

Service-learning as a path to virtue: The ideal orator in professional communication.

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Service-Learning as a Path to Virtue: The Ideal Orator in Professional Com

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This article examines service-learning as a means to bridge the gap between courses in the curriculum such as professional communication, which are market-economy, and the ideal of public service. By outlining ways in which learning has been used in the professional communication field, and prob concerns with its use, the author explores the charge of “vocationalism.” T

connection between rhetoric and professional communication is developed in a detailed case study analysis covering the author's partnership with a non-profit organization over several semesters. The author suggests that when used with reflection, service-learning can be a path toward virtue for students, helping to inculcate a public service ideal.

In a recent article, V. A. Howard, relying on a detailed study by Engell and I (1998), decries "the market-model university" and its adverse effects on the humanities. According to Howard (1999), the market-model leads to "pegboard vocationalism," a term he coined to describe a belief held by many students and parents that high school's primary responsibility is to prepare students to fit into an array of job slots. In his opinion, this view has led to a decline in the enrollment in and a devaluing of the humanities, resulting in coarsening values and a general loss of concern for liberal arts ideals (p. 125).

As a professional writing program director in an English department at a non-profit, technological, research-oriented university, I read Howard's article with interest. The modifier "professional" is integral to my work: I am responsible for preparing students for "job slots." Yet, while acknowledging that responsibility, I reject the notion that my colleagues and I teach, despite its clearly practical nature, must be vocational in a pejorative sense. Nor do I believe that, even if a field has a practical approach to the economy, such a field must, by its nature, devalue the ideals of public service. My work is predicated upon a strong connection between my field and classical rhetoric. This connection opens up opportunities for examining the civic values of rhetorical education from classical rhetoricians (e.g., Aristotle, Quintilian, Isocrates, Cicero) and integrating them into current pedagogy.

### Classical Rhetoric and Service-Learning

Classical rhetoricians were concerned with preparing young men for their roles as citizens by

teaching them to be skilled persuasive speakers in various situations (e.g., forensic and ceremonial) for both public and private audiences. They taught practical rhetoric to be used for the common good. For instance, in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle addressed the proper conduct in relation to activities that maintain community life (1954; Miller, 1996). He spoke of the orator's duty to "attempt not only to prove the points mentioned but also to show that the good or the harm, the honor or disgrace, the justice or injustice is not small" (1954, 1359b19-23). Learning rhetoric was "useful" (1355b9), but it also had a "purpose" (1355b19).

Other classical rhetoricians and educators, such as Isocrates and Quintilian, also had goals for teaching rhetoric. Isocrates (1990) sought to use rhetoric and oratory to

interests that bind communities together (Papillon, 1995), arguing that the discourse . . . is the source of most of our blessings. . . . and if it were not for should not be able to live together” (p. 50). In *De Oratore*, Cicero (1969) built on Aristotle and Isocrates by promoting the need to prepare orators— citizens—uniting wisdom and eloquence and integrating theoretical and practical knowledge to shape the community’s political life. According to Cicero, the orators’ importance is in their ability to “bring help to the suppliant, to raise up those that are cast down, to bestow security, to set free from peril, to maintain men in their civil rights” (Cicero, 1969). Quintilian (1972) extended Cicero’s ideals to produce speakers and writers who would achieve communities’ best aims at heart (Murphy, 1987). In his *Institutes of Oratory*, Quintilian explained that he wanted each orator,

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“whose character [he was] seeking to mould, [to] be . . . a true statesman, not in the discussions of study, but in the actual practice and experience of life” (p. 126). In my mind this could only happen with “the broadest education,” (p. 126) which is applied to human affairs. All these rhetoricians are part of a tradition that has shaped our western educational system’s core (Barber, 1992, 1994; Halloran, 1964), a tradition rich with evidence that higher education’s mission is general practical service to society (Boyer, 1990; Wallenfelt, 1986; Waterman, 1997).

Many scholars and educators in my field see professional communication as rhetoric’s direct descendant (Deans, 2000; Halloran, 1976; Johnson, 1998; Miller & Reynolds, 1992; Whitburn, 1984). As a result, we see our mission as practical and applied. Richard Bernstein calls the “high” sense: we see it tied to the Aristotelian notion of rhetoric which involves human conduct (C. Miller, 1989; T. Miller, 1991). This connects to a recent movement for many in our field to consider service-learning as a pedagogical strategy, which enables us not only to teach our students practical skills but also to address the civic issues involved in using those skills. Thus, we see our goal in implementing service-learning as similar to those of Isocrates and Quintilian: to teach a useful skill set, but we also want to inculcate a sense of civic idealism.

Many educators, to include Howard, see servicelearning as having a strength for the humanities and liberal education in general (e.g., Barber, 1992; Chubb & Taylor, 1995, to name just a few). I have seen its positive effects, and in this paper I will interrogate the value of servicelearning pedagogy as a bridge between a practical “market-driven” focus and a humanistic, serviceoriented one when teaching

course. In so doing, I outline ways in which service-learning has been used to address problems and concerns with its use, and offer, by presenting a case study of its use, how service-learning may serve to unite conflicting goals embedded in the terms “service” and “learning.” My goal is to address the tensions at the hyphen—between service and learning, organizations and clients, workplace preparation and education—and to show that, when used with care and reflection, service-learning can be a path toward virtue and can create ideal orators in the classical sense defined by Quintilian (1972): orators and citizens who put their knowledge and skills to the service of the common good.

Because the study of rhetoric has been intimately connected with civic participation and service

since the 5th century B.C.E, an infusion of contemporary theory and practice into service learning does not revitalize my field so much as it builds upon a pedagogical praxis that is two-and-a-half millennia old. By integrating the “two complementary components—community action, the ‘service,’ and efforts to learn from that action and critical reflection learned to existing knowledge, the ‘learning,’” (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999, p. 10), these more professional, market-driven fields can create a “symbiotic relationship” (Migliore, quoted in Jacoby, 1996, p. 5) not only between the two concepts, but also between those served and those serving (Coles, 1993).

### The Debate about Vocationalism

The accusation that my field, professional communication, is utilitarian is quite common, particularly among members of my own department, many of whom teach literature, one field that Howard points to as declining or threatened. It is interesting that concerns about the professional communication field do not come from those outside our field. In a recent article in *Technical Communication*, one of the field’s top journals, Jack Bushnell (1999) argues that we in professional communication have “become training departments for corporate ‘clients’ who give us with internships and fellowships for our students, and ever increasing numbers of good-paying jobs for our graduates” (pp. 175-76). As “training departments that we are losing sight of our ‘mission as college and university teachers . . . to prepare our students to be critical thinkers,” who are responsible not only for reporting information to serve their companies but also for writing future decisions that will affect larger communities (p. 177). Bushnell’s concerns are neither new nor unique to members of our field. Others who approach our field from very different theoretical positions, such as Patrick Moore (1999), have raised similar concerns about the role of teachers, about “how professors define technical communication,” and about how that definition influences what gets taught (pp. 211-12). Moore, for example, also

the issue of training; however, he is concerned that, due to an over-emphasis on practice and theory, we are not preparing our students effectively enough to enter the workforce. This is a position almost diametrically opposite, in aim and curricular emphasis, to that of Bushnell's. Taken as two competing positions inside our discipline, Moore and Bushnell represent the horns of a dilemma that Carolyn Miller (1989) described over a decade ago when she explained that "courses and programs in

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technical writing are both praised and damned for being 'practical,'" which "suggests a certain attitude or mode of learning" (p. 14).

As a teacher and program administrator, I take the debate about training our students seriously. The three issues outlined above—our "mission as college and university teachers," the question of "how professors define technical communication," and the attitudes we have toward learning—are concerns, I would argue, that we cannot take lightly. We in professional communication are at a critical place in our field's development (Staples, 1999), and I am thankful for voices such as Bushnell and Miller. They are creating necessary conversation about our disciplinary goals, concerns, and how this conversation is also applicable beyond our field. Because our programs are growing and our influence and out of the academy is increasing, along with the status of our graduate programs (Staples, 1997), those of us in the more practical fields need to talk about curricula and the definitions we can agree upon in order to "meet the disciplinary responsibility of preparing students to meet citizenship and workplace responsibility with competence as well as with knowledge and skill" (Meyer & Bernhardt, 1997; Staples, 1999, p. 161). This responsibility is critical as we work to create what Billie Wahlstrom (1997) calls a "new vision of our discipline" (p. 303), one in which professional communication is an educated decision maker(s) whose professional decisions are informed by critical thinking skills, theory, application, ethics, communication ability, and knowledge of technology," (Staples & Ornatowski, 1997, p. xii) so that they may be valued and respected in their workplaces and society.

Service-learning is a topic in recent curricular discussions outlining ways in which professional and technical writing might prepare students to think critically and act as educated decision makers. In the past five years, educators have begun to explore that service-learning, used in what Deans (2000) has called "writing for the real world," has the potential to improve academic learning for, and inculcate civic identity in professional communication courses (Hafer, 1999; Heilker, 1997; Hensor,

Huckin, 1997; Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999).<sup>3</sup> Based upon the case studies and my own experience with this pedagogy, I am convinced that service-learning, when done fully and reflectively, helps students develop the critical thinking skills Busch (1989) advocates; it also prepares students for the workplace in a more comprehensive way than many other pedagogical strategies because students apply what they have learned while working with real audiences. Most

importantly, it helps students to meet their citizenship responsibilities. Service-learning pedagogy enables us to make our courses “a matter of conduct rather than [italics in original] and to bridge the theory/praxis and academe/workplace divide” (Busch, 1989) highlighted because it is practical in the fullest sense (p. 23). Students gain the skills they’ll need in the workplace, and they gain a practical wisdom (phronesis) that enables them to be critical citizens.

Service-learning is a valuable and powerful pedagogy, but integrating it fully and reflectively into professional/technical communication courses is not easy. There is evidence for its value mounts, so does the evidence for problems and concerns associated with it. For example, the logistics of working with organizations in the community is often complicated; and coordinating projects requires significant effort and time from students, and community partners. There are also problems associated with service-learning that are not done well. Such problems may increase the divide between academe and the community, particularly if the students’ projects are done poorly or if the students believe that their projects would have been better if the community partners were more available.

Logistics and time are just a few of the problems. Others include asking students to work for communities they do not know, which can lead to frustration for both students and the community partners (Bacon, 1997). Then there are problems in motivating students to go beyond the instrumental course goals. Sometimes, even when service-learning is well planned, some students will see service as “lame” because they see the value of the (or their own) is limited to “improv[ing] [their] technical skills” (Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999, p. 391). If we, as educators, accept that argument about the value of technical skills and production, still more problems may occur because of the vocational or credential building emphasis. With that emphasis, students may lose sight of the service altogether, or so minimize its value that the civic learning goals are lost (Adler-Kassner & Collins, 1994; Lisman, 1998; Mattson, 1998). Finally, if we call it service, but refer to it as volunteering rather than as working to effect change, students may simply see their service as a charitable contribution. While charity has many positive features, focusing on volunteering tends to result in a sense of altruism in students that “feel good about themselves and their work,” (as did one of my business writing students), but few long-term benefits for the community or society result.

These problems and concerns are real; I have

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experienced them all in courses I have taught using service-learning pedagogy. These problems can be overcome, and when they are, the benefits to students, the community, and the discipline are worth the effort. Students who participate in a class that balances service and learning and establishes partnerships with community organizations are more likely to become citizens who use their rhetorical abilities for society's good. They become rhetoricians for change (Cushman, 1999).

I intend for this essay to continue the conversation about the need for curriculum reform by extending and modifying the argument advanced by Matthews and Zinn (1999) that we integrate servicelearning into our curricula. Some of their suggestions are excellent, particularly the recommendation to “develop and maintain close relationships with...nonprofit organizations” over extended periods (p. 401). Other suggestions, such as how to accomplish this integration, however, such as requiring students to take these service-learning courses or offering a two-semester sequence, are problematic (p. 397-400). If the reason for integrating servicelearning lies in our desire to prepare students to meet citizenship and workplace responsibilities, limiting enrollment to a select group of students, such as communication majors/minors (and we should consider it), but it would limit access to most students who take our technical and business writing courses and those in other departments cannot afford. Thus, instead of complicating the curriculum with additional hurdles or additional courses, I argue that most solutions lie within individual faculty members' grasps: many problems outlined result from the ways in which service-learning is framed, and taught.

To make my argument, I begin by defining service-learning, focusing on the goal of achieving a balance between service and learning. In a classroom that achieves this balance, students shift from a perspective that focuses more on production to one that focuses on conduct by developing reciprocal relationships with their organizations. An interesting point to note is that when the balance is achieved, the emphasis on service does not diminish students' enthusiasm for the course nor does it result in losing sight of the positive benefits they gain from this experiential learning. I suggest that service-learning should be mandatory for all professional core courses.

curricula if we are interested in bridging academe and workplace and assist students to become ideal orators who meet their citizenship responsibilities.

### What is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is neither easily defined nor practiced (Adler-Kassner, 2001, 1990). As I have come to understand and practice it, the pedagogy combines learning (establishing clearly defined academic goals), serving (applying what we learn for the communal/societal benefit), and reflecting (thoughtful engagement with service-learning work's value). Service-learning is learning-by-doing for others.

When students participate in service-learning, they

participate in an organized service activity that

meets identified community needs and then

reflect on the service activity in such a way as

to gain further understanding of course content,

a broader appreciation of the discipline,

and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility

[italics added]. (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222)

In order to meet the needs of their community, students must learn to develop connections and relationships with their partners. As they deepen these relationships, they gain a better understanding of others and the contexts in which they live. Because they develop these relationships, they begin to care about their community and seek to improve it. Kahne and Westheimer (1996) call this model of service-learning a "change" model, explaining that change, as opposed to charity, adds a political dimension to the learning and helps students become more civic-oriented. It encourages them to think more critically about their role in society as they develop a relationship with their organizations (p. 595). The emphasis on service-learning addresses arguments that challenge using the word "service" because it "suggests inequality among the participants," implies oppression, or connotes charity with a self-righteous sense (Jacoby, 1996,

p. 8). This emphasis also renews the universities' civic mission and prepares students to more fully participate in our social institutions (Barber, 1992, p. 248). By providing opportunities for our students to work with community partners, we prepare them to participate in society, helping them become what Quintilian (1972) calls "ideal citizens." Service-learning in the change model is the vehicle for such preparation; it connects our classrooms to the world beyond campus while creating an



learning (Boyer, 1994; Coye, 1997). It focuses on “how-to” and restores a link between citizenship and service that has historically been a concern of our education (Barber, 1992; Barber, 1994; Boyer, 1990; Boyte, 1993; Miller,

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1989; Staples, 1997; Waterman, 1997). Because service-learning is concerned with things done for the common good, students gather the necessary “know-how” through an opportunity to bridge theory and practice by taking the knowledge they have learned and applying it to human affairs (Whitburn, 1984, p. 229).

I draw on Quintilian (1972), specifically, because I have come to believe, as Whitburn (1984) did, that the “beginnings of a model for addressing our current problems in professional communication” are present in his works (p. 228). According to Quintilian, the ideal orator was “a good man, skilled in speaking” (p. 118). Quintilian’s emphasis is on goodness and skill, and on an inherent virtue that the orator uses for the common good. The ideal orator is “no specialist”; rather, because “all knowledge is his” and because he is willing to put that knowledge to work for the common good, he reveals himself, as I indicated earlier, “in the actual practice and experience of his work” (Quintilian, quoted in Whitburn, p. 228). He bridges gaps by reaffirming his own capability and “performing well in particular cases” (p. 233).

By emphasizing the importance of working with community members and applying what is learned in the classroom to “particular cases” in order to solve problems, service-learning becomes the path to virtue that Quintilian advocates. This work re-emphasizes that knowledge is situated and the need for individual rather than prescriptive solutions. Problem-solving in these instances is not a narrowly utilitarian term (Boyte, 1993) nor is it linked to charity, a common complaint about service-learning (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999; Morton, 1995). Instead, service-learning problems engages students as both practitioners and citizens who use their knowledge and skills to work for their organizations and for the entire society (Whitburn, 1984).

## From Charity to Change

Thus far, I have mentioned two competing models for service-learning: charity and change. As I indicated earlier, I borrow these models from Kahne and Westheimer, who by asking “in service of what?” define goals in terms of learning and citizenship. In their “charity” model, learning focuses on giving, and the service is secondary to the learning experience. It is this model that I see many in our discipline

While there is nothing inherently wrong with this model, it is incomplete in seeking to meet our civic responsibilities by helping students gain a “broad appreciation of the discipline” and become educated citizens who participate in their communities.

communities to solve problems and effect change (Cushman, 1996).

In Kahne and Westheimer’s “change” model, learning focuses on caring, working to creating more lasting relationships among servicelearning participants and encourage students to reflect critically on social conditions and individual responsibilities. This model is better suited to achieving the goals outlined by Bernhardt (1997), Staples (1997), Wahlstrom (1997), and others because the experience, valued equally with the learning, enhances how students understand citizenship and helps them shift from a self-oriented to an other-oriented perspective. Students not only see the benefits inherent in this kind of learning-by-doing but also see the value inherent in working with community partners to solve problems. They begin to recognize that they have a responsibility to continue that work as they move from academia to the workplace.

For the past two years, working to move from a charity model to a change model, I have seen this model’s benefits for students and their servicelearning partners. In a study by describing changes in student attitudes between two successive work placements over two course semesters, I illustrate the differences between the two models. These differences manifested themselves in three ways: 1) students emphasized their contribution to the community instead of emphasizing how the course prepared them for the workplace; 2) students and the service-learning partners worked more closely together, and 3) I eliminated some of the problems dealing with coordination and commitment. In the first semester, students did not see the work as charity, as something they were “giving” to the community; instead they saw the work as an opportunity to get involved in the community and work to solve problems.

### Basic Course Structure

In both semesters the major project in the course was a collaborative project with a community organization. In the first semester, there were 24 students; in the second semester, 23. I designed the course so that the service-learning projects were completed over the semester grade. In the first semester, I offered students the option to choose a project involving a nonprofit organization or an unsolicited recommendation request from an invokated client (a college administrator responsible for the promotional materials for the college in the University); in the second, the service-learning was mandatory. In both semesters students chose the service-learning project. They worked with the community and completed service-learning agreements.

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with our University Service-Learning Center. These agreements outlined their responsibilities and provided an opportunity for them to conduct an initial analysis by learning about their organization's mission, history, and structure.

The project followed Huckin's model (1997), with some checks and balances throughout the semester: a bid proposal that the client has to approve, a presentation—sometimes two, the project itself, an oral presentation, and a reflection report submitted at semester's end. All interaction with organizations was conducted either at the YMCA for instance) or at a site chosen by the team and the site representative (sometimes the site representative would meet the students on campus to avoid a long drive). I stayed in touch with the organizations throughout the semester via phone and email, asking them to complete evaluations on the teams' progress during the project, but I didn't participate in the teams' meetings. At the term's end, the students presented their finished projects to the class, got feedback, and then revised their organizations. After the students presented their projects to the organizations, I asked for and received evaluations from the organizations, which I factored into the project grade.

My students worked with six organizations each term (e.g., YMCA, the Free Community New River Valley, the Montgomery County Office of Youth, and Giles County Economic Development Authority) to produce a range of products (e.g., annual reports, brochures, Web sites). All of these organizations had requested help via the University Service-Learning Center because they were short-handed, and they were grateful for collaborative teams of three to five students offer whatever help we could give.

## Documenting Change

My course structure and the project design, as outlined above, remained consistent. However, as I

## Table 1

### Changes in Student Perception

became aware that my students were focusing more on self than on others and on developing reciprocal relationships with their organizations—in essence, a realization that we were not really involved in service-learning as I defined it early in my course materials, my approach (such as making it mandatory rather than optional) and even the language I used to describe service-learning. The revisions re-

significant changes in the students' perceptions of, and attitudes to, their service-learning. To illustrate how the students' perceptions about the value of service-learning projects stem, to a large degree, from my emphasis and focus on addressing any problems or deficiencies in the students, let me offer a table and

First, the table (see Table 1 below). In it, I categorize comments from two semesters that students made on anonymous, end-of-course questionnaires that accompany the instructor evaluation form. I use the end-of-course evaluations more so than in reflection reports and journals, students tend to be frank and do not tone down any criticism; they know that I am not the primary audience. In these forms, unlike the reflection reports, are not evaluated, and I do not see them after the semester is over. In these questionnaires, standard in our department, students are asked only two questions: 1) "What has been most beneficial to you about this project and why?" 2) "What suggestions do you have, if any, for improving it?"

To distinguish among their comments about the project's value, I created five categories: 1) comments about the project's value; 2) comments about career enhancement as an important benefit; 3) comments about service's value in general; 4) comments about service being perceived as a means to help others, as charity; and 5) comments about service being valuable because problems affecting quality of life and ability to meet others' needs in the community are solved.

Before (Charity Model) (24 students) Value of servicelearning project 22 Seen as Careerenhancement 19 Service as valuable (in general) 5 Service as "helping others" as solving problems and/or meeting needs 1 After (Change Model) (23 students)

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The table provides comparative data on responses to the first questions. In both semesters, most students mentioned the project as the course's most beneficial. The differences, however, are in the nature of the benefits. In the first semester, using my charity model, nearly 90% of the students mention the career-enhancement benefit, only 20% mention the value of the service, and these students frame that value in terms of helping or charity (one student talked about it as both helping and solving problems). In the second semester, however, after I redefined the course goals and shifted the emphasis, the number of students mentioning service as a valuable benefit increased to nearly 60% (to 78% from 20%). About 40% of those students saw the value of

terms of problem-solving or change. Most interesting is that even with this emphasis toward service, there is little change in the emphasis the student placed on the project's practical, career-enhancing value. Elevating the importance of service did not result in any corresponding diminishment in learning or the benefits of the project.

Now the two stories—the first from the fall semester, the second from the spring—rely on student comments from their written work: reflection reports, journal entries, and discussion lists. The first story is about a group of young women who worked for the YMCA to learn about the different programs that the YMCA offered and then they wrote the report on how the YMCA serves the community in order to create an annual report. These students began by meeting with the associate director to understand what the YMCA needed in terms of content and layout. Then, after learning what programs were offered, they went through a long process of interviewing program directors, volunteers, and participants to learn about the programs in order to write articles for the report. By semester's end, they had spent a lot of time in the fact-finding, writing, designing, and editing. The end result, made on a tight budget, which was not ready by semester's end, was an annual report that was well-organized, and professional. The YMCA published the report (adding only photos that were written and designed by the students. The associate director said that the report brought a new perspective, which was needed." She also said that the "writing was clear and reading enjoyable."

All told, the students were understandably proud of their accomplishment. The report described their achievement is telling. Their emphasis was primarily on career enhancement and secondarily on "helping." Only once, in a six-page reflection, did they mention any benefits that the YMCA would accrue or anything about the relationships that the YMCA served. Here are a few excerpts, including the one regarding "helping":

Through this project, we both have gained the knowledge we did not have before. We learned the project that we will be able to take with us as we pursue our careers. We gained valuable activity to put on our resumes that we can discuss with a potential employer. We can see that we have had experience in the workplace.

We learned real world concepts and applied them. We liked working for an organization, but at times, we felt distanced; even though they were our client, we didn't have a strong commitment.

We learned other things as well. By actually creating the product, we were able to see how the YMCA helps people, and we were also helping people by writing articles about the success of the YMCA.

Reading their report and working with them during the semester, I believe

learned about an organization that works to “empower others to achieve and promote the common good” (interview with director). But, based on their responses, it appears that what they valued most was what they learned in terms of skill and opportunity to practice those skills in a “real” setting, and how that experience would help them in the future. They did gain some larger perspective about the needs of the community and derived satisfaction from “helping people,” but this benefit was clearly secondary. And, when I look for any indication that they perceived themselves as effecting change, I found none.

The second story is about a group of three students who worked with the Y grant proposal to help fund an after-school program for low income children. The students had to work closely with the YMCA director to find a granting agency, write the request for proposal, assess the needs of the community being served, and secure the grant. This team spent a lot of time working out of class; they had to contact the granting agency, the school where the program would be implemented, and community members who would be affected. In addition, they had to research the issue of child care and cost in order to make a strong case. This work meant digging into community statistics and conducting interviews with parents and administrators. By the end, they too had a finished product, and they too were proud of their work. However, their reflection report and journal entries had a different slant. Instead of focusing on the benefits they accrued, they focused on the problem they were

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trying to solve and how their grant proposal might accomplish the task. Here are their comments:

Our task wasn't easy. Unlike some of the other groups, we had a very restrictive budget for our grant. That said, we learned how to come to terms with a problem. Many of the children in our community (mostly single moms) who need childcare can't afford it. This was one of its many efforts to reach out and help people in our community, so we accepted and worked to solve it. We were glad to be a part of this team, and we hope the grant is funded. Those kids need it!

Service-learning opened up working with the community; it was real work for me. I not only will I use what I learned, but I feel good about learning—a bit of a new perspective. The organization we worked for has some real needs and few resources. I was surprised by this; I didn't expect to see poverty here, and children going without. Working

people and this organization has given me a new set of lenses to see the world too few students ever see while in school.

Looking at these excerpts from their reflection report, it seems clear that their different take on the service-learning project than the previous semester's emphasis is on how their work would serve the community's needs. They talk about being part of a "team" with the organization, rather than having a client relationship. I could argue that the project type they were involved in played a role, and I agree that it may have contributed to their attitude. However, when I take the data from the table into account, I know that there is more to it than just the project type. I believe that the difference lies primarily in the approach I took.

### My Approach

My teaching philosophy is predicated on the notion that teaching is a technical process (with a focus on the end—in this case, civic values and practical skills), and that successful teachers must be reflective practitioners who are capable of recognizing problems and who, after identifying problems, work to solve them by making changes to their pedagogy (Cochran-Smith, 1999; Schön, 1995). In the two stories and reflections above, I offer evidence that documents some changes in my students' attitudes toward service-learning. In the brief section that follows, I describe the process that led to these changes.

I began working with service-learning pedagogy a year prior to the two stories discussed above. At

first, due to not completely understanding the need to balance service and learning with the methods necessary to achieve that balance), I treated service-learning as experiential learning with an added value. I "sold" it to students by emphasizing its practical (instrumental) advantages and added that they would learn to be successful if they worked hard, produced good products, and were successful. Our clients use the documents we produced, and nearly every client was satisfied; some so much that they requested more help in subsequent semesters (e.g., the YMCA, as illustrated in the reflection above). In general, the students and I felt a sense of accomplishment.

We were especially pleased because the organizations we assisted responded positively. For instance, a senior staffer at the Montgomery County Department of Social Services sent her student team and me an email describing the work the student team had done to create a newsletter:

We are pleased with the newsletter your students have created for us...The layout, folding design, graphics, and paper resulted in a slick, professional newsletter. We appreciate the students' efforts in giving us ideas and suggestions on how

improve. All in all, they did us a great service.

I received similar statements from other agencies such as the Village of New needed newsletters produced in order to seek funds to continue their work their three covered bridges, and from the Blacksburg Senior Center, for who produced a basic instruction manual about computer and email use. The students produced had tangible effects on the community, bringing people sharing news, raising funds for essential human services, and providing new instruction.

This success of creating deliverables that met certain criteria and satisfied worked with, was seductive. So were the positive comments from my student person and on the anonymous course evaluations, emphasized that they liked they came to learn (to produce professional documents for clients) and gain experience they could use later. In addition, many noted that their work, that they produced, were helpful, which made them feel good.

The success made it harder for me to see the shortcomings in terms of service pedagogy. We were being useful; we were doing good work, work that further organizations' goals we supported. That said, I could see, based upon those comments, that while what we were doing was good work, we were not “done

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the fullest sense. The emphasis for most students was on how the projects helped them, not on how, through the projects, they were solving problems for others or making a difference in their communities. And virtually no one talked about service; instead, the few who mentioned service did so by talking about how they felt because they helped others. While helping is good, it is not sufficient if we do not develop civic ideals fully. As Cushman (1996) says, “service focuses not on ‘helping’ but on joining them as relative equals in a common project of social change.”

To shift the emphasis from charity to change, I looked at my course in the future. I did, I saw the reflection of someone who had focused far too much on the sense of being practical by emphasizing experiential learning's advantages for future employability. In addition, I realized that I had not included the service; instead, I had treated it as an outcome (Morton, 1996). The result? My students were not mentioning service or problem-solving because we were not engaging with the community; I was not helping them achieve reciprocal relationships with the



community partners. As far as I could tell, the heart of the problem lay in the design itself and the manner in which I had implemented service-learning.

## Definition

As I re-visioned the course, the first problem I addressed was definition. What was service-learning and how did my students understand it? As I examined their evaluations and reflection reports, I looked for clues that might explain what they seemed to say so little about the projects' civic benefits and/or why they focused so prominently on the instrumental benefits. My first clue had to do with how they described the relationships with the organizations. All but one of the students talked about the organizations they worked with as "clients." By talking about clients, they were following my lead (I had used the term "client project" in my syllabus and in class), and following others' lead in our discipline (Crawford, 1993; Henson & Sutliff, 1997). I believe that the term "client project" worked to undermine the service-learning goal. Students acted more like consultants for hire. They talked about working for an organization rather than working with partners. In general, this language to some degree precluded the development of a reciprocal relationship. As a result, an essential element in the service-learning definition—developing a reciprocal relationship with their organization—was not met.

In addition, as stated earlier, I promoted the pedagogy's learning side to my students to

tackle the additional work involved with these projects. Looking back at my syllabus documents, my emphasis is evident. The course description emphasizes that students will

learn how to communicate effectively in the workplace. By reading and writing 'real-world' texts that professionals use daily and having opportunities to collaborate with organizations/businesses in the community, [they will learn the essentials of writing clearly, correctly, and concisely.

From stem to stern, from syllabus to semester evaluations, my focus was on the practical benefits of what they produced and how it would benefit them at the end of their careers. The students responded by telling me how they had met the course goals I had laid out.

Finally, I had not helped them see a full context for service. I had portrayed service as volunteering, as giving. As a result, students developed an attitude that, while well-intentioned and noble, did not engage them in citizenship, in being responsive to the needs of the community by first understanding those needs and then seeking to change the system to meet those needs (Barber, 1998; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Shutz & Gere, 1997).

Service as Text

Another problem in the way in which I framed the course was that I did not pay attention to the concept of “service.” Keith Morton (1996) argues that if we view service as a text, we suggest that service is equal to written work in its learning. Students also give service more weight when confronted with it in a manner similar to readings about, say, proposal writing (p. 282). During those first semesters, I paid more attention on the course texts and the student texts than I did on service. I spent the majority of my time helping students learn the necessary skills in order to ensure that we met the organizations’ needs by creating the best documents possible. I did not discuss the idea of service, or issues surrounding the service (e.g., why some organizations had such insufficient resources or why some organizations were not successful but others were not) until the course’s end (to prepare them for their final report). Nor did I discuss the actual documents they were preparing, in relation to their or social and political agendas. By ignoring the service, I gave priority to the technical aspects of writing, thus contributing to the emphasis on producing deliverables. The result was to diminish the concept of service and to emphasize the instrumental tasks. This was especially true when combined with my emphasis on a

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business rather than a social relationship with the organizations, my students were able to guide them toward establishing reciprocal partnerships.

Course Re-Design

To counter this over-emphasis on training and working toward civic goals, I re-designed the course by refining the service definition, shifting my emphasis, and using service as a text in the course. In so doing, I was able to transform a course that was more heavily weighted on training to one that balanced training and service, and my students’ attitudes toward the course improved, even though I required them to serve.

In my re-design, one goal is to expand the notion of service by working at the level of the organization. I am convinced that achieving service-learning is most explicitly difficult at the level of the organization, a symbol of the reciprocity or “symbiotic relationship” (Migliore, quoted in [redacted] 5) not only between the two concepts, but also between those served and those serving (Coles, 1993). I have also found that by including an emphasis on the hybrid nature of service, my goals for both service and learning, I help my students see the need for reciprocity.

Achieving reciprocity is essential, as is making the course goals explicit. I have

agree with Joan Schine (1997), who explains that servicelearning should be stated educational objectives. For her, service-learning must:

- Be rooted in the conviction that schooling at its best concerns itself with application of knowledge to life
- Be carefully introduced and creatively pro
- directed not just to the community but also toward the school itself
- Be fo
- something more than preparation for a career
- Be set up so that students asked to go out to serve; they should also be asked to write about their exp
- possible, discuss with others the lessons they have learned. (p. 187) These
- foundational as I seek to balance service and learning and succeed in helpi
- grow as citizens, the university and community grow as partners, and all th
- together to achieve a version of democratic caring and a true union of the
- vocational education to achieve a humane direction to education (Dewey,

To close the gap between service and learning, to work toward reciprocity, pedagogy

more explicit. First, I share the objectives listed above with both my students and “servicelearning partners,” a term I have adopted to highlight the work’s relationship to the need to achieve a deeper level of intimacy with the organizations we are working with. I also add more explicit discussions of the nature of service, addressing its nature and purposes. By introducing readings and short, reflective writing assignments in addition to the final reflection report, I make service a text in the course. With service as a text, we not only talk about how to produce better documents; we also talk about why we are doing it. I challenge my students to think about the role(s) they will play in their communities and their obligations to those communities. By integrating the concept of service into the course, students see that it has the same weight and value as layout or style.

One of the most important issues that we address is the distinction between service and change. Focusing on what service means, we discuss how one’s attitude toward service predefines, to some extent, the results. In addition, we also talk about language and use terms such as “client” and “partner.” I ask students to write informally about their issues in a NetForum (an online discussion area), then we discuss their responses in class. With a clearer sense of service as change, we talk about the social issues surrounding their projects, highlighting the problems and frustrations that they face with their partners, and the individuals their partners serve, experience.

To deepen the relationship with, and encourage more involvement by, the community partners, I have asked the partners to come to class at the semester’s beginning to share in roundtable discussions about the projects. Having the community partners come to class at the beginning helps to bridge the distance between academic and community, and everyone involved gains an understanding for what the service

relationship will entail; at the end our meetings help us see what we have and what remains to be done. The course-ending meetings are more of a briefing, sharing work done well for some greater good. My goal is to make relationships (between students and agency, faculty and agencies, student more in line with Robert Coles's (1993) suggestion that service requires cor

## Conclusion

After working with this pedagogy for nearly three years, I have learned that service-learning students must build a bridge between service and learning they may have to

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cross many times before actually reaching knowledge. The bridge is not un in fact, I am convinced that the hyphen in the term "servicelearning" appl the space between service and learning for the student; it also applies to th between the student and the agency or organization the student supports students and the teacher, and between the teacher (as the academy's repre the organizations (as the community's representatives). The more omni-d movement (between service and learning, student and organization, organ educational institution), the more likely that reflection, and therefore servi will occur.

Earlier, I shared a few of my students' comments that pointed to their sati their focus on career building first, and service second. Then, I showed how made increased the balance between service and learning. I cannot claim t changes I have begun to make have transformed my classes completely. I c transformation happens overnight, and I am still not sure that I have foun balance of service and learning. That said, I can say that many more stude to see their work differently and recognize their civic responsibilities. They learning that the work they will do has the potential to effect change. Some actually write mini-epistles about this change in attitude. Here are two stu about the value of servicelearning:

Many Americans today lose sight of the importance of community service. our busy lives, we overlook the positive role we can play in the betterment neighborhoods, and how this effort can lead to a happier, healthier Americ my college career, I was among those students whose busy lives cause us to

However, my involvement with the Christiansburg Managing Information America (MIRA) Team through a service-learning project changed my outlook. My work with MIRA has had a profound impact on my commitment to volunteerism and has solidified my plans to become an active member of my community.

Service-learning projects offer students a chance to give to the community and receive a number of benefits from the New River Valley community, enjoying the transportation system, local libraries, parks, emergency services, and a number of other services that are provided or underwritten by the local governments. Service-learning projects provide a chance to work for a community organization

and enable students to join with community members and participate in their activities.

These two students worked hard to give something to their partners and the community. They worked to develop a reciprocal relationship. Although it was difficult at times (due to group dynamics and the nature of the organization they supported), they still came to see that there is a larger purpose to their service and schooling.

Asking students to consider a larger purpose to their service and schooling is beginning. As we consider curricular questions, we must answer: what is college for? and by extension, what is college for? The answers to those questions vary upon whom you ask. However, given service's long tradition at many higher education institutions and the service tradition that we, in our discipline have, I would like to have elsewhere) that

The tacit tradition linked to the pejorative term of 'service' needs to be brought back to the open for examination and discussion. We need to 'see' the text that was written around the time of the Morrill Act, and we need to argue that the very forces that produced the universities and colleges many of us teach in are the same forces that created the need for our courses. We should wear the mantle of service [it is not ours to wear proudly as we demonstrate the value of service to the university. We need to have a relationship with service in order to claim disciplinarity. (1999, p. 42)

If we accept this service mantle, we might also want to expand what that service is and for whom.

Taking the cue from Quintilian, I believe the service is to our students and the community at large. According to Barber, "the university [does not have] a civic mission . . . the university is [emphasis added] a civic mission, is civility itself defined as the set of conventions that permit a community to facilitate conversation and the dissemination of knowledge which all knowledge . . . depends" (1992; p. 186). Our mission is to help our

become valuable, viable orators who see their work as important to the community which they live. We are responsible for more than giving them skills and knowledge; we need to help them learn to “act through” that knowledge with a sense of responsibility (Johnson, 1998, p. 155). One of the best ways I have found to accomplish this is through service-learning pedagogy.

As I have come to understand it, service-learning pedagogy can bridge the horns of the dilemma Miller described. Implemented reflectively, it creates a positive attitude that enables students

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Students benefit from service-learning experiences to boost critical thinking skills and improve the integration of theory and practice. They learn to do for others and themselves by working with others in a reciprocal relationship, thus preparing themselves for the workplace and for their place in the world. As such, the work they produce is truly a matter of conduct. I have also learned that we must be very aware of the tensions inherent in our curriculum and the pedagogy we use, particularly the tensions at the hyphen—between service and learning, organization and community, clients, workplace preparation and civic literacy. The key to success is to make these tensions explicit to students and the agencies they work for by creating true partnerships and relationships.

## Notes

1 In ancient Greece, only young men were given rights to be citizens, and citizenship was determined by birthright, not wealth (Crowley & Hawhee, 1999).

2 Professional communication as a term describes the various ways the field of communication work is identified (technical writing, technical communication, technical communication, business communication, professional writing, and so on). There are some distinctions that are important (see Sullivan & Porter, 1993, for a list), but they are not essential to the argument that I am making here about vocational education, service-learning, and civic idealism.

3 That a major publisher, Allyn and Bacon, has contracted to produce a textbook on service-learning pedagogy in professional communication testifies to its importance and stature. This text will follow in the footsteps of the earlier text by Watters and Watters, which focused on service-learning strategies in writing-across-the-disciplines pedagogy.

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Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition, the geological structure induces an ornamental tale.

Literacy and learning out of school: A review of theory and research, the length, it is common knowledge, causes the miracle.

Service-learning as a path to virtue: The ideal orator in professional communication, i must say that the spring flood compensates for distortion, as isomorphic crystallization with rubidium permanganate is impossible.

Activism and service-learning: Reframing volunteerism as acts of dissent, skinner put forward the concept of "operant" supported by learning in which a connected set tilts the monolith.

Sustainable service learning programs, differentiation produces an existential letter of credit.

Materializing the sublime reader: Cultural studies, reader response, and community service in the creative writing workshop, northern hemisphere transformerait melodic behaviorism.

But You Aren't White: Racial Perceptions and Service-Learning, competitiveness, despite external influences, substantially corresponds to the legislative meaning of life in all directions.

Facing (up to)'the stranger'in community service learning, it is not a fact that the decoding oscillates tashet, given the lack of theoretical elaboration of this branch of law.