation.

Interviews with faculty who have used community based learning formally or informally in their courses served as another key source of data. As our project concerns the faculty who have participated in community based learning, most of our efforts revolved around selecting and interviewing the faculty. To this end, we compiled an original list of faculty participants and met with Stonehill campus partners who could identify those faculty members who represent the widest variety of experiences and commitment and enable us to gain the maximum variation in perspectives. As a result of

the meeting, the research team identified eight faculty members who represented diverse disciplines and experiences with CBL with the goal of obtaining six interviews. Using multiple sources of data allowed for appropriate triangulation exercises to minimize validity threats and contribute to verification of data coding and analysis from interview transcripts (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Stake, 1995).

#### *Instrument*

A semi-structured interview guide was the primary instrument used to gather information from faculty. The research team felt that one-on-one interviews matched with the highly professionalized nature of faculty members who are typically experts in their individual content areas and do much of their work and writing on an individualized basis. Interviews were semi-structured to allow for natural conversation to emerge with probes interjected as needed to assist elaboration and clarification (Merriam, 1998). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to maximize validity (Maxwell, 2005).

The research team worked together to develop a list of interview questions and probes. These questions were vetted through a piloting process and assembled into a formal interview guide to use as a reference in the interview setting and maximize the probability that the anticipated data will be collected (Appendix D). The interview protocol is adapted from Creswell's (2007) sample interview protocol as well as Elaine Ward's dissertation interview protocol. It was carefully crafted to extract relevant information related to the research questions and was vetted using pilot testing (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Stake, 1995). The interview is broken down into five sections: General and Background Information, Motivation to Use Community Based Learning, In-Classroom Experiences and Educational Outcomes, Looking Forward, and Final Thoughts (Appendix D). It is bounded, as Creswell (2007) suggests, "on the front end by questions to invite the interviewee to open up and talk..." and concludes, with a heartfelt thanks to the faculty for taking time out of their already complicated schedules to sit down and critically answer the questions we posed (p. 133).

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

Four total interviews with Stonehill faculty from different disciplines were collected and analyzed. Three of the interviews were conducted in-person on a one-on-one basis and each interview was led by a separate researcher. The three in-person interviews were conducted on campus at the offices of faculty participants, and each lasted approximately one hour. The research team purposely structured the in-person interviews so that one researcher was present at all three interviews, once as an active interviewer and two additional times as a passive listener/observer. This technique was used to decrease the chance that data or questioning techniques were biased. In addition, this technique minimized validity threats by enhancing reliability in interview data analysis through the ability to cross check when coding data and identifying overlapping themes. The fourth interview was conducted via e-mail. For this interview, a faculty member answered a predetermined set of questions from the interview protocol in writing (Appendix D).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to maximize the coding process. All transcripts were read several times separately by each research team member and emerging themes were recorded and color coded. The team convened to combine

coded data and clarify significant themes. Final themes were identified and key quotations from each transcript were isolated, color coded, and categorized. These data were refined to present as key findings and a document was created that merged isolated quotes under central themes. As an added layer of reliability and validity, interview data was triangulated with documents collected from Stonehill in the data gathering phase.

While the four interviews obtained for this study yielded a number of overlapping themes that were soundly reinforced through triangulation with documents collected from Stonehill, an increased sample size could be useful in further clarification and reinforcement of central themes or the identification of possible outliers. In addition, although faculty participants were from various disciplines and backgrounds, they were all CBL users. The addition of interviews from non-CBL users or faculty who tried CBL but abandoned it could further diversify the sample and provide new and significant data.

#### Findings

In reviewing the interview transcripts, there were a number of unique themes that appeared. These themes can be categorized into the broad categories of faculty motivation, potential barriers to utilizing community based learning, educational outcomes, experience with community partners, and the institutional role in supporting the use of community based learning.

##### *Faculty Motivation*

The data point out that the desire to utilize community based learning is an outgrowth of personal interest and experience for all of the interviewees. Not one of the interviewees mentioned being “recruited” into the use of this pedagogical method. Rather, each interviewee believed that the use of community based learning was a choice consistent with their personal commitment and educational philosophy. Joanna Miller (pseudonym) stated, “my dissertation research project was actually a community based learning project.” She further indicated that this experience as a graduate student in combination with a prior job working with mothers on welfare, “made me want to do a practical kind of social helping research function...not just sitting in the ivory tower by myself and reading.” Alison Jones explained that her motivation to utilize community based learning:

...came about because I was involved in community based learning as an undergraduate.... I felt that was a project that really transformed how I thought of myself as a student. It got me involved in the world outside...got me into the community outside [my college] and I really felt like it was a transformative experience in my life as an undergraduate.

Kim Harris (pseudonym) also shared her reasoning, commenting simply that, “it's definitely what [my] interests are.” Wanda Davis (pseudonym) highlighted some of the educational benefits students who participate in CBL enjoy after their experiences asserting that, “Teaching community involvement is important part of helping students become engaged, informed citizens.”

##### *Potential Barriers to Utilizing Community Based Learning*

While personal commitment enabled these faculty members to overcome any potential barriers to utilizing community based learning, the faculty members did express

many challenges encountered in their experience with this pedagogical approach. In the absence of personal experience or interest in community based learning, other faculty members may not be as inclined to push past the roadblocks that these barriers can create.

The primary barrier mentioned by faculty members is the amount of extra time this educational approach takes. Long before the class begins, faculty mentioned numerous time-consuming activities that take place. First, time must be devoted to working with the department to find a time when a community based learning class can fit into the teaching schedule. After departmental approval, there is a lot of time required to find a community partner and work with the partner to determine the actual service that will be done as well as the logistics of transportation, accountability, and grading. The faculty member also has to do advance work on the syllabus to determine how to integrate the community based learning with traditional classroom learning. Finally, the faculty member may have to sacrifice time when the class is scheduled to be in session to actually do the service. Joanna Miller explained, "It's just the logistics are very tough." Alison Jones also mentioned how the challenge of logistics, "just bog you down" and how this can be hard to reconcile with the fact that, "there's just a lot on your plate as a professor." Wanda Davis has found that challenges, "stem around organizing schedules. How do I prioritize a student-athlete's schedule, with parents' weekend and other related events that may prevent involvement? The time I have had to spend scheduling has been a drawback." While the class is in session, Allison Jones lamented that,

I think it's always a challenge to figure out to have enough time [with the students]... Basically, that [the service experience] takes up the whole class. It's hard, part of me is like I want to sit down and talk about this for an hour now. I want to process what we did today. ...it never feels like enough.

Another potential barrier that may prevent faculty members from considering community based learning is the uncertainty about the credit this extra time and effort may get in the tenure and promotion process. Joanna Miller, a tenured professor, found that it may have carried some weight as her pre-tenure form included a comment thanking her for her work with community based learning efforts. However, Alison Jones, a junior faculty member, was left with the impression that she should limit her involvement with activities outside of research. She conveyed a story about expressing her interest in teaching a learning community course and being told by a mentor in her department, "as a junior faculty member you really need to focus on publishing."

Some faculty members may be disinclined to use community based learning because doing so requires one to give up some control. A faculty member must be comfortable incorporating the community partner as a co-educator and accept the fact that the co-educator's priorities may be different from the faculty member's priorities. Alison Jones pointed out, "I think there's always challenges when you bring someone else into your course by working with a community partner." The faculty members also loses some of the typical classroom authority as the learning students gain from the community often will not fit within the professor's area of expertise. "What happened is that I'm of course teaching a [alternative discipline] course...did I know anything about [this alternative discipline]?" questioned one professor. Students may also want to discuss social problems that have no solutions and require the instructor to be

comfortable with much ambiguity. Alison Jones acknowledged this lack of control exists, but explained, “I’m okay with that [lack of control] because I think such powerful lessons are being learned and lessons I couldn’t teach if I wanted total control.”

While the faculty members we interviewed are likely to continue using community based learning without institutional incentives, they indicated that they would greatly appreciate tangible benefits. These could include: course releases, grants/stipends for course preparation time, and tenure and promotion policies that incorporate CBL.

#### *Educational Outcomes*

The faculty members conveyed many positive educational outcomes that resulted from community based learning. These educational outcomes include the following: community based learning led to increased student learning and more enthusiastic engagement as well as a more collaborative, open classroom environment; the typical rigid boundaries between faculty members and students, between academic disciplines, about where education can take place, and between the campus and the community are blurred; and community based learning offers useful, meaningful education that teaches citizenship and life skills while potentially fostering a long-term commitment to service.

In a recent article on service learning that appeared in the Stonehill Alumni Magazine, Joseph Favazza, associate vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty stated, “We integrate service into our courses because it advances student learning.” (December 5, 2008) The data gathered from our faculty members confirm this to be true. Wanda Davis wrote,

There is no other way my students could have understood what they were learning in our classes as well as they have been able to as a result of community involvement... I think the impact has been immeasurable. Motivation and understanding have noticeably increased.

Kim Harris echoed Wanda Davis’ words when she stated, “I think it would be really hard for them to discuss education policy or discuss a program for alleviating poverty or those types of issues without actually experiencing it.” Joanna Miller conveyed that her students,

...write weekly journals about what they saw and apply critical theory to their observations and critically think about the material... it helps them retain the material more...people learn in different ways and experiential learning I think is one of the major ways that our students learn. So I think it, it is very beneficial...

Alison Jones mentioned the informal discussions she has with her students as they return from the service site and how the conversations make it evident to her that, “my kids are getting something out of this course.”

This increased learning may be related to the more collaborative, open classroom environment that faculty members reported. Kim Harris explained this collaborative environment in stating,

...they've [the students] got an experience and they have something to share that I don't know anything about because I'm not there with them at their community site. So, instead of me giving them information from the top down, they're able to really provide a lot of the information. So it's more student led.

Alison Jones also referred to how the lack of authority creates a more collaborative environment when she stated,

I have found in this class because I'm not an authority...it's more of a collaborative, we are creating a body of knowledge together in a way that doesn't quite happen in my other classes...let's explore these questions together, let's get at these questions together. It certainly is a different type of learning environment.

She further explained that a more open classroom environment exists because of the increased time students are spending with one another, noting, "I think you start to see friendships develop among people. I've found the class is, and I'm not surprised, closer. And it also means that people are a little bit more open about sharing."

The enthusiastic engagement students have for the class is evident to the faculty members. Wanda Davis stated her students "are more motivated to learn the material because they want to understand what they are experiencing in their community involvement." Joanna Miller indicated that "many students say it was the best part of the class." Kim Harris mentioned that the class is regularly over enrolled and declared that the community based learning component of the course is,

...really the one thing that the students almost universally like about the class, even though when we tell them that they're going to have to do it, they groan. At the end of the semester we do evaluation forms, it's always the thing that they like the best and that they get a lot of learning out of...Some of the kids get really into.

The faculty experiences also indicate that the typical, rigid boundaries between faculty and students, among disciplinary areas, about where education can occur, between campus and community, and between self and others are blurred. Kim Harris spoke to the blurred boundaries between faculty and students as she stated,

When I first started teaching, the students here they look at you and they write down everything that you say and I felt like Moses on the mount or something. It was very odd. I would try and engage them in conversation and they just kept writing down things. So, that has evolved somewhat [because of community based learning].

Community based learning has offered instructors the opportunity to make multidisciplinary connections and explore universal themes from multiple perspectives. Kim Harris also spoke of blurred boundaries among disciplines in explaining, "We designed the learning community to integrate the two disciplinary courses...to have the students do more of the work and more of the integration and figure out how everything goes together." A syllabus from a recent community based learning course listed among the goals/objectives of the course: "To *engage* in group reflection on the theological, social, political, legal, economic, and cultural aspects of the immigrant experience." Along with broadening the subject matter that is being taught, another educational outcome is that learning is not confined to textbooks and the four walls of a classroom. Alison Jones teaches her students in a variety of locations as she organized speakers to come to campus, had students go out to dinner together in Brockton, and spoke of the significance of conversations taking place during car rides to and from the service site.

The Davis grant proposal indicated this to be a goal of community based learning at Stonehill in stating that community based learning can, "provide students with academic experiences that create learning spaces both within the classroom and beyond the physical campus." In the Stonehill alumni magazine, Joseph Favazza stated,

“community based learning is a powerful pedagogy that allows faculty and students to make connections, to link what they’re reading and reflecting on in class with community placement.” (December 5, 2008) More than one of the faculty members spoke of the “Stonehill bubble” as a place where students can remain disconnected from the world outside of Stonehill. Community based learning is able to burst that bubble as explained by one course syllabus: “Some students learn best by hands on learning and community based learning is a way to apply theories learned in class to real life experience....make the links between academia and the wider community that houses Stonehill College.”

Kim Harris believes,

Stonehill students tend to be very cautious and they like to stay in their comfort zones... Stonehill’s-even though we’re right next to Brockton- we’re kind of isolated....there’s always this Stonehill bubble joke that goes around. So, we try to push our students into the community as much as possible and deal with issues, deal with people, deal with things that they wouldn’t necessarily deal with or think about.

This opportunity to engage with the community also can blur the line between self and others. Joanna Miller indicated that,

It helps them get out of their own shoes and look at world views from the perspective of someone else.” She also stated, “A lot of times they say after the first few days that their perceptions of, for example, the homeless were totally wrong and that it was an eye opening experience. They bought into the idea that their preconceived notions are often wrong and they notice that these people are unique individuals just like themselves.

Community Based Learning also offers a useful and meaningful education that teaches citizenship and life skills while potentially fostering a long-term commitment to service. According to the Office of Community Based Learning documents, one of the intended outcomes of community based learning is that it fosters “participatory citizenship and social responsibility.” Alison James reflected this in stating, “I feel the heart of this course is really about teaching them to be citizens, teaching them to preparing them with the types of skills they need to be participants in this democracy and in this country.” A course syllabus explains that this course challenges students “to think critically about what it means to be active citizens of a democratic society.” Kim Harris echoed these sentiments in stating, “One of the things that we wanted is for it to really be useful for them as citizens, to have the information that they need to get out of here and be active members of their community.” Joanna Miller stated, “It makes them more aware, it helps them foster their leadership growth I think too.... a lot of the students write that [it] really opened their eyes--that it helped them with personal growth and development.”

The faculty also report that it is not uncommon for students to continue their service experience after completing their community based learning course. Joanna Miller, shared, “I hear through the grape vine that some of my students from two or three years ago are still there based on that initial class.” Kim Harris proudly stated, “We have a lot of students who continue on their own, which I always find really great.” These comments substantiate a view expressed in both the grant proposal and the alumni magazine: “In expanding community-based learning, the College is fulfilling its mission

by developing in students ‘a lifelong desire for self-discovery and commitment to service that will lead to truly purposeful and rewarding lives.’

#### *Experience with Community Partners*

The faculty experience with Community Partners has been mixed—though no one mentioned any truly negative experiences. Kim Harris indicated, “The community partners that we've dealt with have always been fantastic...and they're super nice...I would really like to get even more challenging and more beneficial community placements for them. I think that it's a great enhancement to the class.” Joanna Miller asserted, “I want more of a hand in choosing the community partners because sometimes they just were not appropriate....I think the more planning that goes into choosing the CBL sites, the better the class is.” Alison Jones said,

I think there's always challenges when you bring someone else into your course by working with a community partner....Not wanting to offend them and not knowing really what would or won't be offensive. Trying to work out a partnership because certainly their vision of a partnership was somewhat different than ours.

Wanda Davis explained that, “I work with fantastic folks at the site and that has made everything run as smoothly - actually, even more smoothly than I had anticipated.”

#### *The Institutional Role in Supporting the Use of Community Based Learning*

The data indicate that Stonehill's commitment to education for justice, compassion, and social responsibility is evident to the faculty, inspires them, and leads them to believe top administrators support their interest in CBL. Alison Jones stated,

I really like Stonehill....I like the changes that I've seen over the last 4 or 5 years. I feel like this campus is putting its money where its mouth is.... I think the two things that most excite me in some ways about Stonehill are the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Community Based Learning which is a part of that.

Faculty see the prior work of Nuala Boyle and the present work of the Office of Community Based Learning as being very helpful and expressed that office engagement in the following activities would be particularly useful: advocacy for the legitimacy of community based learning and the inclusion of CBL in the tenure and promotion process, logistical support (setting up partnerships, providing transportation, informing about potential legal issues, etc.), providing networking opportunities with other faculty that are utilizing community based learning, providing educational workshops about the effective implementation of community based learning, providing resources and best practices about community based learning.

## Conclusions

### *Implications for Practice*

Examining the faculty experience with CBL at Stonehill College revealed specific implications for practice and opportunities for future research. Importantly, faculty believes the Office of Community Based Learning can play a useful and meaningful role for them and Stonehill on several levels. First, faculty indicated that such an office could play an advocacy role to communicate the legitimacy of CBL and the inclusion of CBL in the tenure and promotion process where appropriate. If faculty tenure and promotion



processes at Stonehill do not currently align with the service mission of the institution or if there is a disincentive to connect faculty tenure and promotion goals with service, recruiting new faculty to try CBL or hiring faculty who value CBL will be challenging. In essence, faculty participants indicated that they are very satisfied with their CBL experience as it provides a dynamic educational environment for students and faculty. In other words, faculty who have tried CBL believe that the educational outcomes are well worth the extra efforts involved with integrating new pedagogies and service-oriented activities and assessments into their courses. Incentives are greatly appreciated, but not central to the decision to use CBL. In part, the willingness of faculty to try and continue to use CBL correlates with faculty support of the Stonehill mission. Faculty are receiving the message that service and social justice is central to the College's mission and Catholic identity and one way to support this is to integrate CBL into their courses.

Second, the Office of CBL could provide resources and logistics management to faculty as designing, instructing, and assessing a CBL course takes considerable time and requires reflection. An office that can be a true and effective partner with faculty provides incentive by alleviating some of the planning and assessing work required by CBL faculty. Whether for faculty trying CBL for the first time or for the CBL veteran looking to evolve, organizing workshops and forums that provide education about CBL resources and practices and provide new research and literature and resources directly to faculty is desirable. Findings also suggested that faculty would appreciate the Office of CBL to take an assertive role in identifying and arranging community partnerships and helping to pave a smooth pathway for faculty between the service requirements embedded in their course and the community partner.

Third, findings suggest that an Office of CBL could help spearhead logistical issues and fill educational gaps that arise when students choose or are assigned placements in community agencies. For example, transportation for students to and from community placements was cited often by faculty participants as a concern for which additional options would be a welcome contribution from an Office of CBL. In addition, providing student workshops for student to prepare them for what to expect and what should be considered prior to their community experiences could be beneficial.

Finally, an Office of CBL should have a community building function that creates programming and networking opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and community partners. Ideally, by removing some of the time consuming logistics from CBL faculty, they could take time to cultivate and encourage new faculty members to try CBL. As an added benefit, these outreach activities might yield research and publishing opportunities not previously identified. Also, since personal experience is the most likely avenue through which faculty can become invested, an Office of CBL could provide service travel immersion opportunities to engage new faculty and rejuvenate veterans. Service events for faculty are not only an excellent means to build interest in CBL, but can provide a alternative forum for faculty community building and enhanced commitment to the service and social justice aspects of the Stonehill mission.

#### *Limitations and Final Thoughts*

Good research not only answers the questions that are posed but provides opportunities for new ones to emerge. While we have offered many insights into the faculty experience of community based learning, further study remains. There are many

ways that Stonehill can further the knowledge base by building upon the research and findings presented here. This can be most easily done by exploring and adding experiences from other faculty. The exploration of faculty members who have resisted using CBL is a fertile population for further study. This study has revealed some potential obstacles for participation, but a study specifically examining this issue could prove quite useful. The educational opportunities that CBL provides are too important to ignore. Additional research will not only greatly enhance the learning opportunities that are presented to students, but may also result in fostering students' commitment to improving the communities in which we live. The critical thinker? The life-long learner? The student committed to service? This case study has clearly revealed that these goals are all made more likely by participating in community based learning.

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Appendix A  
Founders and Framers Data Gathering Instruments

## Appendix A Founders and Framers

### Community-Based Learning at Stonehill College Case Study Research Researchers: Yishiuan Chin, Fernando Colina, and Joanna Ravello

#### Informed Consent Form and Consent to Audio Taping and Transcription

University of Massachusetts Boston  
Department of Higher Education Administration  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA. 02125-3393

#### Consent form for:

Founders and Framers: Community-Based Learning at Stonehill College

#### Introduction and Contact Information:

You are being asked to participate in a research project exploring community-based learning at Stonehill College from the perspectives of those involved in establishing the Office of Community-based Learning. The researchers are Yishiuan Chin, Fernando Colina, and Joanna Ravello, doctoral students in the Education Administration Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The researchers are part of a doctoral cohort who is conducting the research project for Case Studies in Higher Education course. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. This project has been approved by the UMASS Boston IRB as a Classroom Exemption study #2008018. If you have further questions later, you can reach Joanna Ravello by phone at 401-523-5073 or by email at [javello@mail.uri.edu](mailto:javello@mail.uri.edu). You may also contact the advisors for this research project, Dwight Giles, Ph.D., [Dwight.Giles@umb.edu](mailto:Dwight.Giles@umb.edu) or Elaine Ward, at [elaineward@yahoo.com](mailto:elaineward@yahoo.com).

#### Description of the Project:

The purpose of this study is to develop a baseline understanding of community-based learning at Stonehill College to help the Office of Community-based Learning establish their ongoing evaluation processes. Your participation in this study will take approximately 45 minutes, take the form of an in person interview and will be audiotaped, unless we negotiate otherwise. If you choose to participate in this study, two or more of the above named researchers will interview you on the Stonehill campus.

In the interview, you will be asked to provide demographic information as well as your insight about your experiences (past and present) with the development of community-based learning at Stonehill College, as well as your perspectives for the future of community-based learning at the college.

#### Risks or Discomforts:

This research is of minimal risk. Possible discomfort with this study is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the research interview. You may speak with Joanna Ravello or the advisors to discuss any distress or other issues related to your study participation. This interview does not directly benefit participants.

#### Confidentiality:

Your participation in this research is confidential and every precaution will be taken to protect your privacy. We will not ask you for any personal information that is not directly associated with the purpose



## CONSENT TO VIDEO TAPING & TRANSCRIPTION

This study involves the audio taping of your interview with the researchers. The digital recording will be transcribed and destroyed at the conclusion of the course or at the discretion of the advisors. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the digital recording erased if you wish to withdraw your consent to taping or participation in this study.

**By signing this form you are consenting to (INCLUDE ONLY THOSE OPTIONS THAT ARE BEING USED):**

- having your interview digitally recorded;
- to having the digital recording transcribed;
- use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

**By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.**

This consent for taping is effective until the conclusion of the course or at the discretion of the advisors. At this time, the digital recordings will be destroyed.

---

Signature of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B  
Community Partners Group Data Gathering Instruments



Appendix B  
Community Group

Interview Guide & Protocol

I. Research Questions

II. Interview – General Information

Interview Type:	
Physical Setting of Interview:	
Interviewers:	

III. Community Group Interview Information

A. Interview Date:

Month:	Day:
Year:	

B. Interview Time:

____:____ a.m. or p.m. (circle)
---------------------------------

C. Location:

--

D. Interviewers:

--

and

--

E. Group Participants:

## IV. Interview Protocol

### A. Pre Interview

\*\* All organizations have received an introduction letter from the community group researchers.

\*\* All of the interview participants have received the consent form which outlines issues of confidentiality, agreement to tape the interviews, and possible risks of this study.

### B. Introduction to Participants

Hello! Thank you for allowing us to interview you today. We appreciate the time you are taking to meet with us. My colleague XX is going to be sitting in on the interview to make certain that the digital recorder is working properly, and to take additional notes. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes and we will be respectful of your time. We'd like to also remind you that if during this time, you want to end the interview, you are free to do so. We'd be more than happy to answer any questions you have at the end of the interview.

C.

Could you tell us about your organization and what it does?

#2

Could you tell us about the programs that students and faculty do with, or for your organization?

How long did you participate in this program?

Why did you want this partnership with Stonehill?

**#5**

What did you/your organization wish to accomplish with this?

**#6**

Why did you want this partnership with Stonehill?
Participants: Why did you become a part of this?
What did the Stonehill CBL student's work consist of ?
What was the frequency of the service and how many students came to work with you?
Immediately following/after the first few weeks of completing the CBL program, what did you see happening?
Immediately following/after the first few weeks of completing the CBL program, what did you see happening?
What was the result of your participation? What did you get out of it?

**#14**

What worked and what didn't during this experience?

What would you change?

How did the relationship with Stonehill College begin?

How many faculty participated in the service?

What was the role of faculty in the service/partnership? How did they immerse themselves in the project?

#

Is there anything else that we have not discussed that you feel is important or that you would like to share?

## Primary Introduction Letter to Community Partners

November 15, 2009

Dear Community Member:

We are Graduate students in the Higher Education Administration program at the University of Massachusetts Boston and we have been working with Dr. Corey Dolgon from the Community Based Learning (CBL) office at Stonehill College. We are currently working on a class project which will help the CBL office assess the impact of having Stonehill students involved with your organization.

In order to gain a better understanding of the effects of having Stonehill students out in the community we need your help. We would like to interview a representative from your organization.

Below is an outline of what the interviews will entail.

- We are interested in interviewing the Executive Director, Program Manager or the recipients of the engagement.
- The interviews would last 30-45 minutes at the individuals convenience and can be done either in person or over the phone
- In order to give the individual time to reflect on the service provided by Stonehill students, we will provide the questions we will be asking in advance to the interview.
- Interviews will be digitally recorded for accurate reporting.

A member of our group will follow up with you the week of November 23<sup>rd</sup> to schedule a time to talk. If you are not interested in participating please let us know by emailing deanrubin@yahoo.com. We look forward to working with you soon.

Thank You,

Jay Carey

Wanda Montañez

Alison Rubin

## Email Requesting Interviews from Community Partners

Stonehill College / Local Community Organization Partnership

To: Jay Carey <jcarey@salemstate.edu>

Cc: deanrubin@yahoo.com; Montanez\_w@yahoo.com

Community Group CBL Consent Form.doc (33KB)

Good Morning!

This is Jay Carey, Alison Rubin, and Wanda Montanez. We are writing to you on behalf of Stonehill College's Community Based Learning Office. We understand that you have a partnership with Stonehill College. As student-researchers from UMass Boston, we are looking to conduct a series of interviews that will help us collect valuable information about this partnership. Hopefully, the information we collect from you will help to improve the relationship you have with Stonehill.

As this is an extremely busy time of year, we felt that it would be best if we send you our interview questions via email. That way, you can respond when you have a moment, and we can accurately include your valuable insight in our final report.

We are also sending you the required consent form (which is standard practice) as an attachment; please read through the form, and if you can sign, date and fax it to 978-542-7215 (attn: Jay Carey) that would be amazing!

Before you answer the questions, we want to notify you that if you do not wish to complete this interview, you are free to stop at any time.

Here are the interview questions. Please answer them to the best of your ability, based on your understanding:

1. Can you tell us about your respective organization and what it does?
2. How did the relationship with Stonehill College begin?
3. Can you tell us about the programs that students and faculty do with or for your organization?
4. How long did you participate in this program?
5. Why did you/your organization want this partnership with Stonehill? What were the intentions behind this partnership?
6. What did you/your organization wish to accomplish with this partnership? What were the goals of the partnership?
7. What did the Stonehill Community Based Learning (CBL) student's work consist of?
8. What was the frequency of the service and how many students came to work with you? (how many students, and how often)

9. Immediately following/after the first few weeks of completing the CBL program, what did you see happening?

10. Did you notice any lasting impact that Stonehill students have had on your organization or its participants? Please explain.

11. What was the result of your participation? What did you get out of it?

12. What worked and what didn't during this experience?

13. What would you change as a result of this experience?

14. How many faculty participated in the service?

15. What was the role of faculty in the service/partnership? How did they immerse themselves in the project?

16. Is there anything else that we have not discussed that you feel is important or that you would like to share?

We truly cannot thank you enough!! Please respond at you earliest opportunity. We plan to present this material on Friday, December 18th, so if you can reply to this email in a timely manner, we would be extremely grateful.

If we can ever assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

THANK YOU!!

Jay Carey, Wanda Montanez, Alison Rubin  
Graduate Student-Researchers

## UMASS BOSTON INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

### CONSENT FORM

University of Massachusetts-Boston  
Department of Leadership and Education  
Higher Education Administration  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA. 02125-3393

Consent Form For Classroom Exemption Study #2008018

#### **Introduction and Contact Information**

You are asked to take part in a research project that will provide feedback about the service Stonehill College students and faculty have provided for your organization. The researchers are Jay Carey, Wanda Montañez, and Alison Rubin, doctoral students at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. After reading this form, should you have further questions please feel free to discuss them with either Jay Carey at 857.234.2425, Wanda Montañez at 617.750.2412 or Alison Rubin at 508.353.4528.

**Description of the Project:**

This study seeks to gather information from community organizations that have partnered with Stonehill College. Participation in this study will take 30-45 minutes. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to provide feedback on your experiences with Stonehill College students and faculty on community based learning projects.

**Risks or Discomforts:**

There is minimal risk associated with this research. You may speak with Jay Carey, Wanda Montañez, or Alison Rubin to discuss any distress or other issues related to study participation. If you wish to discuss concerns with Dr. Corey Dolgon, Director of Community Based Learning, you are encouraged to contact him at 508.565.1904 or [cdolgon@stonehill.edu](mailto:cdolgon@stonehill.edu).

This study involves the audio taping of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only the researcher team will be able to listen to the tapes. The tapes will be erased once our data has been evaluated. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:**

Your participation in this research is confidential. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Information gathered for this project will be kept in a secure location and only the research team identified above will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed on or before December 31, 2009.

**Voluntary Participation:**

The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, please notify Jay Carey, Wanda Montañez, or Alison Rubin either in writing or by telephone. Whatever you decide will in no way affect your relationship with Stonehill College.

You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach Jay Carey at 857.234.2425, Wanda Montañez at 617.750.2412 or Alison Rubin at 508.353.4528. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: IRB, Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5370 or at [human.subjects@umb.edu](mailto:human.subjects@umb.edu).

I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM INDICATES THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed/Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed/Printed Name of Researcher



## Appendix C

### Student Research Group Data Gathering Instruments

## Appendix C

### Student Group

<b>Research Question:</b>	What were the student's experiences related to the service component of the community-based learning course?
<b>Sub-Question 1:</b>	How does the community-based learning service component contribute to course learning outcomes?
<b>Sub-Question 2:</b>	How did student's community-based learning experiences influence their career goals or aspirations?
<b>Additional Client Question:</b>	Did students participate in other service activities after participating in their community-based learning course?

## Stonehill College Case Study – Student Sub-Group

### Interview Guide & Protocol

#### I. Research Questions

#### V. Interview – General Information

<b>Interview Type:</b>	Focus group Interview will be used. Groups will be comprised of approximately six participants.
<b>Physical Setting of Interview:</b>	Private room with table, chairs and good lighting. Table should be able to accommodate 8 individuals comfortably. Room should include a white board, easel or wall space for newsprint. Scale of questions posted on wall.
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Two Interviewers will be present. One will primarily ask questions and facilitate focus group activity. The second will primarily take notes and will also assist primary interviewer by asking some probe questions.

#### VI. Focus Group Interview Information

**F. Interview Date:**

Month:    Day:
Year:

**G. Interview Time:**

____:____ a.m. or p.m. (circle)
---------------------------------

**H. Location:**

Hall:
Room:

**I. Interviewers:**

	&	
--	---	--

**J. Group Participants:**

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	SEAT POSITION*
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

\*Seat Position Legend – Seat position denotes the direction and number of seats from the interviewers (e.g. “R3” is third participant to the right of interviewers.

**VII. Interview Protocol**

**D. Arrival**

As participants arrive they should be checked in

and sign waiver to participate in study. Then they should be provided with an 8"x3" folded name card that they will display at the table. Pads of 8.5"x11" with notation on seat position, and pens should be placed at each seat at the table in advance.

**E. Introduction:**

“Thank you for coming today and welcome to the session. My name is XXXXX and I am joined by my colleague, XXXXX. We are doctoral students at UMass Boston. In conjunction with our Case Studies in Higher Education course we are here to assist Stonehill College by reporting on student’s experiences with community-based learning. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to leave at any time. You do not need to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

XXXX and I will be taking some notes on your perceptions; however we want you to know that no participants will be identified in our report. Our report will be used by Stonehill College to assist the Office of Community-Based Learning in future planning.

Over the next 45 minutes or so we would like to ask you about your experiences in community-based learning courses. Student's experiences are important and we ask that you share your honest perceptions, positive or negative. We are not affiliated Stonehill College in any way and we will not be affected by either positive or negative feedback. Your openness and honesty, however, will be very helpful to us in preparing our report."

## F. Ground Rules

"How many of you have ever participated in a focus group? We have some ground rules we'd like to briefly review which will keep the activities moving better and help us get the information we need to write our report. Here they are:

- There are no correct or incorrect answers – we are asking you about your opinions and experiences.
- We would like to ask you to share and we really want to hear from everybody in the group.

G.

"Let's take a minute and go around the table and introduce ourselves. I'd like you to briefly introduce yourself by telling us your name, class year, hometown, and a fun fact about you. We'll start here on the right and go around the table."

## H. Questions

### Question #1

"On the pad of paper in front of you please number lines 1- On line 1 write your name, and on line 2 the community-based learning course or courses that you took."

## Question #2

Why did you choose to attend Stonehill?

Notes:

## Question #3

On line 3 on your pad, list what service activities, if any, you participated in before your CBL course.

**Probe** – Why did you participate in service activities in the past?

## Question #4

“On line 4 on your pad, I’m going to ask you to respond to a statement I will read in a moment. I’m going to ask you to use a 4 point scale where 1 means agree completely and 4 means disagree completely. The scale is posted on the wall. Any questions on the scale?”

OK, here is the statement – ***Students in my CBL class had an active role in planning exactly what would be done during the service component of your CBL course...***”

How many people answered 1?, 2? 3?, 4? Those who answered 1, can you tell us about what happened in your course? (repeat with 2’s, 3’s and 4’s).”

**Probe** – How does involvement/lack of involvement in planning the activity add to/detract from the service experience?

“Think about your first community-based learning course. Why did you take the community-based learning course?”

**Probe** – Was the course assigned or did you select it?

**Probe** - If selected – why?

“On line 5 of your pad, use the 4 point scale again where means agree completely and 4 means disagree completely. Thinking about your CBL course, respond to this statement – ***‘The service component of my CBL class was effective in helping me learn the content I was supposed to in the course.’***”

How many people answered 1?, 2? 3?,4? Those who disagreed completely, what was your experience? (repeat with 3’s,2’s and 1’s).”

**Probe** – How, exactly, did the service component help you learn designated course outcomes?

## Question #7

“Now we’d like to hear a little about what you did with your time at the service-related component of the CBL class. Who did you interact with while performing the service related component? ”

**Probe** - If direct service with those benefiting from service - "In retrospect how do you feel about having worked directly with XXXX in the service-related component?

**Probe** - If positive, ‘did the degree to which you valued the CBL course change as a result of this experience?

Notes:

**Question #8**

“On line 6 of your pad, please answer this yes or no question: **“Have you been participated in community service work since your CBL course ended?”**”

If yes, please briefly list the type of service experiences you have participated in since the CBL course.

**UMASS BOSTON INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

University of Massachusetts Boston  
Department of Leadership in Education  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA. 02125-3393

Consent Form for Classroom Exemption study #2008018  
Principal Investigator: Dr. Dwight Giles

**Introduction and Contact Information**

You are being asked to take part in a focus group investigating student experiences with community-based learning courses at Stonehill College from the fall 2006 semester through the spring 2009 semester. The research is being conducted by Glenn Cochran, Kimberly Russell and Sherrod Williams, doctoral students in the UMass Boston Higher Education Administration program as part of the Case Studies in Higher Education Course under the direction of Ms. Elaine Ward, instructor, and Dr. Dwight E. Giles, Jr., Professor, Department of Leadership in Education, (617) 287-7621. This work is part of a larger case study researching Stonehill College’s Office of Community Based-Learning. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, Glenn Cochran will discuss them with you. His telephone number is (508) 473-7414.

**Description of the Project**

This focus group activity is part of the research being conducted to study student’s experiences with Stonehill College’s Community-Based Learning courses taken between the fall, 2006 and spring, 2009 semesters. Participation in this study will take approximately 45 minutes. If you decide to participant in this study, you will be asked to discuss your experiences and opinions on your community-based learning course(s) in a group setting with other students and one or more researchers. Participants will not be compensated for participation but will be offered refreshments during the session.

**Risks or Discomforts**

Risks associated with your participation are projected to be minimal. The primary risk associated with this study is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in discussing your experiences and

opinions. You may speak with Glenn Cochran, Kimberly Russell or Sherrod Williams to discuss any distress or other issues related to study participation. If you experience negative or distressful feelings and wish to discuss concerns with a counselor, you are encouraged to contact the Stonehill College Counseling Center, Chapel Building, (508) 565-1331.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Your part in this research is **confidential**. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data. After the conclusion of the research information may be destroyed in lieu of being stored in a locked file cabinet.

Page 1 of 2

**Voluntary Participation**

The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should notify Glenn Cochran, Kimberly Russell or Sherrod Williams directly.

You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach Glenn Cochran at 508-473-7414, Kimberly Russell at (617) 755-7644, or Sherrod Williams at (205) 296-773 and Dr. Dwight E. Giles, Jr., Professor, Department of Leadership in Education at (617) 287-7621.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants and has approved this study #2008018. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: IRB, Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5370 or at human.subjects@umb.edu.

**Signatures:** *I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM INDICATES THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ALSO CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.*

_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Researcher	Date
_____	
Typed/Printed Name of Participant	
_____	
Typed/Printed Name of Researcher	

Page 2 of 2



**CONSENT TO AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING & TRANSCRIPTION**  
**STONEHILL COLLEGE COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING CASE STUDY**

**RESEARCHERS:** Glenn Cochran, Kimberly Russell and Sherrod Williams, doctoral students in the UMass Boston Higher Education Administration program as part of the Case Studies in Higher Education Course under the direction of Ms. Elaine Ward, instructor, and Dr. Dwight E. Giles, Jr., Professor, Department of Leadership in Education, (617)287-7621

**INFORMATION:** This study involves the digital audio and/or video recording of your focus group interview with the researcher(s). Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the file(s) or the transcript. Only the researcher team will be able to review the recording(s). The recordings will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or



written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have recordings of you deleted from the files if you wish to withdraw your consent to recording or participation in this study.

**By signing this form you are consenting to:**

- having your interview recorded;
- to having the recording transcribed;
- use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

This consent for recording is effective until the following date: \_\_\_\_\_. On  
or before that date, the recorded files will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Faculty Research Group Data Gathering Instruments

## Appendix D

### Faculty

#### **Community Based Learning at Stonehill College: A Faculty Perspective**

*Michelle Sterk Barrett, Kate Bresonis, & Kevin Piskadlo, Researchers  
Higher Education Administration  
University of Massachusetts Boston*

#### **Interview Protocol**

**Time of interview:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Interviewer:**

**Interviewee:**

**Position of interviewee:**

**Description:** Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As you probably know, researchers and practitioners alike have been working hard to more firmly understand community based learning programs and the impact that they may have on the students, faculty, and community alike. Therefore, in an effort to better understand the role of community based learning at Stonehill, Corey Dolgon, the new Director of Community Based Learning, has initiated this case study. From the distinct lens of four crucial stakeholders—the community based learning framers, faculty, students, and community partners—this case study seeks to better understand the experiences and outcomes of community based learning on each of these groups. This particular study, and the reason we asked you to participate in this interview, exclusively focuses on better understanding the faculty experience.

#### **1) General and Background Information**

- a. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What has been your educational path leading up to joining Stonehill College?
- b. What was your level of exposure to community based learning initiatives before formally introducing it in your class(es) as a faculty member?
  - *Do you have community or other volunteer experience?*
  - *Did you take any courses or attend trainings on instruction using community based learning?*
  - *Were you ever a student in or observer of courses with community based learning components?*
  - *Reflecting back on these previous experiences, did your participation impact your own world view or your own cognitive development? If so, in what ways?*

## 2) Motivation to Use Community Based Learning

- a. How were you initially motivated to incorporate Community Based Learning in your course(s)?
  - *Use probes above if needed*
- b. Are there ways in which an office dedicated to community based learning could assist you as well as new faculty in making CBL courses more attractive to faculty?

## 3) In Class Experiences and Educational Outcomes

- a. What has your experience with community based learning been like?
  - *What challenges were associated with using community based learning?*
  - *What were the greatest advantages of using community based learning?*
  - *What resources (e.g., books, people, articles, organizations, web sites) did you use in adapting your syllabus to include community based learning?*
- b. How did using community based learning influence your teaching methods during your first community based learning course? How did the community based learning experience influence your future teaching methods?
- c. How do you think the community partnerships impacted the quality of classroom learning?
  - *How or to what degree were you involved with identifying community partnerships and forming/building/maintaining the relationships?*

## 4) Looking Forward

- a. Have you continued to use community based learning in your course(s)? Why/why not?
  - *What criteria did you use to determine if you would continue to use CBL?*
- b. How has your use of community based learning evolved over time?

## 5) Final Thoughts

- a. Is there anything I did not address in my questions that you think could be useful in understanding this issue more fully?
- b. Do you have any suggestions or questions for me?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Please know that all of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. If there is any additional information that you would like to share, or if I can be of any

assistance after this interview, please do not hesitate to contact me using the information on the card I provided. I would also be more than happy to send you a copy of our completed study or an abstract if you would like.

**UMASS BOSTON INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

University of Massachusetts Boston  
Department of Leadership in Education  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA. 02125-3393

**Consent Form for the Faculty Experience of Community Based Learning at Stonehill College**

**Principal Investigators:** Kate Bresonis, Kevin Piskadlo, Michelle Sterk Barrett

**Introduction and Contact Information**

You are asked to take part in a research project investigating the faculty experience of community based learning at Stonehill College. The researchers are Kate Bresonis, Kevin Piskadlo, and Michelle Sterk Barrett, doctoral students in the Leadership in Education department at the University of Massachusetts, Boston who are currently enrolled in a research course about the case study method. Dwight Giles, the professor of the course and advisor of the project, can be reached at 617-287-7621. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, RESEARCHER NAME, will discuss them with you. Her/His telephone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX.

**Description of the Project:**

This study seeks to learn about the faculty experience of community based learning at Stonehill College. Participation in this study will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview. The information you provide will be used to assist the new Director of the Office of Community Based Learning to more effectively serve the needs of the Stonehill faculty.

**Risks or Discomforts:**

The risks associated with this study are minimal. The primary risk is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the research interview. You may speak with RESEARCHER NAME to discuss any distress or other issues related to study participation. If you wish to discuss concerns with another resource such as counselor, you are encouraged to contact your campus counseling services.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:**

Your part in this research is **confidential**. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Only the research team and the course instructors will have access to the data. All identifying information linked to the data affiliated with this research will be destroyed at the discretion of the course faculty.

**Voluntary Participation:**

The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should tell the investigator directly in person or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Withdrawing from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.

**Rights:**

You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach RESEACHER NAME at XXX-XXX-XXXX or Dwight Giles at 617-287-7621. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: IRB, Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5370 or at human.subjects@umb.edu.

**Signatures**

I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM INDICATES THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Typed/Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Typed/Printed Name of Researcher

**UMASS BOSTON INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

**CONSENT TO AUDIO RECORDING & TRANSCRIPTION**

The Faculty Experience of Community Based Learning at Stonehill College

Kate Bresonis, Kevin Piskadlo & Michelle Sterk Barrett  
University of Massachusetts, Boston

This study involves the digital recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the recording or the transcript. Only the researcher team will be able to listen to the recording.

The recording will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased if you wish to withdraw your consent to taping or participation in this study.

**By signing this form you are consenting to (INCLUDE ONLY THOSE OPTIONS THAT ARE BEING USED):**

- having your interview taped;
- to having the tape transcribed;
- use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

**By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.**

This consent for taping is effective until the following date: January 31, 2010. On or before that date, the recording will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_