Student Evaluations of the OTA Service Learning Classes

June 2005

Forty-seven students in four Occupational Therapy Service Learning classes completed course evaluations for their fall 2004 classes.   They included 16 students in OTA 1140, 17 students in OTA 1170, 7 students in OTA 2320 and 7 students in OTA 2350.

The focus of the class evaluations was to ascertain:

♦ students' perspective on the value of the <u>service work</u> they performed as part of class requirements

♦ the value of the <u>class reflection</u> intended to integrate their classroom and community work

♦ the value of the service learning component relative to the <u>learning objectives</u> of the courses.

Overall Class Evaluations

Two questions asked the students for their overall evaluation of their service learning class. These were survey question 19 and 20.

> 19. Overall, I feel this was an effective class

> 20. Overall, I feel this instructor was effective

As seen in the following table, almost all of the students in each of the four classes agreed that their classes and instructor were effective.   The extent of agreement with the overall effectiveness questions ranged from 94 percent to everyone in the class.   In general, the students in the 2000 level OTA classes feet more strongly about the effectiveness of their classes.

Q-19: Overall, I feel this was an effective class

	strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140				31	69	100
OTA 1170			6	18	76	100
OTA 2320				14	86	100
OTA 2350				14	86	100
Total	0	0	2	21	77	100

The student responses were similar when the focus shifted from the class as a whole to the effectiveness of the instructor. Again the students in the 2000 level classes were highest in their assessment of effectiveness.

Q-20: Overall, I feel this instructor was effective

	strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140				25	75	100
OTA 1170			6	23	71	100
OTA 2320				14	86	100
OTA 2350				14	86	100
Total	0	0	2	21	77	100

Student Perceptions of Their Service Work

Four class evaluation questions specifically dealt with the course service work: i.e. survey questions 10, 14, 15, and 16.

10. The course, through the service work, gave me a better understanding of civic responsibility

14. My service work provided a needed service to the community

15. My service work taught me it is my responsibility to help address community needs.

16. The service work enhanced my experience in this class.

Better Understanding of Civic Responsibility

The students in the four classes held varying perspectives on the extent that the courses gave them a better understanding of civic responsibility. In two of the classes, 84 and 86 percent stated that they developed a better understanding of civic responsibility. In a third class, 71 percent held that view. In OTA 1140, sixty percent of the students felt they had a better understanding.

Q-10: This course, through the service work, gave me a better understanding of civic responsibility

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140			40	13	47	100
OTA 1170			12	47	41	100
OTA 2320			14	29	57	100
OTA 2350			29	29	43	100
Total	0	0	24	30	46	100

Provided a Needed Community Service

In the 2000 level OTA classes, all of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that their service work provided a needed service to the community. In the two 1000 level classes, 94 and 75 percent of the students held that view.

OTA 2320 stands out because 86 strongly agreed that they provided a needed service. This is twice the comparable percentage of "strongly agree" responses in the 1000 level OTA classes.

Q-14: My service work provided a needed service to the community

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140			25	31	44	100
OTA 1170			6	47	47	100
OTA 2320				14	86	100
OTA 2350				29	74	100
Total			11	34	55	100

Responsibility to Help Address Community needs

Again all of the students in the 2000 level classes, OTA 2320 and 2350, agreed that the class taught them it is their responsibility to help address community needs. In the other two classes, 75 and 71 percent agreed with this statement.

Q-15: My service work taught me it is my responsibility to help address community needs

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140		6	19	31	44	100
OTA 1170			29	35	35	100
OTA 2320				43	57	100
OTA 2350				43	57	100
Total	0	2	17	36	48	100

Service Enhanced Class Experience

In OTA 2320 and 2350, 86 percent of the students strongly agreed that service work enhanced their class experience. In the two 1000 level courses, the corresponding percentages were 56 and 41 percent. Again, however, the students' evaluation was overwhelmingly positive (agree or strongly agree).

Q-16: The service work enhanced my experience in this class

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140				44	56	100
OTA 1170			6	53	41	100
OTA 2320				14	86	100
OTA 2350				14	86	100
Total			2	38	60	100

Value of the Class Reflection Exercises

Questions 11, 12 and 13 directly dealt with the in-class discussions reflecting on the meaning of the service work, the relevance for the course content and the extent that the service helped the students achieve the course learning objectives.

The questions were:

11. The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to course content

12. The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to civic responsibility

13. The reflection activities of this course made my service work a meaningful experience

Reflection Tied Service to Course Content

The findings on the student perceptions of the class reflection discussions parallel the evaluations of the community service work in that the majority of students in each of the four OTA service learning classes hold positive opinions about the reflection activities in their classes. Closer examination of the responses, however, reveals meaningful differences.

The students in OTA 2320 held a very strong perception that the reflection in their class tied the service to the course content. The strength of this perception is clearly less in OTA 2350.

Q-11: The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to course content

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140			7	33	60	100
OTA 1170				47	53	100
OTA 2320				14	86	100
OTA 2350			14	29	57	100
Total			4	35	61	100

Reflection Tied to Civic Responsibility

From the students' perspective, the reflection in all four classes tied their service to civic responsibility but the extent this was true is less. The best example is OTA 2320 where the percentage who strongly agree on the impact of the reflection activities drops from 86 percent on the tie to course content to 43 percent on the tie to civic responsibility. In none of the four classes do a majority strongly agree on the effectiveness of the reflection activities relative to civic responsibility.

Q-12: The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to civic responsibility

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140			27	33	40	100
OTA 1170			5.9	65	29	100
OTA 2320				57	43	100
OTA 2350			43	14	43	100
Total			17	46	37	100

Reflection Made Service Meaningful

The percentage of students who strongly agreed that the reflection activities made their service work a meaningful activity varied from a high of 86 percent who strongly agreed in OTA 2320 to a low of 40 percent in OTA 1140.

13. The reflection activities of this course made my service work a meaningful experience

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140			7	53	40	100
OTA 1170			6	53	41	100
OTA 2320			14		86	100
OTA 2350				43	57	100
Total			6	44	50	100

Course Content and Relevance

One of the objectives of service learning classes is to enhance the learning experience of traditional academic course material. Survey questions 8, 9, 17 and 18 were used to measure that objective.

The questions were:

> 8. I more fully understand course content because of the service work performed
>
> 9. The community partner I served with fit well with course content
>
> 17. I used knowledge from the academic discipline of this class in my service work
>
> 18. I will use skills or information from this class in the future

Better Understanding of Course Content Because of Service

The majority of students in each class (aggregating the strongly agree and agree responses) believed that they better understood the course content because of the service work they performed. The percentage who strongly believed that point varied greatly from a high of 100 percent in OTA 2320 to a low of 29 percent in OTA 1170.

Q-8: I more fully understand course content because of the service work performed

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140			6	63	31	100
OTA 1170			18	53	29	100
OTA 2320					100	100
OTA 2350				43	57	100
Total			9	47	45	100

Fit of Community Partner with Course Content

Every student in the 2000 level classes strongly agreed that the community partner was a good fit with the course content. Roughly two-thirds of the 1000-level class students held the same view.

Q-9: The community partner I served with fit well with course content

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140			7	33	60	100
OTA 1170			6	24	65	100
OTA 2320					100	100
OTA 2350					100	100
Total			4	20	74	100

Used Course Academic Knowledge in Service Work

As with the last question, every student in the 2000-level classes strongly agreed with the survey statement that they used knowledge from the course in their service experience. Almost 70 percent of the OTA 1140 students also strongly agreed on this point. Finally, only 35 percent in OTA 1170 strongly agreed with the statement on use of academic knowledge.

Q-17: I used knowledge from the academic discipline of this class in my service work

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140				31	69	100
OTA 1170			24	41	35	100
OTA 2320					100	100
OTA 2350					100	100
Total			9	26	66	100

Future Use of What They Learned

The courses in the study prepare students for careers as occupational therapy assistants. Future use of the course information is an essential learning goal. Previously, the student responses on the overall effectiveness of the courses were presented. Those positive responses are supported by the student responses to the question on the future use of the skills or knowledge from this class. Every student in OTA 2320 and 2350 strongly agreed with the statement. With one exception, every student in the 1000-level classes agreed or strongly agreed they will use the course content in the future.

Q-18: I will use skills or information from this class in the future

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral/ not applicable	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140				31	69	100
OTA 1170			6	24	71	100
OTA 2320					100	100
OTA 2350					100	100
Total			2	19	79	100

Comparing Responses across the Classes on All Evaluation Questions

Calculation of the mean average response on each evaluation question for each class allows a concise comparison of the student responses. The student evaluation responses were scored on a 5 point system ranging from a score of 5.00 for the most positive evaluation, to 3.00 for a neutral/mixed evaluation, to 1.00 for the most negative evaluation.

For every question in every class, the response means are above the positive statistic of 4.00. The average assessments are the best in OTA 2320. While the overall student evaluation of the two 2000-level classes is the same, on six of the specific questions OTA 2320 receives a substantially higher student evaluation than OTA 2350.

In the 13 survey questions analyzed here, two dealt with civic responsibility. In three of the classes (1140, 2320 and 2350), these two questions received the lowest student evaluations. This was not the case in OTA 1170 where three other questions had similar or lower student's evaluations.

The students perceived that their service community partners were a very good fit with their academic course content. This is one of the greatest strengths identified in this research.

Average Class Response Score for Questions 8 to 20
[Scores range from the most positive (5.00), through neutral (3.00), to the most negative (1.00)]

	OTA 1140	OTA 1170	OTA 2320	OTA 2350	Total
8 - I more fully understand course content because of the service work performed	4.25	4.12	5.00	4.57	4.36
9 - The community partner I served with fit well with the course content	4.53	4.88	5.00	5.00	4.80
10 - This course, through the service work, gave me a better understanding of civic responsibility	4.07	4.29	4.43	4.14	4.22
11 - The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to the course content	4.53	4.53	4.86	4.43	4.57
12 - The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to civic responsibility	4.13	4.24	4.43	4.00	4.20
13 - The reflection activities of this course made my service work a meaningful experience	4.33	4.35	4.71	4.57	4.43
14 - My service work provided a needed service to the community	4.19	4.41	4.86	4.71	4.45
15 - My service work taught me it is my responsibility to help address community needs	4.13	4.06	4.57	4.57	4.23
16 - My service work enhanced my experience in this class	4.56	4.35	4.86	4.86	4.57
17 - I used knowledge from the academic discipline of this class in my service work	4.69	4.12	5.00	5.00	4.57
18 - I will use skills or information from this class in the future	4.69	4.65	5.00	5.00	4.77
19 - Overall, I feel this class was an effective class	4.69	4.71	4.86	4.86	4.74
20 - Overall, I feel this instructor was effective	4.75	4.65	4.86	4.86	4.74

Exploration of the Student Ratings and Possible Intervening Factors

The results of statistical correlation analysis will be reported in this section. Four of the questions deal with student effort and prior service experience. They are: (1) The students' self reported hours spent studying and preparing for class; (2) the number of hours per week spent in community service; (3) the number of hours the student was employed; and (4) prior community service experience. In addition, the student assessment of the fit of the community partner will be included in this correlation analysis. Finally, two of the most important learning outcome questions will be included.

       8. I more fully understand course content because of the service work performed

       12. The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to civic responsibility
       The community partner I served with fit well with the course content.

Correlation analysis was conducted using Kendall's tau b, a nonparametric measure of association available in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. This statistic is appropriate when responses deal with larger or smaller amounts but not exact statistical difference such as inches or pounds. Questions 8,9 and 12 have this type of data.

Three of the questions had no statistical relationship to the others: (1) hours studying and preparing; (2) hours serving in the community; (3) hours of employment.

Prior service experience was statistically related to the student's self-assessment of the impact of the service work on their understanding of course content. It is not surprising that prior service experience benefits learning in subsequent service classes.

The largest association between the variables analyzed was between questions 8 and 12. In this case, the statistical analysis finds that the strongest impact on the understanding of course content and service is the quality of the reflection activities as it ties service to civic responsibility.

Correlation Analysis for Possible Intervening Factors

	(1) hours preparing	(2) hours serving	(3) hours work	(4) service prior	(8) under-stand	(9) partner	(12) reflection
1 – Approximate number of hours per week I spent studying/ preparing for this class	1.00	-.019	.010	.043	-.164	.078	-.102
2 – Approximate number of hours per week I spent serving with my community partner	-.015	1.00	-.033	.003	.074	.104	-.171
3 – Approximate number of hours I work, for pay, each week	-.021	-.033	1.00	-.259	-.053	.050	-.064
4 – Were you performing community service prior to taking this class?	.171	.003	-.259	1.00	.278*	.343*	.047
8 – I more fully understand course content because of the service work performed	-.165	.074	-.053	.278	1.00	.267*	.461**
9 – The community partner I served with fit well with the course content	-.078	.104	.050	.343*	.267*	1.00	.021
12 – The reflection activities of this course tied my service work to civic responsibility	-.324*	-.171	-.064	.047	.461**	.021	1.00

The Community Placements

The student evaluations of the placement goodness of fit with their class are presented in the following tables.

Caution must be exercised in the interpretation of these percentages because of the very small number of respondents for each individual community partner.

Student Evaluation of Their Community Partner Placement

OTA 1140

organization/ agency	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
OTA				33	67	100
PF Students					100	100
SLCC PTA			9	36	55	100
			7	33	60	100

OTA 1170

organization/ agency	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Allen Ward					100	100.0%
Bennion Cure Center				100		100.0%
Cottonwood Hospital					100	100.0%
Crossroads Rehabilitation Clinic			50		50	100.0%
Health South Rehabilitation Hospital					100	100.0%
Highland Care Center				100		100.0%
Pineview Transitional Care Center					100	100.0%
Sandy Regional Health Care Center				50	50	100.0%
St Marks Hospital					100	100.0%
Woodland Park					100	100.0%
			7	20	73	100.0%

OTA 2320

organization/ agency	strongly Disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Total
Valley Mental Health					100	100
Total					100	100

OTA 2350

organization/ agency	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Beehive Homes Retirement Center					100	100
Golden Living Center					100	100
South Jordan Senior Center					100	100
					100	100

Future Service Learning

The vast majority of students indicate they will participate in future service learning classes. The drop in the percentage of students planning to take 2000-level classes may be due to anticipation by students that they will not be taking further classes.

Will you participate in future service learning classes?

Class	Percent Yes
OTA 1140	100
OTA 1170	100
OTA 2320	86
OTA 2350	71
Total	94

The majority of respondents indicate that their future service participation will not be due to their present class. The survey provides no additional data to explain this response.

Will it be because of this class that you participate in future service learning classes?

Class	Percent Yes
OTA 1140	44
OTA 1170	41
OTA 2320	43
OTA 2350	29
Total	40

Exploring Differences in Student Backgrounds between the Three Classes

Overall, the students in the 1000-level classes reported spending more time preparing and studying for class.

Student Characteristics by Class

Hours Of Total Effort Per Week For This Class

Class	None/no response	1 to 3 hours	4 or more hours	Total
	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140	44	38	19	101
OTA 1170	18	47	35	100
OTA 2320	0	100	0	100
OTA 2350	0	100	0	100
Total	21	60	19	100

The hours of service question is greatly hindered by the missing data due to lack of student response. It appears that very few students spent 4 or more hours in service a week.

Hours of Service				
Class	None Or no response	1 to 3 hours	4 or more hours	Total
	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140	44	56	0	101
OTA 1170	71	24	6	100
OTA 2320	0	100	0	100
OTA 2350	100	0	0	100
Total	40	58	2	100

The students in the 1000-level classes worked more hours in their employment than the 2000-level students.

Hours of Paid Employment per Week				
Class	None Or no response	Response 1 to 3	Response 4 or more	Total
	%	%	%	%
OTA 1140	0	62	38	100
OTA 1170	6	53	41	100
OTA 2320	0	72	29	101
OTA 2350	0	72	29	101
Total	2	62	36	100

The students in the 1000-level classes had significantly higher prior experience in service learning than the 2000-level students

Prior To This Class Did You Participated in Service Learning?	
Class	Percent Yes
OTA 1140	75
OTA 1170	65
OTA 2320	29
OTA 2350	43
Total	60

Discussion

The student assessments in this survey were very positive and should provide a compliment to those who created the classes.

The students in the 2000-level classes were much higher in the value they attributed to the service experience in their course learning. They also were stronger in their belief that they provided a needed community service. The importance of these perceptions for the students cannot be overemphasized and suggest they were the most successful service classes.

The research points to one area in particular that has room for considerable improvement. That is the better use of class reflection activities to foster the student's sense of civic responsibility.

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Occupational Therapy Assistant

Service Learning Classes

A Report by Frank Cooney Ph.D. to

The Salt Lake Community College

Thayne Center Service Learning Program

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