

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

November 2011



Montgomery College
endless possibilities



Service learning, at its essence, speaks to two essential parts of our mission: empowering students and enriching the lives of our community. By participating in service learning, students not only enhance the communities in which they live, they also find that they are changed by the experience.

So what does service learning look like at Montgomery College? Service learning begins in the classroom and extends out into the community. It is not insular.

Service learning is:

- A teaching method using community service that addresses real community needs and relies upon reflective writing assignments to assess student learning.
- A form of active learning that values critical thinking and problem solving.
- A pedagogically sound approach linked to higher grade point averages, increased student retention, and enhanced civic engagement.
- A great “hands-on” experience for students in any class.

At Montgomery College, programs like Learning Communities, First Year Experience, Summer Bridge, and Gateway to College have included service learning. And service learning has taken place in classes ranging from math to the health sciences.

For example, Professor Dan Jenkins’ philosophy students engaged in class discussions on issues associated with the Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. The students became effective voices for change with their peers and in their communities, which allowed them to share valuable prevention strategies.

Students in Shelley Jones’ Spanish class serve as tutors at a local middle school dedicated to helping underprivileged Latino boys. The students do oral presentations on their experiences and related research.

Clearly, service learning can take many forms; at its core is the dual commitment to community service and student learning. Who better suited than a community college to provide such opportunities?

Board Discussion Questions:

1. Have you had a personal experience with service learning in your educational experience?
2. What do you see as the broader benefits of service learning, beyond fulfilling our mission statement?

What is Service Learning at Montgomery College?

Montgomery College incorporates academic and co-curricular community engagement in a variety of ways. At the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, service learning is grounded in Alexander Astin's Social Change Model for Leadership Development. Professor James Walters of the Office of Student Life provides students with as many opportunities as possible to address and reflect upon themselves and others in service that challenges or illuminates their decision making and assumptions. The service learning program addresses both in-class and out-of-class learning with an emphasis on student learning rather than instruction. The Volunteerism-Student Learning (V-SL) Office places student organization members in challenging positions and offers the same opportunities to students enrolled in specific instructional courses. In the fall 2011 semester, more than 15 faculty members are incorporating service learning into their courses. Several of these courses are learning communities; others are single course offerings. Students, independent of any course requirement for service, also participate in service learning. Students gain real-life experience from their volunteer work, which is especially valuable when related to their major or professional goals. In fact, their service learning experiences can sometimes influence their choice of major. Student clubs and organizations continue to include service in their charters as well. Overall, several hundred students experience an out-of-classroom learning experience every semester via service.

Faculty-Driven Efforts

In General...

Faculty from a range of disciplines including American government, English, journalism, mental health, political science, psychology, and the American English Language Program have introduced service learning into their classes on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus this semester. Students contribute their time and writing skills to local newspapers; tutor K-12 students in a variety of subjects; work in day care centers; coach athletic teams; work directly with autistic children and their families; and provide support for hospitals, clinics, and after-school programs for at-risk children. At this moment in the semester, most students are mid-project. This means that they are spending time "on site" and writing reflections about their experiences; later they will present their work to their classmates and perhaps to peers in their programs.

In the Humanities...

During the past three semesters, philosophy professor Dan Jenkins participated in the Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, and he is incorporating consciousness-raising into his ethics course this semester as well. In-class discussions on this topic have provided opportunities for students to discuss ethical theory—and are thus pedagogically useful—but such discussions also extend outside of the classroom into students' personal lives, where they influence decisions that students make. These discussions also empower students to become effective voices of change in their own peer groups and neighborhoods. In the fall of 2010, one of his courses was recorded for a radio show, "Sex. Really?" (now Bedsider.org), to help take the conversation to students online across the nation. In this way, the Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy has been an important vehicle in taking learning out of the classroom to propel the surrounding community.

Professor Jenkins is also the mentor for the Philosophy Club, which is routinely involved in service to the campus and to the community. Philosophy Club students assist the Manna Food Smart Snacks program in preparing lunches and weekend meals for the economically disadvantaged children of Montgomery County.

In Learning Communities...

Professors Margaret Harris and Tymofey Wowk's EL103/RD 103 "Business Learning Community" creates opportunities for students to investigate finance and marketing through their service learning experience. At



least three speakers from host sites will give guest lectures to the class, which uses experiential learning to illuminate the link between academic content and real-world application. Service learning sites include Shepherd's Table and afterschool programs, and they give students the opportunity to observe how these organizations market their services to the public and how they raise funds for their services. "Through SL, they can learn valuable information about their proposed majors, get some practical experience in their fields, network with people who might be able to help them down the line, and add depth to their future admission and scholarship applications," said Professor Wowk.

Psychology Professor Tracey Smith-Bryant and English Professor Stephanie Sabourin's learning community "Beautiful Minds" is an integration of EN 101 Techniques of Reading and Writing I and PY 102 General Psychology. Service learning projects include helping out at local elementary schools during the day or at Saturday tutoring sessions, working in their own churches or synagogues, or volunteering in places such as Brookside Gardens. Professor Sabourin said, "Many of the students say that the essay they write after this experience is their favorite of the semester because the theories they have been learning about become real to them and they can see how their learning fits into life outside of school. Many often talk about how they felt good making a difference in someone else's life."

In Language Courses...

Professor Shelley Jones' intermediate Spanish class tutors the students at San Miguel School on Georgia Avenue. San Miguel, which is only two blocks from the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, is a middle school dedicated to serving underprivileged Latino boys. This service is particularly important because many of the boys' parents do not speak English and are unable to help with homework. Her students learn about the specific challenges for Latino boys and use their skills as students of higher education to encourage good study habits and writing and reading skills. In past semesters, Professor Jones' students have volunteered with many different organizations that serve the Latino community. The service learning experience is always tied back to the course curriculum and students do oral presentations on their experiences and research done on a related topic.

Montgomery College student Kevin Connors volunteered at the Gilchrist Multicultural Center in Wheaton as part of his service learning in SN 201 (Intermediate Spanish I). He assisted members of the Spanish-speaking community in English and computer classes. He volunteered beyond the required 15 hours of service and stayed on to assist the center. The director of the center spoke glowingly of Kevin as he clearly was a model for a student who stepped out of his comfort zone to work with the community. He is back at MC this semester and is currently the president of Café Olé, the Spanish conversation club on campus. Professor Carla Naranjo said of her student, "I truly credit service learning as the stepping stone that led Kevin to go beyond the classroom in order to gain a better understanding of the world in which we live."

In the Health Sciences...

The mental health program, led by Dr. Charles Marcantonio, also utilizes service learning as an intensive part of its curriculum. Each semester 20 mental health students put in 200 hours per practicum at a supervised mental health site or at nursing homes or other facilities including hospitals, clinics, after-school programs for at-risk children, or the homes of autistic adults and children. Specific sites include St. Luke's House, Building Better Communities Today for Tomorrow, and Community Visions. Each mental health student is required to do two practicums for a total of 400 service hours. "I am so enthusiastic about our program and the contributions to our community over the years," said Dr. Marcantonio. "What I love about this course is that our students make a meaningful connection with people working in the field. Montgomery County is a model for other communities when it comes to autism, after-care with mental illness, and other areas, so our students have amazing experiences. They get a real understanding of the profession, and more than that, they learn to stretch and go outside of their comfort zones. Through actually working hands on with people who need their help, students learn a lot about techniques in the field, but also about patience and empathy."



There are numerous examples of the way in which Montgomery College nursing faculty impact students who, in turn, play a significant role in impacting the community. One recent example is the way in which students in the Nursing Management in Health and Illness course execute an extraordinary health and wellness education project by putting on a health fair for the local college community. Students provided appropriate community-based education on a myriad of relevant topics, including such matters as STIs, hypertension, and disaster preparedness. In this environment, students had a chance to collaborate with nursing student colleagues to interact with peers and educate them.

In Education Classes...

Monica Tanzey, who is pursuing her degree in education, particularly valued the classroom experience at Sally Ride Elementary School that she had in her MA 130 and 131 courses (Elementary Math I and II) last semester. Her instructor, Dina Yagodich, had the students develop questions and goals for their experiences, which, according to Monica, helped them understand the value of math education, even at the kindergarten and first grade levels. "It's important that the kids 'get it' at the early levels," she said. "Schools have changed a lot, and it was valuable for me to be in the classroom and be able to use what I've learned to teach."

Education majors at the Germantown Campus experience service learning through the Montgomery County "Linkages to Learning Program," which provides services to at-risk children and families to improve school performance. Montgomery College students help run a book club for children at Fox Chapel Elementary School by sorting books, preparing lessons, and encouraging reading through engaging, interactive programs. Professor of Education Sonja Fisher said that her students have learned valuable lessons through this experience and have realized that they enjoy serving their community.

In the Music Program...

The College's instrumental groups reach out to the community to provide opportunities for participation and collaboration for MCPS high school students and music teachers, and local semi-professionals through the MC Wind Ensemble/Maryland Band Directors Band and the Metropolitan Orchestra at MC. Teachers can earn state recertification credits for their participation and high school students earn student service learning credits that meet their graduation requirement.

In a Business Course...

This fall, students in Management Professor Bruce McGee's MG 103 Introduction to Marketing class are writing a marketing plan for Montgomery County Government's Adoptive Home Recruitment Program.

Outside of the Classroom

Nursing student Suzanne Mintz has numerous health-related activities to her credit, including the St. Bernard project, an annual summer weeklong trip to assist with rebuilding destroyed areas in New Orleans. Suzanne also volunteers weekly on Friday mornings at the Long Branch MobileMed Care Clinic. Additionally, she organized a health fair for three elementary schools (Highland View, Sligo Creek, and Silver Spring International) that attracted more than 350 participants, and she served on the MCPS committee to develop a wellness policy for the school system. Suzanne has been a resource to fellow students throughout the program, formally as a mentor and informally by organizing study groups and pot-luck lunches on a regular basis. Her passion for nursing and for promoting wellness is obvious, and she is highly likely to continue these substantial contributions to our community after graduation as well.

Student Paula Jamarillo has an extensive background and experience in community activity as well. She is a volunteer who performs health and wellness teaching and nursing assistant-related duties at a community-based clinic in Wheaton, which caters to a predominantly Spanish-speaking population. For over a year she has



been working with the nursing staff there to coordinate care and services, including interpreting services. She also helps to organize and teach a monthly diabetes class and a nutrition heart healthy class. In addition, Paula works as a volunteer “Stroke Ambassador” through a program sponsored by Suburban Hospital that places her at the Holiday Park Senior Center. She provides blood pressure screenings, patient care, and teaching on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Paula has volunteered and helped with the Langley Park Health Day community-based initiatives of Montgomery College at which mostly Spanish-speaking participants can receive blood pressure screening, hypertension instruction, and breast and testicular self exam information. Paula is not alone in this event. The College routinely has 10-20 student volunteers who work at least three times a year to provide health education and screening to a diverse and underserved community.

Students in clubs and special programs, such as the Montgomery Scholars and the Macklin Business Institute (MBI), include service to the community as part of their programming. Last year MBI students collected gently used shoes for people in third world countries through their Walk in My Shoes program. Additionally, they conducted financial literacy seminars for middle school students.

Jane Ssemenda, volunteer and service programs coordinator at the Rockville Campus, sends out biweekly volunteer opportunities to the campus and coordinated campus activities for Community Service Week in October that included a food and sundries drive, Manna Food Smart Sacks, a volunteer fair, and a presentation about and fundraiser for the Montgomery County Coalition for Homeless. Members of the campus community were encouraged to participate in the county Community Service Day on October 22.

While many students will go on vacation during the March 2012 spring break, several students will travel to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, to help the local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity. During the week, students will volunteer more than 500 hours building affordable new homes to replace those lost from Hurricane Katrina.

