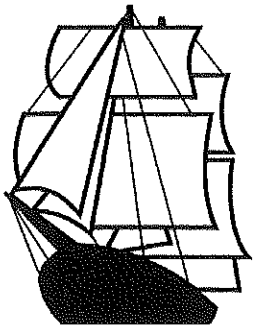

The MAST Journal

Proceedings of the Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Symposium

Conference for Mercy Higher Education, Georgian Court University, Lakewood, New Jersey, June 12-14, 2008

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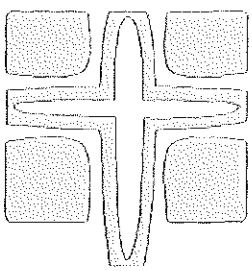

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Dear Readers,

The Conference for Mercy Higher Education (CMHE) exists for the continued preservation and development of the core Catholic identity and mission of Mercy higher education in accord with the spirit, mission and heritage of the Sisters of Mercy.

Comprised of sixteen colleges and universities that have been founded, nourished and sustained by the Sisters of Mercy, the Conference seeks to support, coordinate and facilitate the ministry of higher education among the member institutions as this ministry reflects the charism and ethos of the Sisters of Mercy.

As the current Executive Director of the Conference, I am privileged to work with the Conference Board of Directors, the Canonical Sponsor Council, and the Presidents Council to develop and strengthen ties among the member institutions, particularly as these ties reflect the mission and spirit of Catholic higher education within a Mercy framework. I stand on the broad shoulders of the first executive director, Dr. Mary Kathryn Grant, and the interim administrator, Dr. Martin Larrey. Through the foundational thinking and strategic efforts of both leaders, and numerous others who have worked so closely with them, the Conference is now at a pivotal point in its young history. We are moving forward with shared mission development work and with collaborative efforts that introduce our students to the critical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy at both the local and the global levels. We are seeking joint opportunities that leverage the size and scope of service of the sixteen member institutions.

Perhaps the most significant collaborative project of the Conference to date is the biennial Symposium, inaugurated at Gwynedd Mercy College in Pennsylvania in 2006, and continued at Georgian Court University in New Jersey in June, 2008. This symposium explores issues related to higher education as these topics are viewed through the lens of Mercy. The Symposium held at Georgian Court University considered service learning and civil engagement in Mercy colleges and universities and sought to create links in service learning initiatives among the institutions. The third CMHE Symposium is slated for June, 2010 at Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania. A Symposium Planning Committee is discussing the theme and related topics for this major gathering of participants in Mercy higher education.

It is with pride that the Conference is partially underwriting the costs for publication of the Proceedings of the Symposium held at Georgian Court University on June 18-20, 2008, through this issue of The MAST Journal (Journal of the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology). It is hoped that these Proceedings can serve as a resource for service learning directors and others at our colleges and universities. This financial support has been made possible through a generous grant from the Raskob Foundation.

Sincerely,

Moya K. Dittmeier, Ed. D.

Moya Dittmeier, Ed. D.
Conference of Mercy Higher Education

The Mercy Call to Learn and Serve for Social Justice

Kathleen Maas Weigert, Ph.D.

Introduction

First, I am a hopeless Trinitarian, so I am structuring my comments around the three ideas found in the title of my talk: first, the Mercy Call; second, to learn and serve; and third, for social justice.

The Mercy Call

As a mostly-outsider to the Mercy institutions of higher education, I certainly cannot tell you anything you don't already know about your heritage. I say a "mostly-outsider" because, after all, one of the sixteen Mercy schools is also a Jesuit school! (Now, how is *that* for real ecumenical witness!) To learn more about the Sisters of Mercy, the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, and the Mercy Sponsored Colleges and Universities, I did what all modern students do, I Googled! And as that mostly-outsider, I just want to bring to mind some parts of your heritage, and to stand in admiration of them. Trinitarian that I am, I have chosen to highlight three ideas in this section.

First, clearly the "spirit, mission, and heritage" of the Sisters of Mercy are central to the work you are about. Their commitment is to "live lives animated by the gospel of Jesus Christ and Catherine McAuley's passion for persons who experience poverty." And that latter commitment takes the form of the fourth vow: "service to persons who are poor, sick, and uneducated." How focused and admirable that is!

The Sisters, also being Trinitarians, have created a "Direction Statement" that says they are "impelled to commit our lives and resources to act in solidarity with:

- the economically poor of the world, especially women and children;
- women seeking fullness of life and equality in church and society;
- one another as we embrace our multicultural and international reality."

What a powerful statement! And one that you all can draw on as you do your work in the Mercy colleges and universities. And it leads to my third comment.

You have, in the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, made an institutional commitment to carrying out that vision:

> Inspired by the compassion expressed by Catherine McAuley that she would rather be cold and hungry than the poor of Dublin be denied anything in her power to afford them, students, faculty, and administrators from Mercy colleges and universities generously and selflessly provide service to others through service learning, alternative breaks, service days, and a variety of other forms of giving back not only to the communities in which they live, but also to those in need in other locations around the globe.

Three highlights remind you of the great Mercy call you have. And I stand in admiration of that animating vision, and take delight in having learned a bit about it in the process of preparing for this talk.

Second, "to learn and serve."

To Learn and Serve

As educators in Catholic institutions of higher education, we know the importance of both learning and serving. How we combine them is sometimes where the rub comes. There are many ways to learn and serve. One is clearly community service, and, while that work is important, by itself it is limited as an "educational" activity; it needs preparation and reflection to make it a 'learning' experience. There are marvelous co-curricular opportunities to serve and learn that I won't be talking about but which I affirm whole-heartedly as vehicles for authentic

service and deep learning. What I will primarily focus on here, however, is what you call "service learning" but what at my home institution we have chosen to call "community-based learning," or CBL for short.

We define CBL as "an academic course-based pedagogy that involves student work with disadvantaged and underserved individuals or groups (or organizations working with and for disadvantaged and underserved individuals or groups) that is structured to meet community-defined needs." In short, it is directly tied to social justice.

But no matter which term is employed, there are some key questions that need to be addressed. Some have to do with the "how" of social analysis and theological reflection. I think this is beautifully addressed in the document commissioned by the Conference for Mercy Higher Education and written by Jennifer and Ken Reed-Bouley. I hope you all have had a chance to read and use it.

So, what I would like to reflect on in this section of my remarks is the learning-serving nexus under three aspects: first, the idea of partnerships in the community (local and global!); second, what our students are like; and third, the institutional commitments needed to support involvement in the learning-serving work.

It is to questions that have to do with partners for this work that I turn my attention. Who is there in the community who cares about this kind of pedagogy, and how do we in higher education work with them? (Parenthetically, one reason we chose the CBL language is to emphasize the importance of the community in this work.) There are three resources I want to mention here that I have found useful in thinking about how to answer those questions. One is from the Corporation for National & Community Service, in their "Effective Practices Collection." It is called "Creating, Running, and Sustaining Campus-Community Service-Learning Partnerships." If you haven't had a chance to look at it, I hope you will in the near future. It's concrete and specific, providing a good check-list, if you will, for thinking through these partnerships; and it is a useful tool, therefore, for a center or a department as they plan on making community-campus links.

The second resource is called "Achieving the Promise of Authentic Community-Higher Education Partnerships: Community Partners Speak Out!" based on a gathering at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin in April, 2006. One of the opening quotations from a community partner in that document is this: "We are here because we are passionate about these partnerships, but they are not working." That gets your attention right away. And your interest is sustained throughout, as you hear the deep commitments and real concerns voiced by community partners.

We want to work so that all the stakeholders benefit from the partnerships; we want to build capacity on all sides.

The third resource is a document entitled "Community Voices: A California Campus Compact Study on Partnerships" of April 2007. This document also focuses solely on the community partner "side" of community-campus partnerships—with the spotlight on what is being done well, what isn't, and what more needs to be done. Let me quote just one item:

> One of the most compelling findings of this study is the profound dedication of community partners to educating college students, even when this is not an expectation, part of their job description, or if the experience provides few or no short- and long-term benefits for their organization (p. 16).

As one of the community members said, "We are coeducators. That is not our organization's bottom line, but that's what we do." (Parenthetically, that idea of "coeducator" is another reason we selected the CBL language to describe this pedagogy.)

These three resources emphatically point out the importance of the sharing of resources and decision making, and especially of the essential task of building trust in working with community members, affirming the knowledge and expertise they bring to the table. We want to work so that all the stakeholders benefit from the partnerships; we want to build capacity on all sides. We know that there is no one "voice" that speaks for "the community." There is no monolithic community. It may be that some partnership just does not work. We must

be ready then for what in popular education is called an "amicable parting."

But the process is one of hope. We work to create authentic mutuality with our partners, based on a shared vision and jointly created agenda. It is probable that many (perhaps most) of our partners will be in our local communities. Each of our colleges and universities lives in particular contexts and we need, therefore, to understand those contexts and determine which organizations are ready, willing, and able to work with us to the mutual benefit of all the constituencies. Our service learning or CBL could not happen if we did not have community partners.

The process is one of hope. We work to create authentic mutuality with our partners, based on a shared vision and jointly created agenda.

This is the case whether those partners are local or global. In fact, we know that we must respond to our sisters and brothers around the world, too. Are there collaborative possibilities among the sixteen Mercy schools in a national effort in service learning, or one that is tied to a global opportunity, perhaps through the network of the Sisters of Mercy? Such possibilities help all of us realize that no one school can do it all; together we might be able to make a decided difference in collaboration with national and global partners.

From these thoughts on the centrality and importance of partnerships I turn to the topic of our students. Who are they? What experiences and goals do they bring to our campuses? How do we help them learn and serve within the context of our missions?

First, I certainly do not know what each of your campuses is like, so some of my comments may be more or less relevant, but I hope provocative for your thinking, nevertheless. We have some excellent data on incoming first year students that has been carried out since 1966 by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI).

The students on many of our campuses are of the generation being called the "Millennials," that is, those born between about 1980 and about 2000. (This basically describes the undergraduates at my home institution.) I will be speaking about them in this section. Each year HERI asks students to evaluate twenty or so "objectives" in terms of how important these are to the students as they begin college. The top four objectives considered "essential" or " very important" for the class who entered in fall of 2006 are:

- raising a family (76%);
- being very well-off financially (74%);
- helping others who are in difficulty (68%); and
- becoming an authority in my field (58%).

These have been the top four for years; sometimes numbers one and two are reversed and sometimes three and four are, but these are typically the top four.

Surely the "helping others" item bespeaks a care and concern for others, and fits well with the Mercy vision.

There is another data set that provides insight into college students. This one addresses their spiritual values and it again comes from the Higher Education Research Institute. HERI initiated a longitudinal study in fall 2004, with a subsample that participated in a second survey, which was conducted in late spring 2007. There is good news and not-such-good news (depending on your point of view).

Certainly students' attendance at religious services declines during the first three years of college, a pattern found in many studies. "Frequent" attendance went from 44 percent to 25 percent over the three years. But looking at other items, we can say that, at the same time, they experienced growth along several spiritual dimensions. For example, on three life goals considered "very important" or "essential" the numbers increased.

- "Integrating spirituality into my life" went from 42 percent to 50 percent;
- "Attaining inner harmony" went from 49 percent to 63 percent; and

- "Becoming a more loving person" went from (an already high of) 67 percent to 83 percent.

As the research report states, "These findings suggest that many students are emerging from the collegiate experience with a desire to find spiritual meaning and perspective in their everyday lives." That is, in my opinion, good news, indeed.

There are, however, two items that should give us all pause: Almost 60 percent of the students reported that their professors *never* "encouraged discussions of religious/spiritual matters." When the item was about encouragement to explore questions of meaning and purpose, about 20 percent said their professors "frequently" encouraged those with another 52 percent occasionally doing so. We should ask: Is this the case on our campuses? And in general, what are the implications of this research study for our work?

While this gives some flavor for the students at the national level, each of us has to ask: Who are the students on our campus? Are they of traditional or nontraditional age and background? How diverse are they, ethnically and religiously? How prepared are they for college? What values and hopes do they bring? How are we supporting their academic, personal and spiritual growth?

Let me turn to the third learning-serving nexus: the institutional commitments needed to support involvement in this work. I will overstate the obvious: without institutional resources and recognition, faculty would be unwise at best to undertake the pedagogy of service learning. But you know, and I have already mentioned, that the vision of the Mercy Sisters and your Conference for Mercy Higher Education calls for a commitment to service learning. So, as that mostly-outsider, I would ask how that commitment gets translated into concrete policies and practices in your institutions.

One policy and soon-to-be practice that I am delighted to report we are putting into effect this coming academic year at Georgetown is recognition of community-based learning courses on a student's transcript. The acronym CBL will be in the title of a course or section of a course, after that course has been certified by a Faculty Advisory Committee under the facilitation of the Center for Social Justice. Students can then look for courses that have "CBL" in the title and know that a process was followed that calls for clear standards for labeling a course as community-based learning. On the back of each transcript will be this statement:

> CBL (at the beginning of a course title): Community-based learning, a course-based pedagogy, involves student work with disadvantaged and underserved individuals or groups that is structured to meet community-defined needs.

So, one way of recognizing the importance of this pedagogy is to embed it in the curriculum which is then made real by embedding it in the chief means of recognizing students' academic work, i.e., the academic transcript.

There are two other ways implicit in the transcript idea. One is simply having resources for faculty to design or redesign courses that can be service learning courses; course development grants, for example, or money for transportation for students to get out into the community. A second—and this is a challenge at my home institution as well as at many others, to be sure—is a policy on tenure and promotion that validates service learning as serious teaching, and where this occurs, as serious research (often called "community-based research" or "community-based participatory research" or "action research," for example). Until the institution takes concrete steps to recognize and reward service learning, but continues to speak of the importance of this kind of teaching and learning, there is a mismatch of rhetoric with reality.

Let me quote from the executive summary of another resource I encourage you to examine, called *Imagining America: Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*" by Julie Ellison and Timothy K. Eatman, published in 2008:

Until the institution takes concrete steps to recognize and reward service learning, but continues to speak of the importance of this kind of teaching and learning, there is a mismatch of rhetoric with reality.

> Publicly engaged academic work is taking hold in American colleges and universities, part of a larger trend toward civic professionalism in many spheres. But tenure and promotion policies lag behind public scholarly and creative work and discourage faculty from doing it. Disturbingly, our interviews revealed a strong sense that pursuing academic public engagement is viewed as an unorthodox and risky early career option for faculty of color.
>
> We propose concrete ways to remove obstacles to academic work carried out for and/or with the public by giving such work full standing as scholarship, research or artistic creation. While we recommend a number of ways to alter the wording and intent of tenure and promotion policies, changing the rules is not enough. Enlarging the conception of who counts as "peer" and what counts as "publication" is part of something bigger: the democratization of knowledge on and off campus.

So, we have some exciting work to do in helping our institutions make real the words they use to support and expand campus-community links through the work we do.

For Social Justice

I come to my third and final section of this talk. And just to prove I don't always have to do things in threes, I want to address this topic of "for social justice" with two questions. First, what is social justice? Second, how does service learning help students develop an understanding of social justice?

First, I am not going to give a lecture on the eighty-two hundred ways of conceptualizing social justice! I'm going right to my favorite, which also neatly ties in with Catholic social teachings. It comes from the 1986 pastoral letter of our American Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*:

> *Social justice implies that persons have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way* (par. 71; italics in original).

The bishops go on to say, "This form of justice can also be called 'contributive,' for it stresses the duty of all who are able to help create the goods, services, and other nonmaterial or spiritual values necessary for the welfare of the whole community" (par. 71).

While I think many students understand social justice as "distributive justice" (that is, how are the benefits and burdens distributed in a society?), I think it is important to point out the two sides of the social justice coin as presented in the definition I just mentioned. One side talks about the duty of all people—not just the wealthy and well placed, not just the politicians and professors—to participate in the life of the society. The other talks about society's duty to make that participation possible. I find this dual obligation quite expansive, and I especially like the first part: Everyone who can has a duty. That lessens the perspective of "us" helping "the poor folk." Rather, we're working to make it possible for everyone to contribute to what we might call the common good.

While I think many students understand social justice as "distributive justice" (that is, how are the benefits and burdens distributed in a society?), I think it is important to point out the two sides of the social justice coin.

Second, how does service learning help develop students' understanding of social justice? Jennifer and Ken Reed-Bouley talk about this in their document, and I would refer you to that again with its rich fare and suggested resources in this area. I would like to point to the ideas of the political-public arena and that of civic engagement as vehicles for talking about involvement in social justice work for today's college students.

I return first to the HERI data for the class that entered college in fall 2006 and mention three other objectives students were asked to examine, three that get at this idea of public-political:

- keeping up to date with political affairs (37 percent said it was essential or very important);
- becoming a community leader (35 percent); and
- influencing the political structure (23 percent).

Recall that the top four objectives (raising a family, being very well off financially, helping others, and being an authority in my field) had numbers ranging from 58 percent to76 percent. So right away, we have to recognize that engagement in this larger arena is hardly the most attractive thing to these students. This is a challenge for us, to put it mildly. I share with the Reed-Bouleys the belief that service learning includes the practice of social justice (p. 4). It is a vehicle not only for getting students into the community but for raising the structural issues that help frame the work they are doing. Now that work might be either direct or indirect service, where *direct service* is of the kind that many of us (especially those affiliated with the Mercy family!) still call the "corporal works of mercy" (e.g., feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the elderly, etc.) and *indirect service* refers to work that gets at larger social change, e.g., participation in legislative networks or organizing with others to address community issues or doing community-based research.

In short, with the direct or indirect service our students are doing, we have the opportunity to talk about ingredients of justice in a more organic way. Depending on the kinds of their service work, we can ask our students such questions as: how strong are the schools in that particular area; how many jobs are available for people with less than a high school education; what kind of transportation possibilities do folk have who live in section X of our town; how many grocery chains are in those areas; are there any health clinics near by? Thus, the framing of the service learning is explicitly one of justice.

Related to that for institutions of Catholic higher education is the importance of having at least some of this service learning done in the context of our heritage, which for you is both the Mercy tradition and the larger Catholic tradition. You have, as a conference, stated: "To be a truly Mercy experience, service learning has to be grounded in Catholic Social Theory and the fundamental principles of Catholic Social Thought . . ."

Whatever it is called—and my own preference is "Catholic social tradition"—it is a wealth of vision, principles, values, and ideas that roots our engagement in the world. Again I refer you to the Reed-Bouley document for starters. And I also mention a book I coedited with my colleague Alexia Kelley in 2005, *Living the Catholic Social Tradition: Cases and Commentary*. (All proceeds go to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Center for Social Justice) The reason I mention our book is because it is one attempt to make real this tradition by describing people and organizations in contemporary society that are working out of that tradition in one way or another. So we hope the book helps students explore this rich tradition, and to do so in the classroom context where the tradition can be assessed, criticized, and developed.

This leads to the second arena I want to refer to, one that deals with civic engagement. While the HERI data I have used so far certainly relate to this topic, here I want to refer to two other reports. First is the report entitled "The New Student Politics: The Wingspread Statement on Student Civic Engagement." It is based on a gathering of thirty-three juniors and seniors from twenty-seven different colleges and universities in March of 2001.

The students talk about three distinct forms of political engagement: conventional politics, community service, and what they call "service politics" (p. 15). They contend that service politics is "the bridge between community service and conventional politics," arguing that "service is alternative politics, not an alternative to politics. Participation in community service is a form of unconventional political activity that can lead to social change, in which participants primarily work outside of governmental institutions; service politics becomes the means through which students can move from community service to political engagement" (p. 18).

What do they mean by "service politics"? In their words, "Service politics is a form of civic engagement that looks at systems, while service is typically geared toward symptoms . . . Essentially, while service addresses immediate needs, service politics attempts to address the systemic issues that create these needs" (p. 19). I think this is their conceptualization of what I just talked about under "direct" and "indirect" service. It makes me think of one of my favorite quotations from Paulo Freire in his classic *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (p. 69). Is "service politics" the younger generation's way of speaking a true word?

The other source I want to acknowledge is a report released by CIRCLE and The Charles F. Kettering Foundation last November. (CIRCLE is the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement; so Google either Kettering Foundation or CIRCLE!) The report is based on forty-seven focus groups with nearly four hundred students on twelve four-year college campuses across the country between October 2006 and July 2007. Let me mention their four main findings.

- First: "Today's college students are more engaged than Generation X was."
- Second: "Millennials are involved locally with others, but are ambivalent about formal politics."
- Third: "Millennials dislike spin and polarized debates and seek authentic opportunities for discussing public issues."
- Fourth: "Colleges and universities are providing very unequal levels of opportunity for civic participation and learning." (*Millennials Talk Politics: A Study of College Student Political Engagement*, Executive Summary: pp. 4–5).

A summary statement from the press release about the report says: "Today's students . . . are more engaged in their communities and feel responsible to become civically involved. They recognize the importance of being educated and involved citizens, but discard much of the information available to them because of its polarizing and partisan nature. They are turned off by intensely combative political debate . . ." ("Dissonant discourse turning off college students to formal politics," CIRCLE, November 7, 2007).

To the extent students are engaged and want to discuss public issues, we can affirm and build on those desires. To the extent they continue to view with skepticism the political arena, we have some deep challenges. The exciting news is the recent primary and the current electoral season. Whether they were a Clinton, McCain, or Obama fan, many college students were drawn into the primary race. We need to help them develop that interest and stay engaged in the electoral process. As the bishops said in *Economic Justice for All*, while our service efforts "can help us practice what we preach about human life and human dignity," they "cannot substitute for just and compassionate public policies" (par. 26). Some of the most far-reaching policies emerge from the political arena; we need citizens who are ready to enter that arena to elect good people (or maybe to run for office themselves), hold our elected officials accountable, and work collaboratively with others to effect the vision we have for a more just and humane country and world.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with three statements.

As members of the Mercy family, you have a powerful, shared vision of the importance of the pedagogy of service learning. That vision is rooted in the ideas and life of Catherine McAuley, and expanded upon by the Sisters of Mercy and continues to call for "serving God's people, especially those who are sick, poor and uneducated."

Second, with an understanding of the students who come to your schools—with their hopes and dreams, their fears and worries—you are called to help create educational opportunities, especially in service learning, to respond to that vision.

And finally, I leave you with this quotation of John Paul II in his *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*:

> The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic university, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students (par 34).

Because you have a great vision; because you have the students you have who grace your campuses; because you have the commitment to service learning, you can and will indeed continue to fashion educational experiences that challenge students to turn the Mercy call to learn and serve into the work for social justice.

And as that almost-outsider, I wish you the very best in that crucial work.

Immigration
A Spiritual Challenge to Discover Who We Are in Today's World

Kathleen Erickson, R.S.M.

We live in a world which is stressful, busy, success-oriented, pressured, and noisy. Let's take a long, loving look at who we are as educators and people of faith, and ask how we can nurture the best in ourselves to respond to this world. We are here to hone skills related to service learning. One of the underlying reasons for service learning, and for immersion experiences, is to open our hearts as our worldview expands. Richard Rohr says,

> I think of all the powerful experiences that I've had. But only when I taste my experiences enough so they become realizations, do I change. That takes time and space. Put time and space together and you have a new dimension of silence.

When immersion groups come to the border they are encouraged to "stay with" that experience, take it in, access their feelings, in order to move a growing understanding of the connectedness of all things, moving from the head to the heart. They are asked to increase the amount of silence in their lives. Immigration provides one of several challenges to go into silence and assess how we relate to the reality of this world. The United States-Mexico border, seen as a symbol of all that divides us as human beings, also may show individuals what keeps them from being their best selves. Silence facilitates inner exploration.

The border has changed since the early 1990s, as have attitudes toward immigrants. A majority of U.S. citizens don't know about, or don't empathize with, people dying in the southern desert trying to get to the U.S., or being stopped at checkpoints and put in detention centers. Most don't realize that these centers are frequently operated by private corporations making a lot of money incarcerating materially poor people in inhumane conditions. The heartbreaking stories of families torn apart and dreams shattered, being treated as criminals in a cruel system, will, if heard, call us to discover who we are and how we can contribute to relieving these situations. This is not about guilt, but about realization and awakening. It introduces us to the struggle of being privileged in a world increasingly divided between "haves" and "have-nots." I spent time doing spiritual counseling with young undocumented women who had tried to cross our southern border out of desperate need to provide for their families. Their stories broke my heart. Their tears became my tears, and their despair was the despair of all of us. I had a realization, awakening to how it is all connected.

One goal of service learning and immersion experiences is to awaken participants to what is happening to less fortunate people, to seek ways to be a voice for others, and to learn from what we ourselves need to be liberated. Andrew Harvey encourages us to become "sacred activists." This implies hope, the realization that we are part of a process that is much greater and longer than our own lives. It implies willingness to take risks because of understanding our place in the world.

As we nurture a deeper spirituality and discover who we are as individuals, members of institutions, and people of faith, we realize that standing with the marginalized does imply risk. The challenge, therefore, to ourselves as leaders in our world, and to students who take the risk of participating in the lives of people who are marginalized, is to deepen our awareness, to go into silence to discover ourselves and the world. As Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr says so well:

> Actually the silence is already in you, waiting. It's good to really sink into it. Slowly the scariness goes away; you discover a whole new land within. Under your anxieties and fears, underneath the noise, away from your iPods, cell phones and e-mail messages, there's a pool of silence. When you look into that pool you see the face of God.

Service Learning Assessment in General Education Courses

Rosemary J. Bertocci, Ph.D. and Francis H. Rohlf, Ph.D.

> Individuals who care for those in need must first be professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it, and committed to continuing care. Yet, while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity (*Deus Caritas Est*, 31a).

Observing is one thing; *doing* is another. The behaviors we exhibit, the acts we perform change the world. If we do Mercy, mercy will be ours. If we welcome the stranger, hospitality will be ours. If we do justice, we follow the call of the prophetic tradition. When we serve, we emulate the one who came "not to be served, but to serve . . ."

It is our time to act. As educators, we do this by teaching our students values. But only if these values take hold, only when these values "inform" their lives, have we done our duty; it is only then that we can claim that "we have been good servants."

When one takes up a task, one must do it right. We firmly believe that the way to "inform" students about values is not only to invite them to think about them, but to give them the space—an opportunity—to allow values to be rooted in and to inform their character. In other words, the value has to find a "home" in the person. Without such an opportunity, the value, like the holy family, will find "no room at the inn." With the opportunity that service learning provides, the value can be welcomed as a guest and people treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Observing is one thing; *doing* is another. The behaviors we exhibit, the acts we perform change the world. If we do Mercy, mercy will be ours.

In this paper, we will discuss service-learning goals and assessment in general education courses. In as much as the content and goals in gen ed courses differ from those in courses within a major, assessment will similarly differ. Service learning is tied in major courses to the goals and objectives of the major concerning specific skill sets in developing student expertise in the major area. In general education courses, service learning serves different purposes and, therefore, cannot be assessed primarily in terms of appropriateness to and development of the skill-set goals of the major but, rather, in regard to how service learning contributes to forming the character and vision of the student that will undergird the *values* that students will carry into their professions and manner of living.

In general education courses, values take center stage. Assessment of the *values* formed or developed in general education courses will have a different character than when those values are ancillary to the skill sets honed by service learning in major courses.

This paper will focus on assessing the values, especially Mercy values, in general education courses. We intend to present methods for assessment in core courses for freshmen and seniors—freshmen seminars, Introduction to Religion, and senior capstone courses. The major topics will include:

1. Choosing service projects that inculcate Mercy values for freshmen,
2. Structuring research projects to relate service to the diverse majors envisioned by students,
3. Assessing service learning in core, lower-level courses in terms of burgeoning values, and

4. Assessing service learning in senior capstone courses, in relation to diverse majors and the developed values of those who are ready to move on from the undergraduate experience.

The effectiveness of assessing institutional goals through service learning courses will depend on two things—the design of each course and the assessment tools employed. Thus, we will address both course design and assessment tools.

General-education service-learning courses can easily serve two purposes, one proximate and one remote. The more direct results of service learning should and will affect the students in the course and exhibit effects in their approaches and appreciation of the course material and should, beyond this, affect the students' approach to their major areas of study. The more long-range effects will concern the goals of general education and the institution. These two goals can be assessed in service-learning courses because general-education service-learning courses, geared as they are to the goals of the institution, lend themselves to assessing both the students' growth in the areas specific to the service-learning course and in regard to the more comprehensive general-education goals of the institution.

The effects of service learning on students in freshman seminars and introductory courses like Introduction to Religion are vastly different from those in upper-level and senior capstone courses. Service learning is praxis-based education and, therefore, allows experience (in service) to give direction to the students' research and mastery of course materials. While this is true of both introductory and higher-level service-learning courses, the students' experience of service learning will differ in introductory courses from that in capstone courses.

In introductory courses, if service learning is done well, the students will be confronted with their prejudices by reflecting on the "disconnect" between their acquired perspectives (inculcated from their families and their culture, both societal and religious) and the values offered by the Mercy institution. For example, the value of hospitality may wrench against the common prejudice that the poor *deserve* to be poor and are at fault for their condition, in contrast to those of us who *earned* our place in society. This will tend to be true even if the students have a background that includes many hours of volunteering. The service-*learning* experience, including as it does reflective tools, will bring to consciousness the conflict between students' attitudes and Mercy values. Assessment of values in introductory courses should focus on the quality of the students' struggle and their movement toward integration.

In introductory courses, if service learning is done well, the students will be confronted with their prejudices by reflecting on the "disconnect" between their acquired perspectives (inculcated from their families and their culture, both societal and religious) and the values offered by the Mercy institution.

By contrast, in higher-level and capstone courses, one expects that some integration of the students' values and Mercy values will have occurred and one will be able to gauge, if only externally through assessing the integration of Mercy values in final papers, presentations, and portfolios, the development of values-oriented research and reflection achieved by students. What one expects from a senior will thus differ from what one anticipates in a freshman. By analogy, one would expect, in assessing gen ed goals, different degrees of values integration to be measured in lower-level and upper-level courses.

Service learning in freshman seminars and lower-level gen ed courses, like an Introduction to Religion course, will affect the way students approach their major studies. Further, in as much as many freshmen are "undecided" as to the direction their education will lead, service-learning courses can help them decide how to focus their talents and learning in general-education courses can be an effective process for making Mercy values concrete and alive within the student; to the degree that this is so, service learning in gen ed courses will have effects on the way the student will approach the

major. Anthropologist and infectious-disease specialist, Paul Farmer, was changed by his experiences working with the rural poor in Haiti and these experiences directed his studies at Harvard; he became "interested in both research *and action*" (italics added): "Farmer was probably fortunate—certainly he thought so—to have done some work in anthropology and medicine and public health in Haiti before he studied those disciplines at Harvard. He had a gift for academic pursuits, but Haiti insured that his taste for them would be limited."[1] In the example of Paul Farmer, one sees the profound effects possible for service learning to change the attitude and direction of students' studies in majors.

By relating service learning in gen ed courses to the students' diverse majors, Mercy institutions have far-reaching effects on the manner in which students will approach their majors and help students develop character for their future professional lives.

By relating service learning in gen ed courses to the students' diverse majors, Mercy institutions have far-reaching effects on the manner in which students will approach their majors and help students develop character for their future professional lives. In order to do this, gen ed courses should direct the students' research to the application of their service to their majors. For those "undecided" students, the research in a service-learning course will, hopefully, direct them toward or away from an envisioned major.

It is in the design of the course that one can accomplish this. The design of service-learning courses will both gear the student's research to the students' majors and set up assessment tools for course-specific and institutional outcomes. To do this, course objectives should explicate student outcomes and envision institutional aims. These two sets of goals must be structured into the course design. Here are some suggestions for designing a service-learning course to meet both student needs and institutional general-education goals:

1. Students should be directed to choose their service projects in light of their majors, so that the service becomes a mini-internship (helping students discern where they fit within their chosen discipline and its relation to their values and the values promoted the institution) that will give space for students to develop "emergent outcomes" regarding their future professional lives.
2. Reflection papers (based on a brief questionnaire) should be centered on the process of experience and development of self-awareness in doing the service.
3. The research project should be directed to an area in their major that relates to their service.
4. The research paper and presentation should be structured by rubrics that help students relate their service to their major, allowing students to make explicit to themselves the ways their service has affected their attitudes and the possible directions that they will follow within their majors and their future professional lives. In order to do this, the papers and presentations we assign have three parts:
    a. A succinct description of what service they have done and how it connects to their majors,
    b. Research connected to a topic in their major and the service that they have done,
    c. Elaboration of values—religious (Mercy, Christian), existential, social, biblical, gen ed—connected to the research and the service project itself.[2]

By structuring service-learning courses in this way, students will reflect upon their service and its relation to their (putative) major and their personal educational and professional goals.

The assessment of student progress and course-specific objectives will flow naturally from the process of reflection and the assessment tools—reflection papers, classroom presentation, and research

paper—developed for the service learning course. Assessment will concern how well they have covered and integrated the three criteria in number four above. Assessment tools for the individual student should be in light of the goals and objectives of the individual course and evaluate these areas:

1. The service project and its relation to the major,
2. The research in light of the service and the major,
3. The presentation and paper in light of both service and the major.

By structuring course assessment tools in this way, the instructor ensures that the course is truly service *learning* and can assess students' progress in terms of the integration of their service with their growth in knowledge and the relation of values to the students' goals. Again, one expects a different level of integration from a freshman than a senior.

The assessment tools within a major discipline will primarily gauge the student's growth in discipline-specific areas. Further, there are often external assessments that enable an institution of higher education to evaluate the effectiveness of programs in specific disciplines, like NCLEX for nursing or proficiency tests in education. By contrast, there are no formal tools of external assessment of growth in character and values. General-education courses—especially freshman seminars and capstone courses—can reveal, in light of the general-education goals that directed the formation of the courses, not only the student's growth regarding course objectives but also development in terms of the goals of the institution including, in Mercy institutions, Mercy values. These latter effects will be more directly assessable in general education courses than in service-learning courses within majors. This is so because general education courses are designed with institutional goals in mind, whereas courses in one's major are designed to promote knowledge and expertise in the specific discipline. In the case of Mercy colleges and universities, where it can be difficult to assess student growth in Mercy values, service learning in gen ed courses will provide opportunities for institutional assessment.

Assessment in service-learning courses can, thus, go beyond course-specific goals to give data regarding the broader goals of a Mercy institution. This is especially true because, as we said above, one would expect noticeable character development in the process of moving from a freshman to a senior. As general-education service-learning courses are specifically aimed at institutional goals, appraisal of development, and progress can be gained by comparing students' formulation (conceptualization) and integration of Mercy values in a freshman seminar to their achievements in a senior capstone course. Such a comparison, however, would be onerous on those who would have to gauge the growth and development. Therefore, we think that there are three assessment tools that would enable Mercy institutions to evaluate how well our institutions are meeting our goals and indicate what areas we should improve:

In the case of Mercy colleges and universities, where it can be difficult to assess student growth in Mercy values, service learning in gen ed courses will provide opportunities for institutional assessment.

1. Development of a "course-embedded" tool for freshman seminars and introductory service-learning courses that will invite students to formulate and make explicit their struggle with values as well as the course content. This can be effected without much difficulty if one designs the course as elaborated above.
2. Use of student reviews to gauge the students' experience in areas concerning general-education goals. Student assessments can give data concerning the gen ed goals of the institution where directed questions allow students to assess the impact of their service learning on Mercy Values. At Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, PA, for example, the Faculty Affairs

Committee developed four questions to be added to the IDEA forms that helped assess the development of institutional goals. Such assessments enable the institution to have some objective data for gauging how the institution is meeting the values of both general education and the "higher" values of the institution—Mercy values.

3. Finally, assessment can be facilitated by appraising the quality of integration of institutional goals like Mercy values in the final products that the students generate—the final capstone paper, presentation, or portfolio. This can be accomplished by developing a well-defined rubric for assessing senior capstone projects. Over a two-year period, Mount Aloysius College created a rubric for final senior projects that allows assessment of competence and integration in five areas:

   a. Writing and Communication,
   b. Depth in one's Discipline,
   c. Integration of Liberal Arts,
   d. Research Literacy, and
   e. Integration of Mercy Values.

This rubric is being applied and honed to produce data by which to judge institutional effectiveness in core goals, like Mercy values.

In this paper, we tried to demonstrate three things: first, that service-learning general-education courses are valuable for assessing institutional goals at Mercy colleges; second, that the design of service-learning courses can facilitate assessment not only of course-specific objectives but of institutional goals; and, finally, that assessment tools for gen ed service-learning courses can be developed to help schools appraise the development of general-education goals and, specifically, Mercy values in students as they progress from introductory courses to capstone experiences.

By service learning, when done well, the Mercy values of service, mercy, justice, and hospitality can become more than ideals; they can root our students in values that will inform their professional and personal lives. It is only through assessment that we can discover how well we are doing our "jobs" of instilling values and continually improve our methods to this goal.

Notes

1 Tracy Kidder, *Mountains beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 84.

2 Stephen Post has put forward a simple schema for comparative reflection on values in *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*. Post elaborates ten different ways of giving in four areas of life, or "domains" (12). The four domains are family, friends, community, and humanity. The ten ways of giving are: celebration, generativity, forgiveness, courage, humor, respect, compassion, loyalty, listening, creativity.

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Planning for Academic Excellence Through Service Learning in Teacher Preparation Programs

Lynn DeCapua, Christine Davis, and Carol Scelza

Service learning is generally defined as an instructional methodology that integrates academic instruction with community service in order to address real community needs while students learn through active engagement. Service learning is the powerful synthesis of academic rigor and volunteer service which helps develop students' academic learning with a component of critical reflection on the service rendered as they engage in community work that significantly addresses local needs (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Furco & Billig, 2002). Research indicates that carefully planned and implemented service-learning projects can contribute to preservice teachers' learning and growth in a powerful and meaningful way (Anderson & Pickeral, 2000; Erickson & Anderson, 1997). This paper reviews best practices to effectively integrate service learning into teacher preparation programs and includes specific course examples to demonstrate how to link course content with service to enhance the academic learning of teacher candidates.

Service Learning in Teacher Education

The use of service learning as a viable instructional pedagogy is supported by research (Eyer, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Furco & Billig, 2002) pointing to gains in students' personal and social development, civic responsibility, and academic learning. While many definitions of service learning exist, all have stressed authentic experiences that have helped students understand the value of learning in an applied worthwhile context. Eyler and Giles (1999) offered the following description:

> Service-learning is a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems and, at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves.

Eyers and Giles further observed that valuable service-learning programs must (a) be linked with academic content, (b) identify specific outcomes, (c) meet a real community need, (d) involve sufficient duration and intensity, (e) lead to reciprocal benefits, and (f) include reflection.

Service learning is an instructional strategy that integrates service and learning. Unlike service or volunteerism, service learning distinguishes itself by requiring reflection of the service for the purpose of learning. Academic rigor is not compromised, rather learning is linked with academic content and standards with clearly identified outcomes for both learners and community partners (Howard, 1993). The service provided addresses a real community need in a meaningful way. In order to accomplish this goal, the service provided must be of sufficient duration and intensity. Service learning is a specific type of experiential learning that provides reciprocal benefits to both the provider and the recipient (Furco, 1996). The student benefits from the deeper learning that occurs from the authentic experience while the community benefits from the needed service provided. Reflection is a critical part of the learning process and may take the form of oral discussions, silent thinking, or written journals and papers.

The following two examples illustrate how service-learning was effectively integrated into teacher education courses at Georgian Court University.

Example 1

All teacher education programs at Georgian Court University include an integrated curriculum resulting in eligibility to teach both general and special

education. The program is based on an inclusive perspective that all students have a right to a quality education, that all students are capable of learning, and that all students learn best in classrooms reflective of the social, ethnic, racial, religious, and ability levels represented in society. Consequently, all candidates exit the program prepared to teach students with diverse and special needs. Service learning was integrated into two key courses designed to provide valuable opportunity to focus specifically on the diverse needs of exceptional students the candidates would be qualified to serve.

The primary goals of the service-learning experience were (a) to raise awareness and increase sensitivity to the needs of diverse learners so that these future inclusive educators would serve students with special needs with the core values of the university, namely: respect, integrity, justice, compassion, and service; and (b) to increase commitment to the development of inclusive learning communities that respect individual differences. Secondary goals were (a) to enhance appreciation of the benefits of collaborative partnerships; and (b) to increase students' sense of civic, moral, and professional obligation to lead, serve, and advocate for others by raising awareness of the community organizations and opportunities that exist.

Students were instructed to select from a list of preapproved community partners developed by the instructor. Some of the community partners and services included the Arc of Ocean County where students provided support to adults with developmental disabilities during daily living activities, the Holy Innocents Society where students provided one-on-one assistance to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder during religious instruction, and Children's Specialized Hospital where students developed and provided multisensory activities for children with multiple disabilities. Students were also permitted to identify community partners not included on the list, with prior instructor approval.

In accordance with best practices to facilitate learning and make the service more meaningful, students were instructed to prepare for their selected service activity by reading related literature about the organization sponsoring the event and the population being served, interviewing knowledgeable persons (e.g., family members of individuals with disabilities, employees of the Arc), and/or attending chapter, community, and state meetings addressing related needs. Students were required to document their preparation, service, and reflection on timesheets. Performance was assessed using the timesheets and written reflection papers integrating knowledge gleaned from the experience.

Example 2

Service learning was also integrated into two key courses designed to facilitate competency in literacy instruction in teacher candidates. The goals in the first literacy course were designed for students to gain (a) the knowledge, skills, and values to enable them to become effective teachers of literacy through application of various theoretical principles of instructional practices; (b) an understanding of critical literacy, the use of language for thinking, problem solving, and communicating; and (c) an appreciation of teaching literacy by providing a multifaceted, balanced literacy curriculum for all students.

To achieve these goals, the primary objectives of the service-learning experience in this course were for the students to work with a child or a small group of children who were experiencing difficulty in learning to read, and secondly, to learn about reading programs, strategies, and materials that are currently used in inclusive classrooms. A listing of service options was provided, however all students selected local education agencies as their community partner. Upon completion of their ten hours of service, students wrote a summary of their experiences and provided each of their classmates a copy of their report through the university's course management software. Additionally, through a presentation in class, they discussed their experience and described the reading program, materials, and strategies that they used.

The learning goals for the second literacy course were for students to:

(a) review current research, theory, assessment techniques, teaching strategies, and instructional technology that will enable them to work with learners experiencing difficulties in learning to read, write, and spell;

(b) study a variety of reading programs, approaches, and materials to enable them to help all students, regardless of their level of literacy, to become effective, strategic readers and writers; and

(c) gain deeper appreciation for children's literature and recognize its importance in teaching all children to learn to read.

Community partners included local education agencies. Students were required to select from a menu of preapproved service-learning options, which included designing and monitoring the Governor's Reading Program, conducting a book recycling program, developing a parent/student literacy program, implementing a research-based reading or writing program, supporting reading through technology program, developing an information literacy program, coordinating an author's visit program, and providing reading tutoring services to address reading deficiencies. This menu was not exhaustive and students were encouraged to identify community needs not included on the list, with prior instructor approval.

Each student developed an electronic portfolio which served to document and assess the service-learning experience. Timesheets documenting hours of service and signed parent release forms were required. Portfolio artifacts included related power point presentations, handouts, brochures, posters, bulletin boards, photographs, and videos. Students also completed a reflection log and a written summary report.

Summary

A review of written reflections and portfolio documentation revealed that the primary learning goals of all courses were achieved through the service-learning experience. Students consistently expressed enhanced academic knowledge resulting from experiential learning and purposeful reflection. Secondary goals were also achieved as many students expressed increased civic awareness and a desire to engage in future volunteerism as a result of their experience. Participation in service activities appeared to contribute to the development of professional dispositions such as caring, compassion, respect, and acceptance of diversity. Additionally, participation in service-learning activities introduced students to their role in collaborating with community partners and the variety of opportunities available for lifelong civic engagement.

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The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Service Learning

Rosemary Welsh, R.S.M.

The presentation, with photographs of activities, described a "border experience" in Laredo, Texas which involved students from Mercy sponsored schools, colleges, and universities. The Sisters of Mercy have had a presence in Laredo since 1894. The inspiration for the border experience can be found in the Direction Statement and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

There are ways in which a border experience differs from local social justice activities. For example, it is different to see a picture of a *colonia* than to visit a family living in one. There is a difference between discussing ideas in a classroom and getting information first hand on current issues and putting a human face on the problems. Preparation is crucial for field trips generally, but several parts of the orientation are crucial for a border experience.

For example, both the sending and receiving communities of the students need preparation. Like a travel agent, there should be someone in charge of communication about arrivals, departures, and logistics. Communication needs to be maintained about mutual expectations. Someone needs to coordinate the content of presentations made by people in the course of the trip. Someone needs to plan for group celebrations. And everyone needs to be ready for the unexpected.

There are ways in which a border experience differs from local social justice activities. For example, it is different to see a picture of a *colonia* than to visit a family living in one.

"Border" means different things to different people. For some, it is initially like a trip, as though the group is off to an (almost) foreign country. Prior to a sobering encounter, students can tend to glamorize or romanticize the project, as if "we are off to save the world and the poor." One initial question is to explore with students who they think "the poor" are and to clarify that we are instead talking about "persons who are poor."

The fact is that there are big differences between rich and poor who live in the two Laredos, reflecting the contrasts between the two worlds of Mexico and the U.S.A.

Students gradually absorb the do's and don'ts of being in another culture. "The good, the bad, and the ugly" describe some of these behaviors. Students learn they can't always control the food that is served or their accommodations. Persons they encounter don't know the students' families of origin or the personal histories of students. This disconnect can cause students to feel outside of their comfort zone. Stereotyping can happen from both the student side and the receiving community's side. But overall, I have found that time is always too short, once students are engaged.

Several areas of resistance can arise. Students may assume at the beginning that the people they meet have nothing to offer them and could not possibly teach them anything. They might also mistakenly assume that everyone loves to have talkative American students around. Academics may see service learning as an add-on and not "real education." After a border experience, it may be difficult to assess whether students have changed at all. There may be indifference or a "so what?" attitude. They may or may not have meaningful questions.

The evaluation should involve several questions. Why and how the participants have come to

the experience? Because of a friend? Did particular students not really want to be here? Were there other explanations for negative attitudes, such as this not being a student's first choice for getting service hours? Was there a good match between the receiving community and sending community? Were the expectations from both sides realistic? Were the goals clearly enough defined so it can be determined whether they were met? What obstacles were reasonable explanations for why something didn't work—language barriers? The weather? While every group is different, what has generally worked in the past, but may not have on this occasion?

One thing that is essential is a daily orientation and a nightly debriefing. Students are advised to keep a journal, and time should be allotted for this reflective activity.

A site team provides the orientation as collaborators who understand service learning, civic engagement, and volunteerism. An example for participants in the Laredo experience is STEER (South Texas Environmental Education and Research). What enhances the border experience is the willingness of local residents and families to tell their personal stories. After the input, there is need for in-depth discussion and integration.

The "good" of this experience is the positive engagement of participants who feel invited, the receiving community that feels happy to "show off" their culture, their food, their lifestyle, and the symbols that are important to them. Educators and students alike can feel good because they have proven that they can leave their comfort zone and home culture. Later, they find they are able to say what they think and how they feel about different issues; they are more confident in expressing themselves with people who may think differently.

When students return, the sending community typically finds that students are more involved; and sometimes they are readier to challenge the status quo! Often they have questions and criticisms. Hopefully, the sending community can also offer some guidance in how to translate their new awareness into positive action at home.

Sponsors should maximize the energy when students get home in various ways, such as arranging for them to give interviews, set up displays, give talks, and meet with faculty and administrators. Follow-up is an important part of the border experience.

Students will never be the same whether they liked the experience or not.

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Service Learning in a Catholic and Mercy Context[1]

Joy Clough, R.S.M.[2] and Susan M. Sanders, R.S.M.[3]

Catholic universities are not singular in their commitment to service learning. This pedagogical strategy enjoys considerable cachet in educational institutions, whether public or private, secular or faith based. Rather than the "what" of service learning, it is the "why" of this educational approach that is, or should be, distinctive for Catholic—and Mercy-sponsored—institutions of higher learning. This article proposes to explore that "why" by considering not only rationale but also the components involved in a service-learning experience and the hoped-for outcomes of this experiential pedagogy. Moreover, this discussion looks first at service learning in higher education generally, then more specifically at service learning in Catholic institutions of higher learning, and finally at service learning in Mercy-sponsored colleges and universities.

Preliminary to this exploration, however, a working definition of "service learning" might be helpful. In a booklet published by the Conference for Mercy Higher Education (CMHE), Jennifer and Ken Reed-Bouley[4] define service learning as a pedagogy with four characteristics:

- It integrates community service into academic courses. In other words, it is part of the curriculum, not simply a valuable cocurricular activity.
- It advances students' understanding of course content through experience, reflection, and analysis. All three components are important.
- It meets articulated educational goals and recognized community needs. A real partnership of campus and community is vital.
- It fosters the integration of learning and life. Education moves beyond the classroom and, ideally, beyond students' college years.

Service learning, then, is a complex reality that mixes and balances educational goals and community needs, academic discipline, experience and reflection, and learning and life.

Service Learning in Higher Education

Rationale

Why do so many colleges and universities encourage or even require students to engage in service learning? Moving beyond the notion that it might simply be a pedagogical fad, one rationale views service learning as the next iteration of established practice. That is, service learning takes cocurricular service-oriented opportunities directly into the curriculum. Service learning offers rich opportunities to expand students' horizons, to broaden the cultural, social, and economic contexts in which they live and study. Counterpoint to such enhanced global awareness is the self-awareness that service learning often promotes. A new context can awaken insight into unconsciously held assumptions or stereotypes. Additionally, service learning is unusually holistic and communal. It is an educational strategy that engages mind, body, and spirit; and it can be a wonderful way to create a true community of learning where all participants—students, staff, faculty, community members—are collegially engaged in educational discovery.

In addition to such pedagogical rationale, there are formative reasons that support an emphasis on service learning. For those who find in the young adult an unwarranted sense of entitlement, service learning can provide an antidote by showing them how privileged they are relative to so many others. For those who find in the young adult a wonderful sense of idealism, service learning can provide a productive avenue for their desire to be of service to others. Also among the formative

reasons cited for service learning is the notion of fostering citizenship through engagement with the community and a desire to promote a sense of the common good that stretches beyond students' immediate surroundings.

Whether for pedagogical or formative reasons, service learning generally involves four components—personal experience, reflective processes, disciplinary framework, and cultural context.

Components

Typically, though not always, the *personal experience* of service learning takes students into an unfamiliar environment or context. That could be Africa or Central America, but it could also be the inner city or a facility for persons with disabilities or another setting somewhat out of the norm for most college students. There is an element of risk or adventure, a mix of anxiety and excitement that often helps open the doors to learning.

Another aspect of the personal experience is mutuality—the sometimes surprising, but regularly experienced, realization that those who come to serve often enough end up being served. Such mutuality breeds respect as participants realize that neediness does not cancel out giftedness. Each person has gifts, each community has assets, and service is seldom one-sided. Students housed with immigrant families, for example, often return with wonderful stories about their hosts' hospitality, sense of community, and religious faith. Accompanying those stories may be insights about cultural values or questions about broader meanings of terms like "poverty" and "wealth."

The *reflective part* of service learning attempts to make meaning out of the experience and to integrate that meaning into the learners' worldview. Participants often find themselves reviewing their understanding of the human person, struggling with new insights or unsettling emotions, discovering in themselves certain attitudes or assumptions they may wish to claim or to change. Ideas about how life is or ought to be may be called into question. Reflection, both personal and communal, begins to sort out these experiences. Techniques vary—journaling, sending an imaginary text message to a friend back on campus, writing a headline that captures the impact of the day's experience. Communally, reflection means personal sharing and discussion that may move into analysis, but that will certainly articulate fresh questions. And it may be questions rather than answers, puzzling over realities rather than spouting solutions that meaningfully enlarge students' perspectives and move them forward on the educational continuum.

It is in this puzzling that the *disciplinary framework* comes into play since service learning is curricular. The connection with academic discipline(s) may be very specific or somewhat generalized. For example, a service learning opportunity within a nursing course might help students connect their experience to public health nursing or health care policy. On the other hand, a service learning opportunity in an inner city environment might draw on a variety of academic disciplines and the analytic tools appropriate to those disciplines, enhancing the relevance of a liberal arts education.

The remaining recognized component of service learning is the *cultural context*. This is a broad concept that involves students' understandings of community, experiences of ritual or symbol, range and comfort with language(s), historical knowledge, philosophical interpretation, social science constructs, and religious traditions. Devotional practices or ritual gestures, expectations of community involvement in a patient's care, the sense of time and "being on time," styles of dress that carry meaning, practices related to disciplining children—these are practical examples of culturally contextualized behaviors that are often part of the service-learning experience.

Outcomes

Assessing the outcomes of service learning means revisiting the reasons for which it was undertaken. Good rationale does not guarantee the desired outcomes. Still, service learning attracts both educators and students with the hope that postexperience evaluations will indicate that participants came away more globally aware or culturally sensitive; or that they recognized differences as differences without having to scale them on a continuum of better or worse; or that they had a learning experience that integrated the personal and

the communal, the intellectual and the affective, the action-oriented and the reflective. Seeds of volunteerism, even philanthropy, may have been planted. Sparks of engagement with community as responsible citizens may have been stirred. Yet, even with positive immediate evaluations, long term outcomes cannot be easily predicted.

In the Catholic Christian context, service learning is an opportunity to expand on participants' baptismal commitment, a commitment that fundamentally involves an outward dimension of service to others.

Service Learning in Catholic Higher Education

When it comes to service learning at Catholic institutions of higher learning, some questions rise: What, if anything, is different about service learning because the institution is Catholic? Or, perhaps, should anything be different? This article proposes that there are or should be some differences because of an institution's commitment to Catholicism. The differences build on what has already been said about service learning generally in higher education. It is still a pedagogically sound approach to learning and a formative opportunity for engaged citizenship. Service learning in a Catholic context is still experience based. It still requires reflection. Like its counterparts in secular universities, it may still be oriented to a particular academic discipline or to a cluster of disciplines. After all, service learning provides a practical opportunity to help students understand and experience what it means to think like a social scientist or to gather data, or to think like a philosopher about how to understand the world, or to think like a poet or an artist conveying insights to others. Service learning in Catholic institutions, as elsewhere, needs to be culturally informed, aware of or attuned to different cultures.

So, what is or should be different about service learning at a Catholic institution? There are at least two answers to that question, two things that deserve attention even though, at first blush, they seem to be but blinding glimpses of the obvious. First, service learning at a Catholic university should be rooted in the university's mission as faith based, Christian, and Catholic. Second, service learning in a Catholic context should be grounded in models of theological reflection. These assertions suggest that faith-based mission and theological reflection will influence the rationale, the components, and the hoped-for outcomes of service learning at a Catholic educational institution.

Rationale

In the Catholic Christian context, service learning is an opportunity to expand on participants' baptismal commitment, a commitment that fundamentally involves an outward dimension of service to others. Service learning contextualizes that dimension and provides an opportunity to hear and witness anew to the gospel. This focus on service also connects the Christian gospel to other faith traditions and other sacred documents like the Qur'an. It is an opportunity to link religious teaching and practice to social, political, and economic realities. Frequently, students start exploring their beliefs and asking questions: How is it that these people, who are so desperately poor, are nonetheless happy? What makes their economic condition so impoverished? What makes for happiness? How does all this relate to my experience at home?

Service learning informed by Catholic teaching and practice promotes faith-based decision making—not just ethical decision making but an integrated notion of personal spirituality. Moreover, service learning in a Catholic context fosters faith-based community involvement, taking spirituality beyond "me and God" to a more communal sense of "us and God."

Such attention to gospel faith and spirituality during service-learning experiences at a Catholic college or university has several corollaries. It can foster an integrated faith life—one that includes action and reflection, one that balances the personal and the communal. It can provide fresh and

formative opportunities for compassionate service and self-gift, at the same time promoting reflection on why Christians (and, therefore, Catholics) have the responsibility to give of themselves to others and on how such self-giving expresses God's presence in the world.

Finally, and very importantly, service learning in a Catholic context can assist students in the discernment of their Christian and professional vocations. College students are often quite focused on their professional goals or vocations, and service learning can affirm or refine or change that. "I'm going to be a nurse, but now I know I want to be a visiting nurse." "What an experience! I'm sure I want to be an elementary school teacher." But what about students' Christian vocation? What is it they are called to in the bigger picture—not just a profession, not even religious or married life, but as Michael Himes suggests, doing the truth in love, "finding God in all things," loving their neighbor as Jesus has loved them? One of the wonderful reasons for Catholic institutions' engagement in service learning is—or could be—the opportunity to get students thinking about the whole notion of vocation.

On this broad sense of vocation, Himes provides a cogent framework for an understanding of vocation based on three questions: What gives you joy? What are you good at? Does anyone need you to do it?[5] Service learning gives faculty and staff broad scope to invite students to consider what gives them joy, even in a situation where the specific service—helping to dig a well or cleaning up a child who's just been ill—is not particularly pleasant. Similarly, service learning situations offer faculty and staff participants fresh opportunities to tell students that they are good at something—something beyond or different from academic performance. Finally, service learning can open eyes to what is needed in society and can lead to discussions about how students might use their talents and education to respond to various needs in today's world.

Components

As with rationale, so with components—what has been said about service learning generally applies to Catholic institutions, but there is—or could be—more. What might that "more" be when it comes to the personal experience, reflective processes, disciplinary framework, and cultural context components of service learning?

Personal experience, naturally, touches students' contemporary experience of faith. What familiarity with or understanding of Catholic teaching, practice, and ritual do they bring to the service-learning experiences? How does involvement with others in a service context bear on the question of needing a community to help support their faith? What happens if or when a community challenges or shatters what they think about God or religion or spirituality? In short, how might service learning illuminate students' spiritual journey?

The *reflective processes* associated with service learning at a Catholic institution take on new dimensions when they are centered in theological reflection. Theologians like James and Evelyn Whitehead, Michael Himes, Jack Shea, and others have written extensively on theological reflection, making it accessible to a broad spectrum of believers. Their work highlights theological reflection as a God-conscious way of looking at the world and at daily experience. By attending to experience, faith tradition, and culture, theological reflection seeks to make meaning and integrate the service experience into students' faith life. Reflective strategies include personal and communal prayer, ritual and liturgy, and the acknowledged formative presence of the Holy Spirit.

Still, it is important to point out that theological reflection associated with service learning need not, should not exclude those who are not Catholic or Christian. The religious pluralism of Catholic universities makes the combination of theological reflection and service learning an opportunity for those of diverse faith traditions, or none, to learn about one another's approach to ultimate mystery and to its meaning for human life.

Such inclusiveness may seem problematic when it comes to relating service learning to the additional "*disciplines*" appropriate to a Catholic institution of higher learning. Scripture, tradition, Catholic social teaching, Church documents and decisions, the Catholic intellectual tradition, relevant Church history, the wisdom of saints and other forbearers in faith—all these offer rich material to frame and inform and deepen the educational

impact of service learning. Service learning sponsored by a Catholic institution should make use of these resources, but doing so does not exclude the possibility of involving students of other faiths. The basic principles of Catholic social teaching—human dignity, common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity—resonate with other faith traditions. Wisdom figures like Hildegard of Bingen or Francis of Assisi, Augustine or Teresa of Avila speak to many beyond Catholicism. In addition, students from other religious traditions can be invited to share insights from their sacred texts or wisdom figures, from their tradition's social teaching or religious or intellectual history.

Considerations of *cultural context* in relation to service learning take on some interesting configurations. There is the interfaith dimension already discussed, but there is also the discovery of cultural adaptations of Catholicism itself. The expression of belief, the style of rituals and symbols, the presence or not of familiar organizational structures or roles, the place of religion and religious talk in society—all these can differ markedly in different places and cultures. Each of these can lead to some very interesting conversations and learnings.

Outcomes

Results, ideally, parallel goals. When this is so, in whole or in part, students may come away from a service-learning experience with an expanded sense of their baptismal commitment; a further integration of faith and reason, of contemplation and action; and some new or deeper thoughts not only about their professional goals but more importantly about their Christian vocation.

Service learning can also occasion fresh insights into scriptural themes: "Who is my neighbor?" "What does it mean to be a servant leader?" "What gospel images of God make sense for me?" Catholic social teaching comes to life in service learning situations: "What serves the common good?" "How do I hold on to what I've learned here about human dignity and solidarity?" Immersion in service learning also fosters an appreciation for the values and costs of community reflection and action. Certainly, community brings blessings, but it also asks for sacrifice.

A final cautionary note on service learning at a Catholic university. *All* of the components cited above and highlighted by those who advocate theological reflection but especially the Whiteheads and John Shea, are critical to the process of helping students integrate or deepen their faith life. Personal experience alone can lead to subjectivism: It is all about me, my feelings, my biases, my experience, my insights. Tradition alone can lead to fundamentalism: Decisions and life today should be literal just as portrayed on the pages of scripture, unaltered by contemporary realities. Culture alone can lead to relativism: How things are in one place is fine, different from someplace else (which is also fine), the proverbial "I'm okay, you're okay." Logical positivism and complete reliance on empirical data as a means to truth can lead to denial of the transcendent: What cannot be measured cannot be proved, and what cannot be proved cannot be true.

Service Learning in Catholic and Mercy Higher Education

The argument here is that a Catholic context adds some aspects to service learning as practiced in higher education generally and that, similarly, service learning in a Mercy context potentially enhances even the Catholic service learning experience. In rationale, components, and outcomes, Mercy-founded or sponsored colleges and universities have in their Mercy heritage a distinctive resource for their service learning programs.

Rationale

The reasons marshaled for service learning at a Mercy institution can include the historical reality that such pedagogy extends the ethos of some of the institutions' earliest professional programs in teaching and in nursing. Chosen, perhaps, because they were the professions first open to women, they were—and still are—service professions. Now however, through service-learning opportunities across the curriculum, the message is that service isn't limited to identifiable service professions. It is part of the Christian calling.

Moreover, service-learning engagements help students (and, frankly, the participating faculty and

staff members) internalize Mercy spirit and values. Service learning engages and practices such values as integrity and service, respect and justice, hospitality and compassion, diversity and those other core values claimed by Mercy institutions. Similarly, the service learning experience involves students in both action and reflection, in both mercy and justice, in both direct service and advocacy for systemic change.

Components

Every one of the components of a service learning experience can be enriched by engaging with the broader Mercy reality of which a Mercy college or university is a part. New dimensions of learning emerge when Sisters or associates of Mercy participate with students in the service learning *experience*. Insights into religious life, discovery of association, respect for the lifelong service orientation of sisters, examples of intergenerational affection and "sorority," as one student called the spirit of community he witnessed—all these enter the picture if and when Sisters and associates are integral to the service and/or the reflection aspects of a service learning experience. Further, when service learning opportunities can be sited at Mercy-related ministries, students' understanding of the heritage of their college or university begins to deepen and broaden.

Such a broader sense of Mercy realities is a new aspect to bring to the *reflection* component of service learning. Even students who understand that their college or university is Sisters of Mercy connected do not necessarily realize that there are other Sisters of Mercy colleges and universities, let alone hospitals and housing ministries and social service centers and retreat houses. Nor, in most instances, do they grasp the geographical reach of Mercy beyond their institution or city or state or even beyond the United States. And why is this important? Because it offers students the opportunity to discover a much larger and quite diverse network of people and activities that try to live the gospel in varied circumstances but similar spirit. That very broadening can bring home to them in a new way the core values of their own Mercy institution as they experience the similarity among Mercy-related entities and at the same time note interesting and unique twists of that heritage at their own college or university.

The *disciplinary framework* pertinent for service learning at a Mercy institution calls on the congregation's foundational documents. Citations from the *Constitutions* might include the lines about being engaged in direct service and systemic change or about learning how to be merciful by collaborating with others in mercy or about relieving misery and addressing its causes. Also relevant for reflection are the *Direction Statement* and the *Critical Concerns*, both of which speak to timely contemporary issues—poverty, the status of women, immigration, the earth, nonviolence, racism, and multiculturalism. Then there is the mission statement of the specific Mercy institution that is sponsoring any given service learning opportunity. Which parts of that statement relate to the experience or could be a base from which to launch some reflective discussion? Whatever the core documents of the sponsoring institution—educational philosophy, Catholic identity statement, institutional history—attention to them could enrich the service-learning experience from the Mercy perspective.

As to larger *cultural realities* that reflect the Mercy ethos, consider the traditional spiritual and corporal works of mercy derived, in part, from the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 25. While it is tempting and easy to focus here on the corporal works of mercy—feed, clothe, visit, shelter—it is important to remember the spiritual works as well—instruct, comfort, counsel, pray, forgive. If the former are direct service, the latter are often related to systemic change as well as to professions in which many students will be engaged for most of their lives. Do they/could they think of those professions as expressions of the spiritual works of mercy? Other cultural sources related to Mercy and potentially useful in some service learning settings are Mercy-authored letters, congregational and institutional histories, biographies, and other documents that convey the Mercy slant on basic Christian and Catholic teaching and practice.

Outcomes

The result of a Mercy-enhanced service-learning experience is an enlarged understanding of both

mercy and Mercy. As to the former, there is the insight that mercy embraces compassion and justice, service and advocacy—complementary, not oppositional, qualities. As to the latter, there is the awareness that the Sisters of Mercy heritage of the students' home institution has a much broader context, one that augments and reinforces what they have experienced not only during their venture into service learning but also as part of the ethos of their Mercy college or university.

Conclusion: A Blinding Glimpse of the Obvious

Service learning at secular and faith-based universities share similar rationales, components, and hoped-for outcomes. They are not totally different realities. In fact, service learning at a Catholic and Mercy institution might not be any different than service learning at a good secular institution. Should that be the case, however, it would seem to be an opportunity lost. Catholic and Mercy institutions could do so much more. That "more" includes personally experiencing God in others, especially those who are poor or marginalized. That "more" means thinking about Catholic social teaching. That "more" values "hanging around" and working side by side with Sisters of Mercy, with Mercy associates, with Mercy-imbued colleagues. That "more" is reflection infused with a faith perspective and a Mercy spirit.

What the "more" of service learning at a Catholic and Mercy institution probably is not, however, is an attempt to be exhaustive. Not everything suggested in this discussion can be part of one finite service learning experience. In fact, it is quite possible that no single instance of service learning should attempt to incorporate all that has been mentioned in these pages. At the least, however, service learning at a Catholic and Mercy institution should help address and bridge the divide, sometimes spouted on campus, that is resistant or uncomfortable with being Catholic but content or pleased with being Mercy.

The blinding glimpse of the obvious about service learning at a Catholic and Mercy institution is the importance of engaging students with the gospel and the Mercy ethos. It is not just social science but Catholic social teaching. It is not just theology but Mercy spirituality.

It offers contemporary Mercy educators the opportunity to follow the ministerial vision of Catherine McAuley who "connected the rich to the poor, the healthy to the sick, the educated and skilled to the uninstructed, the influential to those of no consequence, and the powerful to the weak to do the work of God on earth."[6]

That is service learning in a Catholic and Mercy context. That is the argument to be made on the campuses of Mercy-founded, Mercy-sponsored institutions of higher learning that are embracing the pedagogy of service learning.

Notes

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference for Mercy Higher Education biennial Symposium on Service Learning and Civic Engagement at Georgian Court University, June 12–14, 2008.

2 A member of the West Midwest Community of the Sisters of Mercy, Joy Clough, RSM is special assistant to the Office for University Mission and Heritage at Saint Xavier University, Chicago.

3 A member of the West Midwest Community of the Sisters of Mercy, Susan Sanders, R.S.M., is vice president, Office for University Mission and Heritage, and professor of public policy, Saint Xavier University, Chicago.

4 Jennifer Reed-Bouley and Ken Reed-Bouley, "Introducing Students to Social Analysis and Theological Reflection: Foundations for Facilitators of Service-Learning at Colleges and Universities Founded or Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy." Conference for Mercy Higher Education, Gwynedd-Mercy College, 2007.

5 Michael J. Himes, "Finding God in All Things: A Sacramental Worldview and Its Effect," in *As Leaven in the World: Catholic Perspectives on Faith, Vocation, and the Intellectual Life*, edited by Thomas M. Landy (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 2001), 91–103.

6 Sister M. Joanna Regan, R.S.M., *Tender Courage* (Pennsylvania: Gwynedd-Mercy College, 1978), no pagination.

Service Learning in Guyana
The Interconnectedness of Mission, Student Development, and Guyanese Community Enrichment

Christen Lefebvre and Amber Berry

As graduates from the nursing program at Saint Joseph College this spring, we are here to present our personal experiences and some of the sustainable programs and relationships that our school has developed over the past six years in Guyana.

Once or twice a year, groups of Saint Joseph's students and faculty take a two-week trip to Guyana. Usually these groups include students and faculty from several different majors. During our trip this past January, our group included nursing and counseling students, but in the past nutrition and family studies students have also participated.

Guyana is located on the northern coast of South America and is bordered by Venezuela, Suriname, and Brazil. We spent the majority of our time in Georgetown, which is the capital, but we also visited other programs outside the city. We took a weekend trip to Kaiteur Falls, and we had the chance to explore the rain forests and visit with some of the local people.

We tried to experience different aspects of their culture whenever we could. For instance, during our time in Georgetown we were lucky enough to have a cook who made us a home-cooked Guyanese lunch every day. We also visited museums and the marketplace to get a better sense of their history and everyday lives.

We think Guyana is an ideal destination because it offers different cultural experiences in an English-speaking environment.

The idea for this program started when one of our nursing professors attended a conference in 2001 on Mercy Mission Effectiveness. A connection introduced her to the Guyanese Sisters of Mercy and the program developed from there. The Guyanese Sisters of Mercy are still our hosts today, and a majority of the work we do is through Saint Joseph Mercy Hospital, which is in Georgetown. We also spent a good amount of time at Georgetown Public Hospital and outreach programs in the area.

The Trip to Guyana

Participating in the Guyana experience was eye opening for us. Saint Joseph's offers outreach programs in our community, but the time we spent in Guyana gave us a much more global view of health and health care. It also helped us become more aware of cultural differences and the need for compassionate service in tune with people's needs. We learned that approaching people from different cultures, or really anyone for that matter, with a "let's fix-it-all" attitude is unrealistic and often unwelcome. The service-learning opportunities we took part in helped us realize how important it is to work *with* people and learn from everyone we encounter.

We think Guyana is an ideal destination because it offers different cultural experiences in an English-speaking environment. This was helpful because we didn't have to overcome a language barrier. Guyana is considered a developing country, and visiting it gave us the opportunity to experience what it's like in a country that suffers from extreme poverty and limited resources. Their average annual per capita income is about $250 U.S. per year.

Guyana's population is made up of Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese. It was apparent from the first moments we walked into Cheddi Jagan International Airport in Guyana that we stood out

because of the color of our skin. It took us out of our comfort zone and gave us the experience of feeling different. Amid the ethnic diversity in the U.S., this doesn't happen so frequently. Our first visit to St. John Bosco Orphanage highlighted that feeling of being a minority and not fitting in. We had barely stepped out of our taxis before mobs of young boys were running towards us yelling, "The white people are here! The white people are here!"

Observations on Healthcare

Along with its unique culture, Guyana also offers some challenges. For instance, the mental health care system is inadequate. During our first visit to the psychiatric ward at Georgetown Public Hospital, we quickly realized how limited their knowledge of mental illness is and, therefore, the reason why standard practices for effective care are absent. I was nervous at the thought of visiting the psychiatric ward. We were told when we arrived that we'd be going to the male ward. When we walked up the stairs, the first thing I saw was a small desk where the guard was on duty. Directly across from him was a huge room enclosed with prison bars. There were twelve patients. Some of them were walking around in a daze, and some were wandering around the room without clothes on. Three men came up to the bars to greet us. It was clear they were heavily medicated, but they were friendly and polite. The guard was hesitant to let us into the room with the patients, which just made me more nervous, but after short time, he decided to let us in.

Once we were inside we produced paper and crayons, and I spent an hour talking and coloring with a couple of the patients. Some others from my group kicked around a soccer ball with them. After my initial moments of terror, I realized that there wasn't any reason to be scared. These men were people, and even though they were ill, they deserved the same respect and compassion I would give to any other patient. In the end, the experience pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me realize that every experience, even a scary one, offers an opportunity for personal growth.

Another challenge that Guyana faces is the minimal number of well-educated people. There are several reasons that seem to contribute to this. First of all, there are a limited number of accredited higher education programs. The ones that are available are expensive, and since money is a concern for most families, education is not always a immediate priority. Second the people who are lucky enough to become educated often use their degree as a way to leave Guyana.

Along with its unique culture, Guyana also offers some challenges. For instance, the mental health care system is inadequate.

At one point, I had the opportunity to spend a day in the operating room. I talked with the nurses and the nursing students about their role there, and assisted the surgeon with simple tasks during the surgery, such as retracting and suctioning. But the most interesting part of my day was talking to the nurse anesthetist. He was very welcoming and willing to share his stories with me.

He told me that he is one of four nurse anesthetists in the entire country of Guyana. He shared some stories with me of conferences he had been to in the United States. On one of his recent trips to New York City, he was in the operating room with the nurses and doctors. They were preparing the patient for surgery, and were trying to find the right-sized endotracheal tube. They went through three different endotracheal tubes before they found the right size, and all of the ones they didn't use got thrown into the trash. He explained to me that he was just looking at the ET tubes in the trash, thinking about how wasteful it was and wondering if he could take the items from the trash without anyone noticing. Supplies like that are reused in Guyana. One of the doctors saw him looking in the trash can. The doctor immediately realized how wasteful they had been and told the nurse anesthetist that he could take as many supplies back to Guyana as he could carry.

What I took away from this story is that we can be very wasteful here in the U.S., and I'm more

aware of that now and I try to take steps to correct it whenever I can. It also amazed me to find out that even though Guyana reuses many of their supplies in an operating room, they have a lower number of hospital acquired infections than we do here in the U.S., according to Saint Joseph Mercy Hospital.

In Guyana, the provision of health care is much different than in the US. They don't have many resources there, but what little they do have, they get by with. We learned it is possible to function with much less and with less expensive equipment and technology. I learned that the goal of their healthcare system is to meet basic human needs. For example, an alumna of St. Joseph College who traveled to Guyana a few times recognized a need for better nutrition in a Guyanese preschool. There, the children were malnourished and not developing properly. She began a program to fund nutritious snacks twice a day for the children, and a staff member was recruited to take data including the children's heights, weights, and twenty-four-hour dietary recall. This information has shown that the program has been a success and is currently still in practice. A simple thing such as a nutritious smoothie can make a huge difference in the health and well-being of many children.

In Guyana, the provision of health care is much different than in the US. They don't have many resources there, but what little they do have, they get by with. We learned it is possible to function with much less and with less expensive equipment and technology.

Basic human needs are met very differently in the hospitals in Georgetown compared to hospitals in the U. S. We are familiar with large air conditioned hospitals with all the amenities and in most cases comforts similar to home. By contrast, let me describe the maternity unit at Georgetown Public Hospital. The prenatal ward is a large open room with about seventy-five twin-sized beds, every bed occupied by a women in labor. Each woman must bring all of the supplies she will need from home, including clothes for herself, clothes for the new baby, sheets, antiseptic soap, toilet paper, a water bottle, and food. None of these are provided by the hospital. At the same time, all actual services at the public hospital are absolutely free, unlike in our country. After the women endure a long delivery by midwives trained in Nigeria, without any technology or pain medication, they are escorted along with their babies to the postnatal ward. This has the same set-up as the prenatal ward, but with two women and two babies to one twin bed. Unfortunately space is so limited, not even the fathers are allowed to visit.

Mahaica Leprosy Hospital

Mahaica Hospital is a long-term care facility for people who have leprosy, also called Hanson's Disease. Even though leprosy is easily treatable in its early stages with the right medication, in Guyana there is a social stigma attached to the disease. For this reason, many people who contract leprosy do not seek treatment right away. Once they begin to have recognizable symptoms, like the loss of fingers and toes and skin lesions, they have already been rejected by society. Mahaica is a place where many of these people, having already spent a good portion of their lives there, will most likely spend the rest of their days.

A small group of us went on a day trip to Mahaica to bring fruit, movies, and supplies to the patients. From Georgetown, it was about an hour drive. When we got there, it seemed as though we had come across a forgotten place. We drove slowly through the roads towards the back area of the complex where there were five buildings, all connected by wooden walkways. We dropped off the supplies and met a couple of the patients. Both were in wheelchairs. One of them was born there and had been living there his entire life. His mother had had leprosy and he contracted it from her. All of the residents expressed gratitude for our visit and the supplies but one of them in particular made a deep impression on me.

He was a man who welcomed us graciously into his room, invited us to sit down, and got out all his old photo albums. These albums dated back several decades and included pictures of his parents and siblings, his wedding, and his children and grandchildren, most of whom he is still in contact with, although they don't visit very often. When we were getting ready to leave, we took a group picture with him. Before he would let us leave, he asked each of us to write down our address and birthday, and explained that each year he sends out birthday cards to the people who visit him. I was really touched by his gesture of thoughtfulness and gratitude.

I quickly learned that their culture does not accept my beliefs. I tried to explain where I was coming from, but I realized that I could not change their cultural mindset.

Experiences in Educational Institutions

A learning opportunity in which I took part while in Guyana was teaching classes to high-school-age students at Mercy Wings Vocational School. After we put in long hours of preparation for these classes, nothing could have prepared us for some of the challenges and situations we encountered. We taught anger management skills, dangers of alcohol and drugs, and offered information about sex and sexually transmitted diseases. After teaching the first class on anger management, we realized that only the boys spoke or raised their hands. The girls sat there silently, observing. We decided that a better approach for the next class would be to separate the boys and the girls. This was a profitable decision. When the girls are separated from the boys, they interacted with us, they spoke up, and asked questions. There was an obvious cultural difference between teaching the boys and the girls.

Cultural differences became very apparent when I was teaching the boys' class about sex and sexually transmitted diseases. We allowed the boys to write down questions they wanted to ask so they could remain anonymous. One of the boys asked a few questions about homosexuality, wondering why do some men like other men. Despite conflicting opinions of people in the U.S. , I can say that our culture in general is tolerant of gay people or at the very least, accepting of them. When I began to talk about acceptance and tolerance for homosexuality, I was quickly stopped by an angry riot of boys yelling, "Kill the gay people, bury them six feet under!" A male teacher encouraging these comments by laughing and agreeing with them. I quickly learned that their culture does not accept my beliefs. I tried to explain where I was coming from, but I realized that I could not change their cultural mindset. Their opinions were so strong that I risked losing their respect and had to move on to the next topic.

We had another educational experience at St. John Bosco Orphanage operated by the Sisters of Mercy. About forty-eight boys, ages five to sixteen, live there. We visited the orphanage frequently over the course of our two week stay. A counseling student who was on the trip with us proposed a project to make a keepsake book for the children since they lack attention and personal identity while living among forty-eight other boys. To make this book, each boy was interviewed separately and asked what his favorite food, sport, and books were as well as what he wanted to be when he grew up. We took a picture of each boy and had each draw a picture of his choice. Each boy got his personal page within the book. They really enjoyed the attention they got and felt like they had accomplished something by creating this book. We also spent time playing with the children and learning how to play cricket, the most popular sport in Guyana.

Giving Instruction about Internet Classes

I had the pleasure of teaching basic internet classes to the staff of Saint Joseph Mercy Hospital. The hospital-wide internet system was not functional yet and none of them had e-mail accounts, so I had

everybody log into my e-mail. Since a good part of our visit in Guyana was spent learning and experiencing different aspects of their culture, it was gratifying to have a chance to feel I was giving something back.

I taught ten staff members how to log onto the internet, how to send and check their e-mail, and how to send an e-mail with an attached document. Since they didn't have e-mail accounts yet, I had them all log on to my own e-mail and type my e-mail address into the "to" line, so they were sending all of the e-mails into my inbox. I asked them to come up with a subject line, and then type anything in the body of the e-mail. We practiced this several times, and then practiced again while attaching a word document. I was impressed that at the end of the exercise, every student could turn on the computer, log on, open an e-mail, attach a document and send it, even those who had never even touched a computer before!

After the class, I returned to our apartment, where we had the luxury of wireless internet and laptops, and checked my e-mail. As you can imagine, after two solid hours of having them send and receive e-mails from my account, I had many e-mails. I read each one of them. Their messages were really touching! Every one of them thanked me for teaching the class. Some of them talked about the weather (we had brought rain with us!), some told me I was pretty and nice, and one even invited me to her birthday party. Teaching this class was one of the highlights of my trip, and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to give something back.

Outcomes of the entire Guyana Immersion Experience were made possible by the sustainable projects and relationships that have been established over the past six years. The same faculty and staff have been going every year, so some level of trust has been established between us and the Guyanese community, and they believe us when we say that we will follow through. According to the World Health Organization, this sort of trust is unusual. After I got home, I was inspired to do something to give back to the Guyanese for the experiences I had. I noticed that the St. Joseph Mercy Hospital nursing students had some nursing textbooks that were outdated. I decided to collect used textbooks from my fellow nursing students. It was a huge success. We collected more than three hundred pounds of books that we were able to send to Guyana through a generous donation for shipping costs.

We returned with a greater understanding of Guyanese culture, the third world, and ways in which our previous knowledge and skills can be used to gain new learning experiences and a new perspective on our lives.

Before we left for our trip, we had a semester-long class. Its purpose was to prepare us by teaching us about the Guyanese culture, about studying abroad, directing us to the Guyanese newspaper online, showing us movies, having us speak to students who have gone to Guyana in past years, and giving us a taste of authentic Guyanese food. We left home with an open mind, eager for the experiences awaiting us.

We returned with a greater understanding of Guyanese culture, the third world, and ways in which our previous knowledge and skills can be used to gain new learning experiences and a new perspective on our lives. At our return, we were asked to write a reflection on our experiences. I felt like I could sum them up by saying, "I had culture shock when I arrived in Guyana and culture shock when we got back to the U.S. after having the experience in Guyana and changing my outlook on the world, its people, and my own society."

A Tribute for Mary Kathryn Grant

Jacqueline Marie Kieslach, R.S.M.

In April of 2002, Mary Kathryn Grant began her letter of application to the CMHE search committee for an executive director in the following manner:

> *"I would like to be considered for the position of executive director of the Conference for Mercy Education because I believe passionately in the power of education to help create a world of justice and peace and because I have a deep, life-long- interest in creating vehicles for sustainable sponsorship to ensure the future vitality and viability of our Mercy ministries."*

This one sentence captures for us the person, the energy, the passions, and the ministry of a woman we knew as Kate.

Beginning in the early 1970s, Kate's visionary leadership both in higher education and health care systematically probed the possible design, implementation and evaluation for models of sponsorship. Actually, Kate was experimenting with models of collaboration between religious communities, their institutional works and nonreligious leaders even before there existed a true vocabulary to support such exploration. Canon Law has yet to define this relationship called "sponsorship"! The journey she undertook and led was responsive to an anticipated need, and guided by the deep love of the works of mercy and the intention to assure their future within the evolving changes affecting women religious and their institutions throughout the United States.

Two qualities shaped Kate's vision in developing the model of sponsorship and collaboration we know today as the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. Kate understood collaborative processes, and she loved the vital support Mercy service provides to people through education and health care. Beginning in 2002, and continuing until her death on August 15, 2006, Kate never let go of her dream for the conference. At our last symposium in June of 2006, Kate was recognized for her energies on our behalf. If you recall, she did come to the symposium, but had to leave because of her illness, so was not physically present to receive our accolades.

Today, we again say our humble thank you and appreciation for Kate's presence among us. We thank her for being a person of hope and vision, shared among us. In a very particular way, we thank her for giving life and form to the directive found in our Mercy *Constitutions* "By collaborating with others in works of Mercy, we continually learn from them how to be more merciful."

Mary Katherine Grant is remembered by her colleagues in CMHE by a plaque placed in the memorial garden at the Mercy International Center at Baggot Street in Dublin.

Abstracts
Concurrent Sessions

Pre-Conference Workshop

The Nuts and Bolts of Service Learning

John Daniels, University of Detroit Mercy, and Sr. Michele Marie Schroek, R.S.M., Mercyhurst College, Erie, Pennsylvania

This workshop served as an introduction to service learning for faculty and administration interested in incorporating service learning into their courses.

It focused on a theory and purpose, definitions, different types of service and the do's and don'ts of service learning. Included were reflection and assessment, how to develop community partnerships and find organizational supports.

In Mercy Higher Education, service is linked to social justice. This presentation illustrated how to link course objectives to service needs in a way that would encourage students to look at the root causes of inequality, and systemic issues of injustice that students can witness as they give service. The purpose is to encourage students to move toward social action.

These two Mercy college service directors shared stories about service learning, and how it works at their campuses.

Concurrent Sessions

1. Striving for Insight: Administrators, Faculty and Staff as Service Learners

E. Suzanne Lee, Ph.D., Wanda Manning, M.B.A., Pamela Klick, M.A. Suzanne Kimble, M.Ed., M.S., R.N. St. Xavier University, Chicago, Illinois

This presentation articulated and applied the essential elements of service learning to the manner in which the Mission and Heritage Committee at St. Xavier University developed as a committee and pursued its tasks. Our interpretation of service learning is not only service by which undergraduate and graduate students undertake outreach into the community for academic and community-related growth. Our interpretation of service learning includes administrators, faculty, and staff as learners within the university community, extending their professional expertise, academic skills, and reflective practice into their work both inside and outside the university. The committee agrees that the experience of members could not have happened if it were not for an administration that allowed the support, space and commitment to be creative and allow the committee to evolve by an established process. We were directed to compose committee membership that included staff and faculty; given the respect, time, and resources to build relationships with each other and the freedom to own the process as we created something meaningful and of value. They encouraged us to share the produce of our efforts with the university community. Our aim was to have participants think beyond the traditional academic viewpoint about service learning and see how the essential elements of service learning can apply to other academic projects.

Our work seeks to further a commitment to social justice within our university community.

2. Service Learning Assessment in General Education Courses

See text by Francis Rohlf, Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, Pennsylvania, and Rosemary Bertocci, Saint Francis University

3. Strengthening Civic Engagement through National Service Programs on Campus

Colin Hurley, AmeriCorps, VISTA, Mercyhurst College, Erie, Pennsylvania

Does service learning and civic engagement make a difference in the public square? With the help of national programs like AmeriCorps and Campus Compact, there is a strengthened bond between a college campus and its community that can combine to make a huge difference. In the past year, there have been reports of national record-breaking hours of service, much to the credit of these organizations. Qualified and motivated individuals are poised to build a sustainable infrastructure that can foster experiential learning for college students while aiming to educate children, shatter generational poverty, and give others a brighter future. With the addition of an individual sponsored by a national service organization, a service learning office can experience tremendous growth. This person can become an asset, and the person's role can be quite diverse in scope. Depending on the age of a program, some may find it best to work with individual professors to develop future syllabi in order to include service opportunities for students in a class.

The individual might be called to lead an alternative service trip to bring about awareness of social issues in different areas of the country while learning with students through engagement in service. In other cases, a national service member may be best suited for coordinating a transportation schedule with a college or public transportation system in order to bring students to local organizations in need of after-school tutoring, mentoring or recreational assistance.

4. Organizing for Justice on Mercy Campuses

Ms. Kate Braggs and Catherine Darcy, R.S.M., Sisters of Mercy Institute Justice Team, Silver Spring, Maryland

There are several methods to engage Mercy campuses in justice issues. First is to have a method to choose which justice issues are important to build up on Mercy campuses. Trying to work on every justice issue would be too overwhelming. However, selecting a few key issues that impact students, faculty, and staff directly can be a more effective way to get campuses interested in justice. Such issues might include providing fair trade coffee in the cafeteria, or sweatshop-free clothing in the bookstore.

Education is a crucial step in mobilizing campuses around justice issues. There are several means to educate students, faculty, and staff. Holding a teach-in on a certain issue can be a good way to get information out. More students will be inclined to come to a teach-in if it does not look like a class. There are ways to present a teach-in and other education-based events to make them fun and accessible.

After campuses have been educated on an issue, it is crucial to take that energy and encourage action. There are various approaches to mobilizing campuses for action, which can take place on a variety of levels. Campuses can hold letter-writing campaigns, rallies and other events. Campuses can also collaborate with other movements working for justice and send students, faculty, and staff to events off campus. This can be an effective method to expose them to the larger picture of social justice, assist in energizing campus activities, and provide opportunities for students to be in engaged in justice activities after graduation.

5. Service Learning in a Catholic and Mercy Context

See text by Joy Clough, R.S.M., special assistant, University Mission and Heritage, and Susan Sanders, R.S.M., vice-president, University Mission and Heritage, St. Xavier University, Chicago, Illinois

6. Discussing Homelessness in an Introduction to Philosophy Class

Gail M. Presbey, University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, Michigan

The presentation explains how, as a faculty member, I coordinated with the project of John Daniels, our service learning coordinator, in focusing upon the problem of homelessness as a theme in service learning classes. In Introduction to Philosophy, students are challenged to question their assumptions. If we are privileged, we are often unaware of structural violence, taking the situation as the norm. Regarding the problem of homelessness in America, issues of class are important (in our stratified capitalist society), race is important (discrimination leads to heightened vulnerability), and gender is important (with women, especially those who head single parent households making up a large proportion of America's poor). I explore Charles Mills' concept of "white ignorance" in social epistemology. The process of cognition involves perception, conception, memory, testimony, and motivational group interest. Perception is already socialized; to recognize objects in our perceptual field we must draw upon our memory, or background knowledge that appeals to testimony. When drawing upon testimony, we decide which voices to listen to and which to ignore. Our worldviews therefore already pre-shape how we perceive our world. With many students being success oriented, it is important to challenge their ideas that their success is due primarily or solely to their own individual effort. After all, this student has not shaped the field of real estate, banking, etc.

Our cultural emphasis on individual piety and our blindness to systemic problems may leave an individual feeling that he or she is not part of the problem as long as he or she refrains from making racial slurs or showing other forms of overt hostility to members of other racial groups. Because of this, I have students read Peggy MacIntosh's essay on "White Privilege and Male Privilege," and I have students read philosophers including Laurence Thomas, Jeremy Waldron, and Martha Nussbaum who explain how our laws are biased against the homeless and how our ability to feel compassion is shaped by our ideas and judgments about others.

In the case of the homeless, if our judgments are unfair or overly harsh, we may be incapable of compassion for their plight. I also use Jane Addams' essay "On Charitable Effort," to bring home the idea that the homeless can model important virtuous behavior to us, and we can learn many lessons from them about our own shortcomings as well as guidance for us to reform our values and actions.

7. Assessing Service Learning: Servant Leadership, Catholic Social Teaching, and Student Evaluation of Teaching

John Daniels, Director Leadership Development Institute, University of Detroit Mercy

This presentation reviewed five years of service-learning activities, and its impact on six thousand students. How do we measure the impact of service learning? The university's program was borne out of a Kellogg Grant in 1995. By 1999, the program needed to be run with limited university resources. If university funding was to be retained, it was necessary to assess the impact of the program. From 1999 until the present, the process of assessment has deepened and the data base has grown. Faculty research is increasing, and faculty development is encouraged by use of the assessment data. How do we decide what to measure? How do we measure? How do we process our data? In addition to a review of faculty research, we take note of a new dynamic reporting through Microsoft Access. This overview of University of Detroit Mercy's assessment process was a springboard for discussion.

8. Using Person-in-Environment Perspective as an Orientation Tool for Service Learning

Emma T. Lucas-Darby, Ph.D., L.S.W., Department of Social Work, Carlow University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Colleges and universities are including service learning in their curriculum in an effort to support the Mercy practice of service, to develop community partnerships, and to connect the classroom and the community. Service learning is a structured form of experiential education through which students engage in activities that address human and community needs and simultaneously encourage changes in students' knowledge, skills, and values. Service learning promotes the reciprocal learning relation-

ship and sustainable improvements between students as change agents and communities (Nokes, Nickitas, Keida, and Neville, 2005; Lucas, 2000).

Often, college students are placed in unfamiliar communities. A planned orientation will assist students to better understand these communities. By employing the person-in-environment perspective during orientation, students become familiar with the distinct characteristics of a community including an introduction to the history and values of the community. The person-in-environment ecological perspective recognizes mutual interactive relationships between community members, their culture, and the social environment. (Ambrosino, Hefferman, Shuttlesworth and Ambrosino, 2005; Appleby, Colon, Hamilton, 2007).

An exploration of culture, power, stratification, control, and privilege supports one's understanding of oppression (Appleby, Colon and Hamilton, 2007; Allen-Meares and Garvin, 2000; Kirst-Ashman, 2000). Students must be challenged to look outside their "comfort zones" and examine their assumptions and stereotypes (Lucas-Darby, 2006; Spitzer, Kesselring, Ravid, Tamir, Granot and Noam, 1996).

The preplacement orientation prepares students for entry into communities through a personal examination of beliefs and values, including their role as change agents, rather than simply to "volunteer" or carry out a "missionary ideology."

This presentation suggested a format for a culturally sensitive orientation and shared the results of a presurvey and postsurvey used with community service-learning students to determine the usefulness of the orientation and their attitudes toward community characteristics.

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9. Mercy Spirituality, the Foundation for Compassionate Service

Leona Misto, R.S.M., Ed.D., Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island

This purpose of this presentation was both motivational and educational. The forms of compassionate service at Salve Regina University can suggest ways other Mercy institutions can clarify and implement their own concepts and models of service learning.

At this university, discussion of mission, Mercy spirituality, and Catholic social teaching are the focus of an annual twenty-eight-hour retreat for faculty. An understanding of Mercy spirituality begins by examining the concept of mercy as it is developed in the Old and New Testaments. God's covenant with Israel arises out of an experience that God is the God of mercy, the one who initiates a relationship with Israel, who liberates, and who restores to God's people to wholeness This covenant is brought to fulfillment in the Incarnation, and the understanding that Jesus liberates and restores humanity.

Catherine McAuley, drawn by God to continue the divine work of mercy, looked at the world around her and she saw the great need of people suffering from physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional pain and she responded with all her

energy. Catherine's religious institute, the Sisters of Mercy, is devoted to the works of compassion and relief of people's needs.

Mercy spirituality focuses on the poor in whom we find Christ. The Sisters of Mercy are committed to the poor by their fourth vow of service to the poor, sick, and uneducated. Mercy spirituality also introduces a synthesis of contemplation and action. Catherine instructed her sisters to consider prayer and service as reciprocal dimensions of spirituality. She believed that our center is God, the source from whom all our actions should spring.

A third characteristic of Mercy spirituality reflects God's loving kindness. The love of God for us makes possible love for ourselves, and these together make possible our love for others. This love entails action and cannot exist only in words. So important was the virtue of charity to Catherine that she devoted an entire chapter to the subject in the Rule she wrote as a guide for the life of her community.

These components of Mercy spirituality are the foundation for compassionate service that engages both faculty and students.

10. Mobilizing Mercy beyond Borders

Marilyn Lacey, R.S.M., Executive Director of Mercy Beyond Borders, Santa Clara, California

"Mobilizing Mercy Beyond Borders" brings fresh energy and new possibilities for global reach to social justice work on Mercy campuses. It addressed four core questions:

- How can the crucial concerns of the Sisters of Mercy be translated in service learning and community education activities?
- How important is institutional support to success and what kinds are best?
- What agencies of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas are helpful partners in international projects?
- How can service learning and community education on a Mercy campus differ from similar activities on other Catholic campuses?

The presentation explained how a new organization, Mercy Beyond Borders, has been formed with a goal of mobilizing Mercy "families" throughout the U.S. to alleviate conditions of extreme poverty in developing countries (e.g., among refugees, migrants, internally displaced populations, victims of human trafficking, former child soldiers, persons suffering from HIV/AIDS). It examined how involvement in Mercy Beyond Borders gives campuses of higher education a way to translate Mercy vision and critical concerns into a practical, achievable action involving faculty and students. It explored a range of potential opportunities through Mercy Beyond Borders for colleges and universities, including faculty, students, and alumni and offering opportunities such as personnel exchanges, sharing of resources, development of projects and research ideas, campus campaigns, advocacy efforts, and short immersion experiences in places like rural Cambodia and the slums of Nairobi. God's mercy is made real when people stand in solidarity with the poor.

11. Overview of How to Incorporate Service Learning into the Curriculum

Callie Watson and Kristin Haas, College of St. Mary, Omaha, Nebraska

The occupational therapy department at College of St. Mary recognizes the need for an engagement strategy that involves students and faculty in service-learning activities throughout the curriculum. This presentation focused on how to structure service-learning activities progressively throughout a curriculum. Many examples were offered, including a logic model to aid in assessment and outcomes and examples of curricular threads. In addition, several examples were outlined of service learning projects that were already executed within the department of occupational therapy. Presenters also described the benefits and barriers of service learning to an entire curriculum.

Presenters explored collaboration with community partners in developing a program of service learning. A collaborative and symbiotic model drives service learning, and students play a critical role in developing these relationships. Some strategies for promoting this collaboration were discussed.

12. Integrating Academic and Student Life Around the Call to Service

Joseph F. Gower, Ph.D. Provost, Michael F. Gross, Ph.D., Associate Provost, Evelyn Saul Quinn, M.Ed., M.S.W., Associate Provost, Georgian Court University, New Jersey

Within the last few years, Georgian Court University has taken several substantial steps toward integrating academic and student life around a call to service. In fall 2007, a new general education program was put into place with required courses in philosophy, ethics, religious studies, and women and gender. The first year seminar course was made mandatory and increased from two to three credits, and a one-credit transfer seminar course was instituted. Both courses include an introduction to service and the Mercy tradition. In addition, undergraduates must now complete at least two experiential learning requirements, one of which is required to be service learning taught as part of a course. An Integrated Academic and Student Life Framework, piloted in the fall 2008 semester, provides a mechanism to coordinate student learning and development. The aim is to establish a comprehensive learning model that integrates the total education of each student, embracing intellectual, personal, social, and professional areas of growth. This format is grounded in Georgian Court University's Student Learning Goals and linked to the Professional Standards of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). The framework provides a list of example courses and student life experiences that will help the student achieve the learning goals. Students will be advised each semester on ways to attain the learning goals and will be able to document their achievements through an e-portfolio.

13. Trusteeship as a Path to Mercy-Core Mission and Service Learning

Marie Michele Donnelly, R.S.M., Lisa Fontenelli, Patricia Koch, and Ray Shea

Each of the presenters is a current trustee of Georgian Court University, and all have different backgrounds, educational histories and career paths. Each trustee spoke about what motivated them to take on the responsibility of trusteeship. This involves the matter of stewardship of Mercy core values, and what it means to be a steward of Mercy mission.

Several values were highlighted. Awareness that all is gift, and that a trustee works in consciousness that all has been given. Gratitude for gifts received leads to a greater spirit of giving. Prayer is relationship with God who is the heart of mercy. Sacrificial giving arises from an awareness of our identity as stewards, and people are moved to share because they desire mercy, not sacrifice. Judgment is the gift for distinguishing what is really necessary. Love is the motivation for being stewards of the Mercy mission, and responding by self-giving in the spirit of being merciful persons.

Each trustee has a different reason for becoming a board member and a distinct way of expressing commitment. For example, one concentrates on the comprehensive, arduous and time-consuming accreditation process. Another brings experience in finance with the nonprofit higher education sector. A third has experience in higher education, counseling, and spirituality, using that background to build a more cohesive board.

Despite their differences in background all, regard the stewardship as so important that it becomes a value, and core personal motivator. The dedication to Mercy mission by serving as trustee leads to personal growth and a sense that this work leads to fulfillment of what one is capable of becoming.

Poster Presentations
Pedagogical Strategies and Classroom Practices

15. Service Learning: The Right Fit in Teacher Preparation

Janice M. Rey, Ed.D., Saint Joseph's College of Maine, Standish, Maine

Furco (2000) distinguished service learning "by the intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring." For the past two years, Saint Joseph's College and Portland Housing have embarked on a reciprocal arrangement that benefits all the stakeholders.

About twenty miles form the rural residential campus, the city operates after-school study centers for children living in subsidized housing. The population surrounding these centers is mostly made up of refugees who have fled their homeland and come to the United States. The children of these families frequent the centers after school. On-site coordinators assist students with homework, but welcome additional academic programs. Our teacher preparation program provided incremental field experiences throughout a four-year undergraduate program; however, the field placements mirrored a somewhat homogeneous population, similar to the college itself. Merryfield (2000) maintained that colleges and universities were not producing graduates with the knowledge of equity, diversity, and global connectedness. Service learning with Portland Housing Authority provided a field experience that more closely reflected the realities of society.

What initially began as a voluntary activity is now a required aspect of the science and math methods courses. Preservice teachers continue to prepare lessons in math and science as part of their coursework. With service learning, the teachers-in-training offer six weeks of science and math lessons at the study centers in Portland. Preservice teachers experience teaching students in a nontraditional setting with a population culturally different from themselves and study center participants solve problems and investigate questions that emphasize essential concepts and skills.

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16. Emergency Plan Advertisements for the Residents of a Pennsylvania Borough

John N. Mellon, Misericordia University, Dallas, Pennsylvania

"No community is immune from emergencies. This presentation guide suggests ways a marketing course might contribute to emergency management" (Ready Campus, 93). "A concrete example follows of how emergency management can be comprehensively integrated into a basic marketing advertising course, particularly through use of service learning. The necessary subject matter is addressed and is enhanced with the knowledge and activities that surround the successful preparation for and response to crisis" (Ready Campus, 74).

The course title in which this service-learning project was embedded was "Advertising and Sales Promotion," and its description was: "A comprehensive study of the theory and practical applications of advertising and promotions, as part of an integrated marketing communications strategy, for businesses, nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Relationship building and ethical issues will be addressed."

Course objectives: At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

- To develop media materials to educate and inform a borough of Pennsylvania as to what to do in the case of an emergency
- To describe and construct the media elements of an advertising plan for a product or service, representative of a business, nonprofit organization or government agency

Service Learning Objectives:

- Interview the Borough of Luzerne and the County of Luzerne EMS representatives, a sample of the borough's residents, and a sample of the borough council members, to gain a solid understanding of an emergency plan from the borough, county, and residents perspective
- Each student group, using skills, knowledge, and competencies achieved within the BUS 340 Advertising and Promotions course, will determine how the specific emergency management information should be displayed within a brochure, flyer, billboard, and radio announcement to educate and inform the borough residents as to what to do in the case of an emergency.
- The students will construct a complete emergency plan brochure, flier, billboard, and radio announcement.

The presentation includes the course syllabus with the sequence of steps and semester timeframe for completing the emergency plan media pieces. Additionally, student-created specific media pieces for two complete emergency plans comprising a brochure, flyer, billboard, and radio public safety announcement will highlight the presentation. The professional media printing was funded by a $4000 *Ready Campus Grant.*

Being able to communicate with people concerning what to do within their borough when an emergency crisis occurs is the subject of this presentation. This presentation not only explains the relationship between the discipline of marketing, service learning, and emergency preparedness. It also explains the relationship between marketing and understanding community members' needs and meeting those needs (Ready Campus, 57).

17. Synergism in Combining Service Learning, Scholarship, Social Change, and Career Preparation

Brenda Hage, Ph.D., C.R.N.P. and Fred Croop, M.B.A., C.P.A., C.M.A., Misericordia University, Dallas, Pennsylvania

Faculty members in Health Science and Business at Misericordia University recognized a need to enhance crosscultural competency in professional practice among their students. After researching the approaches to accomplishing this objective, it was decided that optimal results would come from integrating students' practice of their disciplines with a cultural immersion experience in a richly diverse population. Through contacts the faculty members had with Sisters of Mercy in Guyana, South America, twelve students were placed in practice in Guyana as a culminating experience of a semester-long three-credit course. The health care institutions, social service agencies , and other entities in which students worked made possible the designation of the course as service learning. The faculty also decided that the project represented an opportunity to study the effects of the experience on the cultural competency of the participants.

The research findings could be disseminated for the benefit of other educators interested in the use of immersion and service learning in addressing the need for students to develop cultural competency in professional practice. In analyzing the outcomes of the initiative, required activities related to the service learning components of the students' experiences made possible a level of achievement related to cultural competency in

professional practice that would not have been possible without the inclusion of service learning.

The presenters discussed how to foster synergy among service learning, cultural competency in professional practice, and scholarship in a course experience.

18. Merciful Practices of a Business Program: Looking In, Reaching Out

Tracy Warrington, D.B.A., Arleen Nicholas, Ph.D., Judith Keenan, Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island

This session provided a case study of the Salve Regina University Business Studies and Economics Department and how it evolved over the last six years to better integrate the University's mercy mission for department members—students, faculty, and staff.

The session began with a working definition of "mercy," interpretation of the Salve Regina University mission statement, and the Business Studies and Economics Department mission-integration statement. Curricular issues focused on identifying and recognizing social injustices within the discipline of business, discussing the issues related to the injustices and potential solutions, and then giving students the ability to create and implement their own solutions. The active experiences facilitated by the Business and Economics Department are carefully crafted to encapsulate the mercy mission. For example, nonprofit organizations that operate with lean staff and small budgets are often used as "clients" and paired with students who have the skills required to accomplish the tasks needed by the organization.

Finally, the challenges and opportunities presented by offering action-based service-learning programs were addressed. Challenges included managing "clients," engaging students, and integrating the learning process into the activity. Opportunities also exist: providing students a chance to practice what they have learned, increasing retention of concepts they have learned, providing students with activities that will enhance their resumes, and developing a culture of mercy to differentiate Mercy business programs from competitors.

19. Planning for Academic Excellence through Service Learning in Teacher Preparation Programs

See text by Lynn DeCapua, Ph.D., Christine Davis, Ed.D., and Carol Scelza, Ed.D., Georgian Court University, New Jersey

20. Authentic Discipleship: An Integration of Civic Engagement, Relationship Building, Theological Reflection, and Social Analysis

Dr. Karen Elliott, C.PP.S. and Jennifer Discher, Mercy College of Northwest Ohio, Toledo, Ohio

As a result of a desire to incorporate service learning, the presenters developed a course centered on the issue of homelessness—Interdisciplinary Studies 399: Homelessness and Service Learning. The course incorporated sociology, religion, and spirituality. Service learning theory was the major pedagogical method. The learning objectives of the course included relating college core values to the study of social issues and recognizing the responsibilities of citizenship afforded by higher education. Another aim was promoting faith-based decision making out of the theological and biblical mandate for service. Students were also taught to integrate both personal and professional goals for service.

Service learning opportunities included local community placements and the development and implementation by the presenters of an alternative spring break experience. The alternative spring break experience consisted of a week-long trip to the Southwest to work with social service agencies, social justice groups, and faith-based organizations that serve homeless populations. The service-oriented course was evaluated using a variety of assessment methods including theological reflection, journaling, presentations, and papers. This project turned out to be a successful way to achieve the learning objectives.

21. The Story of Service Learning in a Small Parochial School on the Southside of Chicago

Eileen Quinn Knight, Ph.D., St. Xavier University, Chicago, Illinois; Carolyn Majorowski, M.A.; and Mariagnes Menden, M.A., Coprincipals of St. Nicholas of Tolentine School, Chicago, Illinois

This presentation outlined the service-learning project of two graduate students, to teach the teachers at the elementary school how to speak Spanish so that the entire school community could be engaged in the values supported by the Catholic, Christian, and Mercy identity of the school. The teachers had requested this service, and recognized that this particular parish had shifted from Irish to Polish to Hispanic majorities over a twenty-five year period.

Also featured was the service-learning project of undergraduates who tutored the St. Nicholas school students in math. This project aimed at fulfilling the school's core value of excellence.

One of the professors at the university gave parents a presentation on effective parenting skills, and how to teach their children Catholic, Christian values. The principals also engaged in a service-learning project as alumni of St. Xavier University, demonstrating the effectiveness of the university's program and core values, especially of hospitality.

One of the graduate students in the Anthropology of Education course attended a variety of meetings at St. Nicholas of Tolentine school to observe how the core values were being manifested.

22. The Reflective Participant in Service Learning

Dr. Kristin Hass, O.T.D., O.T.R./L and Dr. Callie Watson, O.T.D., O.T.R./L., College of St. Mary, Omaha, Nebraska

Two occupational therapists conducted this presentation. The aim was to apply classroom learning to real life. It is essential for students to get into the community and explore application of their knowledge through service learning. An assessment of what students and participants are learning is essential to any service-learning course. This presentation outlined strategies for encouraging reflection on what helps participants—educators and students alike—to connect their experience to real life. Key questions are "What?" "So what?" and "Now what?"

These questions are ways to challenge participants to move beyond surface reflection and make deeper connections. Being able to articulate thoughts, feelings, and emotions is important to any service-learning program assessment. The objectives for this presentation included: 1) identifying strategies for appropriate reflection, 2) maximizing an educator's ability to get students to reflect honestly, 3) incorporating participants' reflection into the overall program assessment, 4) linking a theory of reflection to practice.

23. Teaching Women to Teach Women the Importance of a Safe Sleep Environment for Infants: A Story of Reaching Out to Others

Mary Kay Smid, M.S.N., R.N., C.N.E., College of St. Mary, Omaha, Nebraska, and Kristin Kult, B.S.N., R.N., Children's Hospital, Omaha, Nebraska

The role of nurse as teacher plays a significant part in maintaining wellness of clients. In order to see this role as important, students must build professional confidence in the ability to teach healthcare content to clients. Knowledge base, acquired skills and attitude must first be learned so that the student can teach knowledge and skills and influence attitude in client(s). For the student, the knowledge base comes from evidence-based practice and scientific evidence, adding credibility to teaching content. Skills needed would include therapeutic communication, needs assessment, and organization of content for presentation. Student attitude must include the importance of the content, openness to client need and confidence in the ability that content taught will make a difference in the health of the client. When the student utilizes the principles of a health promotion model (N. Pender, 1982, 2006) to assist clients to improve their health status, they increase professional confidence to teach and demonstrate a positive level of

self efficacy (A. Bandura, 1977). When the service-learning model (Robert Sigmon, 1996) is added, reflection produces themes that describe feelings of self efficacy.

In an effort to: support the role of the nurse as teacher, build professional confidence in nursing students' ability to teach, and encourage service learning this mixed method study will: "explore nursing students' perceived self efficacy related to client teaching following participation in a service learning project."

Nursing students enrolled in a maternal-child nursing course in a college in the Midwest were invited to participate in this study. Forty-two of the fifty-three invited students completed this project. Discussion of limitations and strengths of the project will be described. Results of data analysis will be described and discussed. Areas of further research study will be explored.

24. The Perils and Rewards of Integrating Service Learning into an English Department

Mary Chinery, Ph.D., Chair, Department of English and Communication, Georgian Court University, New Jersey

In 2002, as part of the new requirements for a course in literature, the Department of English and Communications at the university initiated a service-learning project. Its purpose was to remind English majors of their rights and responsibilities. Students in the class agreed on a fairly easy project. Some class time was provided for organization, but the project was completed outside of class. Our attempts were simple: a project to read to children at a children's hospital, a book drive for a battered women's shelter, poetry lessons at the local day school, and a book drive for members of the military serving in Iraq.

There were numerous pitfalls. We discovered, first of all, that most English majors need every minute to learn the content of the course, such as literary terms, research techniques, and background to literary theory. We learned that students were not too thrilled about engaging in a service-learning project, believing they were far too busy with school, jobs, and home life. A number of students did not complete the project. Still others lied about doing so. With the addition of a service-learning coordinator at Georgian Court, the project was reorganized.

The presentation reviewed the perils and rewards of adding service learning to the English major (and other humanities), and discussed revisions to the project. It incorporated research on service learning, in particular, research on service learning in a literature department. And there was a brief survey of the students and faculty who participated in the projects.

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25. Weaving Self-Directed Learning Components into a Service Learning Course

Cristy Daniel, M.S., O.T.R./L., Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, College of St. Mary, Omaha, Nebraska

This presentation outlined how self-directed learning components were integrated into a service learning course for senior level occupational therapy students. Occupational therapists Herge and Milbourne (1999) discussed utilization of a self-directed learning model within fieldwork education in occupational therapy programs. By using this model, "the learner is responsible for identifying their learning needs and for developing a strategy to meet those needs." This was the philosophy behind designing a service-learning course in which

the student is the captain of his or her own voyage of learning. This journey allows the student to discover who they are, what occupational therapy is, and what the needs of their community are. Students must then "put the pieces of the puzzle together" in order to see how occupational therapy can address the organization's needs. This challenges students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. This requires advanced level communication, problem solving and clinical reasoning skills. Ultimately, this process prepares students for advanced level coursework and for future fieldwork experiences. The learning objectives for this course include:

- Identifying a community-based organization in which to serve
- Completing a "mini" needs analysis of the organization
- Identifying how occupational therapy can address the organization's needs
- Meeting the organization's needs through education of staff or clientele, program development, or resource development
- Developing a tool for program evaluation
- Reflecting on experience through documentation in a professional portfolio and in a presentation to faculty and peers.

In addition to reviewing these learning objectives, this presentation also suggested additional ideas on how to integrate self-directed components into other service-learning courses to meet student and curricular needs.

26. Introducing Students to Social Analysis and Theological Reflection: Foundations for Facilitators of Service Learning at Colleges and Universities Founded or Sponsored by Sisters of Mercy

Jennifer Reed-Bouley, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Theology and Director, Service-Learning Program, College of St. Mary, Omaha, Nebraska

Service learning holds promise to develop students' understanding of their academic disciplines and commitment to civic responsibility, as well as to foster colleges' and universities' engagement with the communities in which they exist. For Catholic colleges and universities, service learning also has the potential to teach values congruent with Catholic mission and identity, and specifically to demonstrate the relevance of Catholic social teaching to contemporary social issues.

This session offered an overview of "Introducing Students to Social Analysis and Theological Reflection: Foundations for Facilitators of Service Learning at Colleges and Universities Founded or Sponsored by Sisters of Mercy," a guide coauthored by Jennifer and Ken Reed-Bouley. The guide can be accessed from the website of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education at http://www.mercyhighered.org/documents/guide3.pdf.

The session first addressed why social analysis and theological reflection are difficult yet important processes for college students. Reflection challenges students' prior knowledge, helps them to contextualize their experiences of service, and guards against overly individualistic interpretations of suffering and remedies to social injustices.

The session provided an overview of the guide's five parts: a discussion of the congruence between the hallmarks of Mercy Higher Education and service-learning; an overview of scripture and Catholic social teaching as two resources for facilitating social analysis and theological reflection; a model for facilitating social analysis; recommendations for facilitating theological reflection; and a sample plan that can be adapted for curricular and cocurricular service-learning projects.

27. Making Critical and Civic Connections Clear: Service Learning in the Composition Classroom

Dr. Marnie Sullivan and Sr. Michele Marie Shroeck, R.S.M., Mercyhurst College, Erie, Pennsylvania

Presenters outlined the requirements of a writing course that integrates ten hours of service learning to develop a writing process that incorporates work at sites related to the elderly, to children and youth, and to the homeless in Erie County.

Development of critical thinking as conscious review and critical analysis is enhanced when students engage in first hand experience, when their writing is for real audiences, when they are challenged to participate in activities that promote reflection, and when they are given the chance to be community builders.

Reflection questions for students included:

- Describe a typical day at your service site. What do you feel like when you're there?
- Has the service provided any insights into the people who provide service to others? What type of person does it take to be successful at the type of service you provided?
- If you were the leader or supervisor at your site, would you have team members do anything differently than what you are doing, now? Would you treat them differently? Would you treat the clients or patrons differently?
- How do people at your site see you? As a staff member? As a friend? How do you know? How similar is your impression of yourself to the impressions others seem to have of you?
- How have your activities during a typical day at your site changed or evolved over time?
- How is this service related to your studies? To your career objectives? To your life after college?
- What happened that made you feel you would (or would not) like to do this for a career?
- What compliments have you been given and what did they mean to you? How did you react?
- What criticisms have you been given and what did they mean to you? How did you react?
- What's the most difficult part of your project? Compare this to what you imagined the challenges to be before you began your service (in-class writing).
- What have you learned about yourself during your service?
- Write about a person at your site whom you find to be interesting or challenging. Describe them thoroughly and explain why you find them engaging or difficult.

Quotes from student papers show their reaction to experiences at Emmaus Soup Kitchen, a neighborhood Art House, and a Boys and Girls Club. With the focus on writing for the community, research papers on elder issues treated end of life questions, such as the advantages of home care versus a nursing home, maintaining quality of life and the challenges of health insurance. Another set on the topic of children and youth described the effects of nutrition, appropriate forms of discipline and the importance of physical touch. A third set on hunger and homelessness discussed the effectiveness of the welfare system, barriers to nutrition and the quality of social services.

31. Ideas for Making Service Part of Our Mission

Carol N. Scelza Ed.D., Associate Professor, School of Education Georgian Court University, New Jersey

The objective of this poster presentation was to demonstrate how to incorporate service into one's busy routine by using skills, talents, and hobbies to serve others.

This poster presentation consisted of three major categories: Use Your Skills, Use Your Talents, and Use Your Hobbies. (Photographs and illustrations were displayed under each category.) The premise behind the model is that everyone has different skills, talents, and hobbies. If one looks at each of one's abilities and how that ability could serve others, service becomes much easier. The examples presented on the poster were based on the presenter's personal and professional experiences and abilities. The hope is that participants can examine their own skills, talents, and hobbies and determine how they can translate them into serving others.

Use Your Skills

Most of us are fortunate in that we can read, write, and speak. Examples of how to use these skills for service were presented as follows:

- Read to children in schools
- Read to children in library story hours

- Read to children in hospitals
- Teach a child who is struggling to learn to read or write
- Participate in Read across America on March 2 every year
- Volunteer in a library
- Teach an adult to read (Literacy Volunteers of America)
- Do a book talk/discussion at a senior citizen home or community center
- Research historic sites and donate the research to your local historical society
- Serve on committees to present informed views
- Be active in professional and/or community organizations
- Write an article for a newspaper or magazine
- Write a book

Use Your Talents

Everyone has talents. Identify your talents and use them to serve others in the community.

- Share your knowledge through speaking engagements at community organizations, schools, and senior citizen homes
- Share your musical talents
- Share your vocal talents
- Share your writing talent
- Share your acting abilities in local theater
- Share your physical skills by teaching an exercise or swimming class
- Share your creative abilities by demonstrating floral arrangements, donating floral arrangements to charities or giving gardening lectures.

Use Your Hobbies

Hobbies are usually personal leisure activities, but can be used for service.

- Plant and maintain a community garden or plot
- Participate with a group in a community garden
- Work on a group quilt to raise money for a charity
- Take photographs for a community or church affair and donate them to the group
- Do a demonstration of your hobby at a Girl Scout, Boy Scout, 4-H meeting or senior citizen meeting
- Write an article on your hobby for the local newspaper
- Teach a class on you hobby at the local adult school
- Donate a piece of artwork or give a lecture/demonstration on an artistic medium

Incorporating service into your routine not only provides contributions to others, but moreover, gives one the tremendous sense of satisfaction that comes from helping others and contributing to the community.

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Other presenters: Linda Kardos, Georgian Court University, Rumu DasGupta, Georgian Court University

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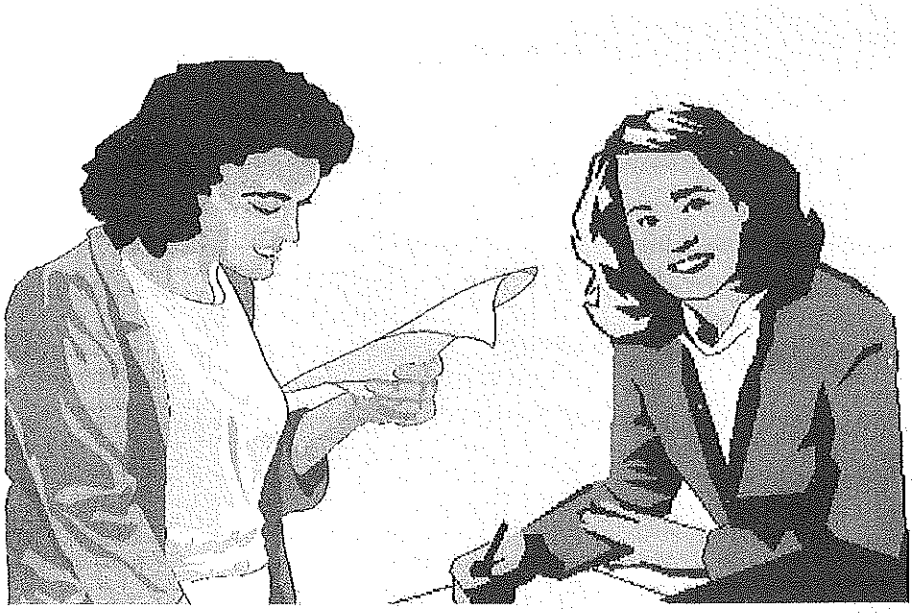

MERCY ASSOCIATION IN SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

MAST, the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology, met for the first time in June 1987 at Gwynedd-Mercy College in Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania. Called together by Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. and Mary Ann Getty, twenty Mercy theologians and Scripture scholars from fourteen regional communities formally established the organization to provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation among Sisters of Mercy and associates. The stated purpose of the organization is to promote studies and research in Scripture, theology, and related fields; to support its members in scholarly pursuits through study, writing, teaching, and administration; and to provide a means for members to address current issues within the context of their related disciplines.

MAST has been meeting annually since then, and the organization now numbers fifty, with members living and working in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States. Marilyn King, R.S.M., currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its 23rd annual meeting **June 19-21, 2009, at College of St. Mary in Omaha, Nebraska,** and its 24th annual meeting in **Philadelphia at St. Rafaela Center, June 18-20, 2010.**

Members work on a variety of task forces related to their scholarly discipline. Present task forces include: Scripture, healthcare ethics, and spirituality. In addition, the members seek to be of service to the Institute by providing a forum for ongoing theological education.

Membership dues are $25 per year, payable to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST Treasurer, Sisters of Mercy, 535 Sacramento Street, Auburn, CA 95603. Email: mhoward@mercysisters.org

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Since 1991, *The MAST Journal* has been published three times a year. Members of the organization serve on the journal's editorial board on a rotating basis, and several members have taken responsibility over the years to edit individual issues. Maryanne Stevens, R.S.M., was the founding editor of the journal, and Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., currently serves in that capacity. Marilyn King, R.S.M., currently serves as MAST's executive director.

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