

STONEHILL COLLEGE



Study of the Office of Community-Based Learning

2011-2012

Executive Summary

Developed and Facilitated by CommunityBuild

SUMMARY – STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Students (9) reported as 44% both 20 yrs and 21 yrs. 55% identified as female and 88% identified as White (with 11% not reporting race). 44% were seniors and the largest percentage reported living out of state. 44% reported a major in Communications followed by 22% majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies. 55% of students reported taking 1 CBL course which was largely an elective course. 77% reported doing other volunteer work, 88% found application and practice in their CBL courses as well as defining them as ‘great’. 66% reported a belief that CBL will help their careers. According to the Teagle Scorecard data, most students reported spending 3-4 hours/week on CBL projects.

Faculty (46) reported as 50% between the ages of 46 and 55, with the majority identifying as female and 83% as White (with 17% not reporting race). 50% of faculty reported their discipline as Sociology and having taught college level students between 7 and 12 years, with an average of 3 years at Stonehill. 50% of faculty that were interviewed reported using CBL for 8-15 years while 21% of those completing the web-based survey reported using CBL for 1 – 3 years and the largest percentage (32%) not using CBL at all. The majoring of faculty using CBL to teach 2 courses using this pedagogy annually.

Community Partners (12) reported as 25% between the ages of 18-24 yrs and 25% between the ages of 25-35, with the majority identifying as female. 58% of partners identified as white with 25% noting Latino and 8% Black. The majority of partners reported being located in Brockton and 41% reported being at their organization for one year or less. Partners represented a variety of nonprofit organizations with 75% reporting having worked with students from other colleges and 58% reporting that CBL at Stonehill was ‘great’. The majority reported partnership with OCBL for 5 courses and engaging 80-100 students in totality.

SUMMARY - KEY FINDINGS

CBL Benefits

Students reported experiencing the personal and student development in the CBL benefits of application, affirmation of career fit, extension of classroom learning, learning about inequities first hand, and increased awareness of community needs, insight into social systems and social justice issues, and ongoing opportunity, such as internships. Students noted great learning that was more in-depth and resulted in broader understanding than in other courses. Of particular note was their experience linking theory and practice as well as the reinforcement that teaching others course material provided. It should be noted that students reflected that *life at Stonehill is kind of a bubble* and that CBL not only gave them an opportunity to serve others but to expand their horizons. In addition, students reported the CBL benefit of building relationships with classmates and those they served.

A review of the Teagle Scorecard data reflected these reported experiences as it revealed that students noted positive responses (agree or strongly agree) to all of the course elements assessed by the tool reflecting their projects, connections to course work/knowledge/skills, written critical reflections that allow for addressing controversy with instructor feedback, application of theories, courses offered over a sustained period and engage student input and effective community partnerships. A review of the Strategic Plan reveals both recognition and clear ties to the outcomes of CBL which promote many of the students outcomes noted for development in the plan, i.e. diversity, well-being, character. And a review of the Giles (2009) report once again

reflected these same outcomes: Students use CBL to challenge assumptions, gain real world experience and better retain learning, develop the value of service, understand culture more fully, examine priorities and interests and realize their impact, finding value in their engagement in CBL course discussions and project planning, being more collaborative and motivated in their learning, and seeing a connection in these experiences to their future plans and career goals

Students additionally reported experiencing the ways in which the community benefitted from their service calling it a *ripple effect*. They noted that the tour and course readings helped them to prepare for service. Students shared a future commitment to CBL learning however were unsure as to what was available noting that they *were not easy to find*.

Faculty reported the CBL benefit for Stonehill as community partners were engaged on campus, reflective of the deep commitments of the college. Faculty realize CBL as an effective pedagogy noting that it integrates theory and practices, is a powerful way for students to learn, improving students' interest in coursework, and promotes their own reflective practice. For some faculty using CBL, motivation comes from their own personal histories and commitment to social change. Faculty noted finding satisfaction in designing and teaching CBL courses.

Faculty reported strongly that CBL is essential for Stonehill students who typically are underexposed or insulated in their experiences, again mentioning *the Stonehill bubble*, and noted that student experiences in CBL courses had resulted in benefits that transcended the service. Some Stonehill students brought the youth they were mentoring onto campus for a meal and a visit and were met with criticism from their peers which only served to reinforce their resolve for social justice. Faculty reported student excitement about CBL work and even noted that students were *mimicking them*. Faculty reported that CBL offers them opportunities to address social justice issues in class and some students have requested more course work that is focused in this arena. A review of the Giles (2009) confirmed this experience of faculty using CBL as an outgrowth of personal experience, interest and value as well as their educational philosophy, exemplifying Stonehill College's commitment to education for justice, compassion and social responsibility.

Community Partners reported that CBL is *bridging the disconnect between academia and community, supporting Stonehill's mission and setting Stonehill apart*. Community partners reported realizing organizational benefits through CBL including learning experiences, reflection on operations and help for staff. Partners note being able to undertake projects given students' help. Partners additionally reported more effectively understanding and meeting community needs as a result of their CBL work with Stonehill. CBL project are vast and community partners noted many desired benefits for Stonehill students which correlate largely with those reported by students and faculty. Those student benefits noted only by community partners include the development of proficiency in technology, marketing and management skills, understanding and reducing stigma and hopes that students will eventually join their organizations. Community partners are 100% committed to future work with Stonehill.

CBL Barriers

Students reported experiencing challenges with their CBL courses, most commonly regarding communication between the partners, the school and the students. Sometimes these communication challenges resulted in there being too many volunteers at a community partner site or difficulties with clients directly (which may relate to the need for more training). Students noted the need for more preparation or training with clearer details about course expectations and putting course concepts into action. Some students reported a disconnect between their community partner site and the concepts they were learning noting a lack of *check-ins through the course with professors*. Transportation presents another barrier for students.

A review of the Giles (2009) report once again reflected transportation as a barrier. Students did not report other concerns noted at that time including having to create their own projects, and desired more direct work with partner clients

Faculty reported challenges with CBL including the need for coordination assistance and consequently increased staffing at the OCBL. This need is of particular importance for faculty in the Environmental and Health Sciences. Faculty noted challenges with Community Partners when they offered limited training to students or came to speak on campus without preparation for the academic environment. Faculty reported however that they want *more permeable boundaries with partners and students*. And transportation remains a challenge for students in their experience.

Faculty who have not used CBL additionally reported the barriers of time and energy and even desire to restructure classes. Some reported a lack of information about CBL, sometimes related to their discipline and/or being new to Stonehill. Some faculty reported using CBL in limited ways: as an option for students or with students finding their own community partners and projects. Some questioned the depth of integration of CBL in Stonehill faculty pedagogy.

A review of the Giles (2009) report once again reflected transportation as a barrier and noted that faculty found challenge being convinced of the benefits of CBL. This study found a critical mass of faculty who understand and embrace the benefits of CBL.

Faculty noted concerns about evaluation, particularly relative to community partners and community impact as well as concerns about teaching about social justice.

Community Partners reported challenges with CBL including student preparation, specifically the time to prepare students. Partners noted improvement in this area with one partner noting *when I sat in with students and did pre-planning they were very prepared*. Community partners additionally reported challenges internally noting limitations of staff and coordination time, and the scheduling of students in semester blocks often not allowing for project completions. Community partners additionally noted transportation challenges for students and the need for good connections with the OCBL and faculty.

OCBL Assets

Students reported participating in the OCBL's Community Based Learning Institute; working with faculty to redesign courses to incorporate CBL apart from this experience students did not report other asset experiences with the OCBL.

Faculty reported many assets of the OCBL including the Community Based Learning Institute which provided them with resources, connections and examples of engaging CBL pedagogy. A review of the Institute's evaluation data revealed that 100% of participants received the benefits notes previously. A review of the Strategic Plan reveals recognition and clear ties to the outcomes of CBL which promote some of the faculty outcomes noted for development in the plan, i.e. professional development, satisfaction.

Faculty additionally reported the value of the OCBL staff noting that they would not have undertaken this pedagogy without the support and consultation provided. Corey Dolgon is credited by faculty as making

connections between people as well as informing pedagogical thinking and scholarly research. Faculty noted other assets of the OCBL including the Community Build diversity training exercise, assistance identifying and applying for funding and the monthly brown bag lunch series.

A review of the Giles (2009) confirms that faculty see the OCBL as a positive resource that can help with advocacy for the legitimacy of CBL, logistical support (setting up partnerships, providing transportation, informing about potential legal issues, etc.), networking opportunities with other CBL faculty, providing educational about the effective implementation of CBL as well as resources and best practices.

Community Partners reported the most prominent asset of the OCBL as a relationship mechanism for Stonehill. A review of the Giles (2009) report reveals the alignment between the OCBL and Stonehill's mission clearly. Community partners noted Corey's presence and knowledge in the community as well as increased effectiveness due to Stonehill's increased cultural competence. Community partners note that the OCBL is getting better over time and that student preparation for community work is improving. A review of the 2009-2011 OCBL Annual Report reveals a marked increase in activity and participation over the two academic years as well as the focus on diversity training

OCBL Areas for Development

Students reported that work with Community Partners was an area for OCBL development noting a desire for partners outside of Brockton, that are more course-related, and that are in *rotation* thus offering students more exposure. Additionally students would like greater faculty involvement over the course of the semester as well as broadening CBL work to additional disciplines. Students also noted the needs for course designation to assist them in seeking out CBL courses and continued OCBL support to enable Stonehill to be a leader in the community.

Faculty requested that transportation become an area for development as well as greater coordination support and organization from the OCBL which will require expansion. Faculty additionally identify a need for great expansion of community partners to include a broader group of disciplines, and also suggest a role for community partners in delivering training and/or speaking on campus.

Faculty want recognition for the CBL work with support from the OCBL relative to Promotion and Tenure and perhaps opportunities for a course reduction. Faculty noted the need for the OCBL's continued efforts in diversity training as well as assistance to faculty with coordination, consultation and grant acquisition. A review of the Giles (2009) report revealed that faculty struggles then in finding time for the extra work related to CBL especially in light of current promotion and tenure guidelines. These desired are additionally reflected in the OCBL's Institute evaluation data where participants asked for post-institute follow up, more information about partner needs and social justice/social change as well as reflection techniques.

Faculty hope for a mechanism to define which courses are CBL courses, and for efforts to more effectively market the great work of the OCBL. A review of the Giles (2009) reports reveals that faculty expressed difficulty tracking students as there was no CBL course designation. Faculty would like a website that reflects a listing of Community Partners, their needs/goals as well as the OCBL history of their partnership. Faculty hope for continued development relative to social justice issues and related teaching as well as for workshops on community based research and the CBL experience. Lastly faculty want increased evaluative work related to the OCBL and its many elements.

Community Partners want to work with the same faculty over time, build a summer component, market CBL to students more effectively, engage students with computer training and have student representation on their boards. Community partners desire to be more involved in the classroom and to have opportunities for reflection. A review of the Giles (2009) report reveals community partner desire to be involved in the classroom.

OCBL's Position within Stonehill College

Faculty largely reported that the OCBL should remain under Academic Affairs in the institutional structure yet some suggested that the OCBL break out into a center that would also encompass issues of social justice incorporating the farm and Into the Streets within its prevue.

Students and Community Partners were not assessed regarding this issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OCBL Growth - A review of the Strategic Plan reveals commitment to the expansion of CBL including study abroad, internships, undergraduate research and creative performance.

- **Core OCBL Function:**
 - Coordination: Communication between the partners, the school and the students
 - Training: Community Partners, Students & Faculty Development
 - Permeable boundaries with community partners and students – Social Justice work
 - Marketing CBL to students, community partners and faculty
 - Faculty Consultation: Pedagogical thinking, course design, CBL scholarship, grants
- **Growth Needs:**
 - Assess alternative mechanisms for training students
 - Transportation
 - Assess community partner capacity
 - Expansion of partnerships (outside Brockton? Rotation?), & faculty development with sciences, technology and other disciplines
 - Course designation
 - Programmatic expansion – community partner generated opportunities
- **Balancing Resources & Growth:**
 - Assess and plan for OCBL staffing increases and/or resources - Explore restructuring of Office to encompass issues of social justice incorporating the farm and Into the Streets within its purview
 - Conduct annual training assessments with faculty and community partners to assist in resource allocation
 - Manage growth by setting priorities for partnership development, training and consultation (sciences/other disciplines)
 - Assess alternative mechanisms for training students – community partners, specially trained students (could be their CBL project) [note: students report limited OCBL experiences – how can they be more incorporated?]
 - Assess OCBL as a community partner – to support the development of the office
 - Develop marketing materials for students, community partners & faculty (what to expect, benefits)
 - Develop a website that reflects a listing of Community Partners, their needs/goals as well as the OCBL history of their partnership.
 - Explore student representation on community partner boards – assess interest
 - Assess Faculty Fellows (course reduction) with training or consultation responsibilities
 - Assess planning models to allow projects to begin one semester and end in another, to engage faculty with community partners over multiple semesters, and to develop a summer component
 - Develop Task Force or committee to explore Course Designation
 - Explore models for Transportation

Training – Community Partners

- Assess Community Partners for desire to train/co-educate and for social justice content
 - Conduct annual Co-education training with Community Partners including speaking in academic settings, working with faculty, preparing students to encounter difficulties with clients
 - Engage interested and trained Community Partners to lead social justice training on campus
 - Work to have Community Partner in class where well-received by faculty to pre-plan with students

- Explore co-learning opportunities such as awarding in-class community partners credit

Faculty Development

- Assess CBL and Social Justice training needs annually in collaboration with the Center for Teaching & Learning
- Incorporation of Promising Practices – to increase the quality of CBL Pedagogy:
 - Can be incorporated into faculty training, developed as an iterative collection accessible on the website or as a handout
 - To address students’ disconnect between their community partner site and the concepts from the course - *check-ins through the course with professors* – increased faculty involvement
 - To address faculty using CBL in limited ways: as an option for students or with students finding their own partners and projects
 - To address need for clearer details about course expectations and helping students put course concepts into action
- Use Brown Bag Lunch Series as mechanism for post-institute follow up with outreach to institute participants
- Continue Institute!
- Workshops on community based research and the CBL experience

Diversity & Social Justice

- Measure outcome of current Diversity Training
- Examine adding additional or expanded training either by conducting faculty training, engaging Community Partners and/or trained students
- Incorporate asset-based approaches and invisible privileges in training

Evaluation

- The Teagle Scorecard quantitatively measures only the presence of course components and should be augmented relative to course evaluation. This could be a pre and post set of essays that can equally provide reflection opportunities for students.
- Revision of the Diversity Training evaluation tool and the Community Based Institute to better capture students’ impact and learning as it relates directly to readiness for community engagement; may correlate to student learning outcomes
- Assess OCBL events and/or partnership projects for impact, learning
- Add evaluation data reflections to Annual Reports – data speaks to impact
- Since faculty noted concerns about community partner and community impact data perhaps one CBL course could take this as a project

Promotion & Tenure, Recognition:

- Exploration of Promotion and Tenure revisions and opportunities for a course reduction (fellowship) or other recognition mechanisms may be critical to developing CBL as a pedagogical norm and has been known to attract new faculty that share these values

Opportunities for Further inquiry:

- Assess extent of CBL adoption as a valid pedagogy on campus
- Qualitative exploration of CBL resistant faculty members – we recommend a focus group approach

LIMITATIONS

Although this assessment produced myriad & rich data, there are some limitations. In primary data collection, faculty who did not use CBL were not examined beyond the web-based survey. Although this produced some data additional qualitative data collection and analysis would have been helpful.