

SUSTAINING SERVICE-LEARNING:  
BEST PRACTICES AT SIX EXEMPLAR  
U.S. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

Ann Martha Ludwick  
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of  
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Committee:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Program Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dean, College of Humanities  
and Social Sciences

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By

Ann Martha Ludwick  
Master of Public Administration  
George Mason University, 1995  
Bachelor of Arts  
Longwood University, 1988

Director: John O'Connor, Professor  
Higher Education Program

Fall Semester 2010  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

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## DEDICATION

To my loving husband, Bob, our dear daughter, Maddie, and my wonderful parents, Charlie and Fae Ann Lawson. This dissertation is also dedicated to the committed service-learning staff, faculty, and administrators at my participant colleges who freely shared their stories with me.

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## ABSTRACT

### SUSTAINING SERVICE-LEARNING: BEST PRACTICES AT SIX EXEMPLAR U.S. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Ann Martha Ludwick, D.A.

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Dissertation Director: Dr. John O'Connor

This qualitative study identified key factors associated with exemplar service-learning programs at six community colleges across the United States. The purpose of this case study was to determine why these programs have sustained over time and to better understand how administrators and faculty meet shifting demands for service-learning. The research design was primarily qualitative and used surveys, interviews, and document analysis. Participants included program coordinators, faculty, and presidents at the six selected colleges. Semi-structured interviews provided multiple viewpoints of the current state of service-learning at the institutions. An analysis of these interviews relied on the participants' own experiences and explanations as to why service-learning has survived for more than a decade at their colleges. Findings revealed that robust programs started with a strong foundation, made positive connections across the college and throughout the community, had organizational structures aligned with service, used service-learning to emphasize student learning, and recognized the practical

application of this method for career and work purposes. Barriers affecting programs within the college and community partners revolved around communication, procedural, and organizational issues. The six colleges have demonstrated that long-term service-learning offers practical, real-world learning opportunities for students, the college, and the community.

## 1. Introduction

The historic United States 2008 presidential election invigorated Americans everywhere. President Barack Obama's theme of public service resonated with many people. On the president's agenda for public service: expand the Corporation for National and Community Service, expand service-learning in middle and high schools, and require 100 hours of service in college. On April 21, 2009, Obama signed The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (H.R. 1388) (Kittredge, 2009), a legislative initiative which supports his agenda and commits close to \$6 billion through 2014. Expanding several public service programs such as AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America, the law also "establishes the Campuses of Service to support and recognize institutions of higher education with exemplary service-learning programs and assists students in the pursuit of public service careers" (Kittredge, 2009). With the passage of this historic legislation, there is more of a need for service-learning than ever before. It is an opportunity to ensure the continuation of service-learning programs strongly connected to the community, and identify what role the community college will play in meeting the call to serve.

Service-learning and the community college form a likely connection. Service-learning can be a teaching method using experiential education concepts appealing to varied student learning styles. It can fulfill the community college mission of lifelong

learning and general education. It can also enhance students' civic responsibility and contribute to their understanding of self and society. And it improves student learning outcomes. It provides an ideal connection for service to the local community. For all these reasons, service-learning programs on community college campuses are essential. Programs that endure have positive effects on everyone involved.

A "typical" community college classroom may not be so typical these days. At Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio (Lester, C. & Robinson, G., 2007), students collaborated on a history project focused on the immigration experience in the Dayton area. Art students took photographs of local citizens and community events. History students researched data on immigration trends. Sociology students tapped into neighboring agencies to find out about community needs. Communication students interviewed local area immigrants. The objective was to tell the story of local area immigrants and highlight the rich culture of the Dayton area. "The Many Faces of Dayton Photo Mural and Stories Project" was the result of this effort. The project

consisted of approximately four thousand faces of people living and working in the greater Dayton area. These digitally produced photographs reflected the multicultural nature of the Miami Valley and were grouped on a series of 24 three-foot-by seven-foot canvasses with mylar overlays. Fourteen story panels, telling the stories of how people came to Dayton, accompanied the display (p. 26).

Faculty and students at Sinclair Community College partnered with the Dayton Visual Arts Center, the annual regional City Folk festival, and the City Hall on this undertaking.

The project is currently displayed at the college. These are examples of activities that student complete for service-learning credits.

In general, service-learning provides students with experiences that enrich their classroom learning with community service. A form of experiential education, the service-learning pedagogy brings an element of community service into the classroom, along with reflective thinking about personal responsibility and serving one's community. There are many benefits to service-learning. Service activities allow students to reflect on their experience, build critical thinking skills, learn practical skills, and connect their own involvement to social responsibility. Although the use of the service-learning pedagogy varies across colleges in the U.S., Sinclair Community College is one example of community colleges that currently offer service-learning.

### **Problem Statement**

The community college serves as a model for both open access for educational attainment and local community involvement. Some community colleges actively promote citizenship through service-learning programs which allow students to associate community service with classroom learning. Students develop critical thinking skills to enhance their roles as members of a democracy. Although student outcomes of service-learning have been studied, a relatively new area of research focuses on how colleges administer their service-learning programs and what factors influence the survivability of these programs. Moreover, most of the literature focuses on service-learning at the four-year university level. Kozeracki (2000) challenges us to consider the distinctions between two- and four-year institutions and raises the question about different approaches to serve

different student constituencies (p. 65). Therefore, this study is situated within community college service-learning programs.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

This study's purpose is to identify factors associated with program longevity in community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995, the first year of the American Association of Community Colleges' *National Service-Learning Survey* (Robinson & Barnett, 1996). This study is a multi-case, descriptive case study. There are two research questions:

1. Why have service-learning programs survived for more than a decade at selected colleges?
2. What practical factors influence program survival at these specific colleges?

My assumption was that for a service-learning program to be meaningful, it must have a chance to survive. My dissertation uses three related terms: program longevity, program sustainability, and program survival. Longevity refers to the permanence, or long-lasting time frame, of the program's existence. Sustainable programs exhibit longevity, but they are operating within a stable organization. The organization has reached a level of stability because it has survived. Program survivability, borrowing from new institutionalism, has to do with the point at which organizations blend into their environments and become interdependent (see definitions section within this chapter). As Cassidy, Leviton, and Hunter noted, "even the most effective program faces two challenges: maintaining or expanding its capacity and sustaining its effectiveness over time" (2006, p. 149). Although many programs begin with grant funding, a major barrier

for program survival is continued funding. How do programs maintain or expand service-learning when seed funding expires?

Research question one was intentionally designed to be rather vague in order to look for emerging trends from the data and considers why and how faculty and administrators support their programs. However, from the literature, I had some expectations about what I might find. Consequently, I planned some specific questions to ask participants relating to program survival and organizational culture areas. For research question two, my interview questions were of a more practical nature asking about internal and external barriers that influence program sustainability. My objective was to catalog useful strategies or advice for colleges and community partners that could be formulated into best practices. My interview process is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

This study uses the following definition of service-learning from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC): “service-learning combines classroom instruction with community service, focusing on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility” (Prentice, Robinson, & McPhee, 2003, p. 1).

Service-learning activities from this study’s participants include a variety of tasks such as nursing students working at a YMCA, sociology students tutoring or partnering with an international student, history students collecting oral histories, and anatomy and physiology students partnering with a local children’s museum.

## **Conceptual Framework**

As the above examples show, service-learning consists of various activities and takes place across disciplines. However, a structure needs to be in place at the college for service-learning to begin and ultimately thrive. This study looks at service-learning from an institutional perspective. What physical structures need to be in place in order for service-learning to grow? How do institutionalized programs survive over time? And who are the stakeholders involved in the effort? Several studies and new institutionalism theory have helped to frame this study. A discussion of the relevant ideas follows.

### **The Scaffolding for Service-Learning**

As Prentice, Exley and Robinson (2003) note, “for service learning to become institutionalized, it must be part of the fabric of the college. It should be integrated into the curriculum, supported by faculty, students, and administrators, and enhanced by strong community partnerships” (p. 1). The outlook for service-learning is positive, as it appears that many programs have indeed met the criteria for being institutionalized. For some time, researchers have studied how service-learning programs become embedded in their colleges.

Rubin (1996) takes an organizational approach and concludes, the institutionalization of service-learning in American higher education is more likely now than in the 1960s and 1970s because many colleges and universities have learned from the past and have become more collaborative and creative in developing programs that are directly tied to the mission and the culture of their institutions. (p. 314)

Institutionalized programs have tangible indicators of commitment to support service-learning. These include resources such as: a dedicated, centralized office; faculty rewards and incentives; and public awareness (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Hinck & Brandell, 2000). Prentice (2001a) includes student, faculty, and community partner orientations, as well as service-learning connected to existing initiatives as marks of successful programs.

Furco (2002) developed a rubric to assess the levels of service-learning institutionalism in higher education and discussed varying physical characteristics in stages across mission, faculty, student, community, and institutional dimensions. Furco's *Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education* (2002) offers an organized plan to gauge the level of institutionalism across five dimensions: philosophy and mission, faculty support and involvement, student support and involvement, community participation and partnerships, and institutional support; and by three stages: critical mass building, quality building, and sustained institutionalization. My case study focuses on the final two dimensions: community participation and partnerships, and institutional support.

While much has been studied about the indicators of institutionalized programs, the next target for study is what keeps them thriving. The service-learning literature has entered this next phase of program sustainability. Once colleges demonstrate a commitment to programs, how do they survive, or what makes the programs sustainable? I explore new institutionalism theory as a way to explain program survivability.

## **New Institutionalism Theory**

My study considers new institutionalism theory as related to how service-learning is situated in the college as an institution. New institutionalism focuses on myriad offshoots within institutional theory. In new institutionalism, for my study, I find it appropriate to consider the perspectives on environment and institutional survival. Meyer and Rowan (1991) contribute their standpoint on organizations reflecting their environments. Their emphasis is on “institutional isomorphism” (p. 47), meaning organizations blend into or become interdependent with their environments. This “isomorphic” quality ensures survival because “organizations both deal with their environments at their boundaries and imitate environmental elements in their structures” (p. 47). This concept is supported by Brint and Karabel (1991) in their discussion of the transformation of the two-year college. They point to “environmental adaptation theory...to say that organizations survive if they fit into niches in the ecology of existing organizations” (pp. 348-349).

Two streams of thought pertain to my understanding of community college service-learning programs. First, there is an internal environment that has to do with where the program is positioned within the college, for example, within Student Services, an academic unit, or Career Services, as well as interactions among students and faculty within the college. Second, there is an external environment which is the local community and the partnering organizations participating in service-learning with the college. How the stakeholders are interdependent and adapt to organizational change will be examined.

The discussion of new institutionalism provides a good frame of reference to understand the survival of service-learning programs. If such programs were considered woven into the fabric of the college, certainly they would persist and survive organizational changes over time. The community college has found its own niche over time and service-learning programs are also examples of adapting and responding to a need. Next, I discuss a previous study which has contributed to my conceptual framework.

### **Impact Variables for Institutionalized Programs**

An assessment model proposed by Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, and Kerrigan (1996) was relevant to my case study. Their article, “An Assessment Model for Service-Learning: Comprehensive Case Studies of Impact on Faculty, Students, Community, and Institution” looked at impact variables along four constituencies: student, faculty, community, and institution. Their paper documented the impact of service-learning at Portland State University (PSU) and offered a model for assessment, including indicators and measurements, to measure impact of service-learning outcomes.

Driscoll et al.’s (1996) study is a result of their efforts to collect data about various service-learning activities happening at their particular university for the purpose of developing a formal assessment approach. They offer their model as a way to monitor program activities from multiple stakeholder perspectives and suggest mechanisms to measure impact.

**How the model pertains to my study.** Driscoll et al.’s (1996) model was based on four constituencies: students, faculty, community, and institution. Although the

participants in my study directly include service-learning coordinators, faculty, and presidents, my interview questions ask about impacts along the four constituencies from participant perspectives. A wide range of impact variables allowed for multiple ways to sort and categorize the data.

**How I adapted the model.** The purpose of my study was to determine why six community college service-learning programs have sustained over time, and to better understand how administrators and faculty met shifting program demands. Surveys, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis gathered data related to the same variables. However, I adapted the university-based model to fit the community college level. The adapted model fits better as a rubric for my purposes.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework as a diagram. I have depicted the four stakeholders connected by service-learning with students, faculty, and college located in an internal environment, and the community as part of the external environment. The dotted line represents a shared relationship between the internal and external environments. Because of the collaborative nature of service-learning, the internal and external environments interact as do the stakeholders.

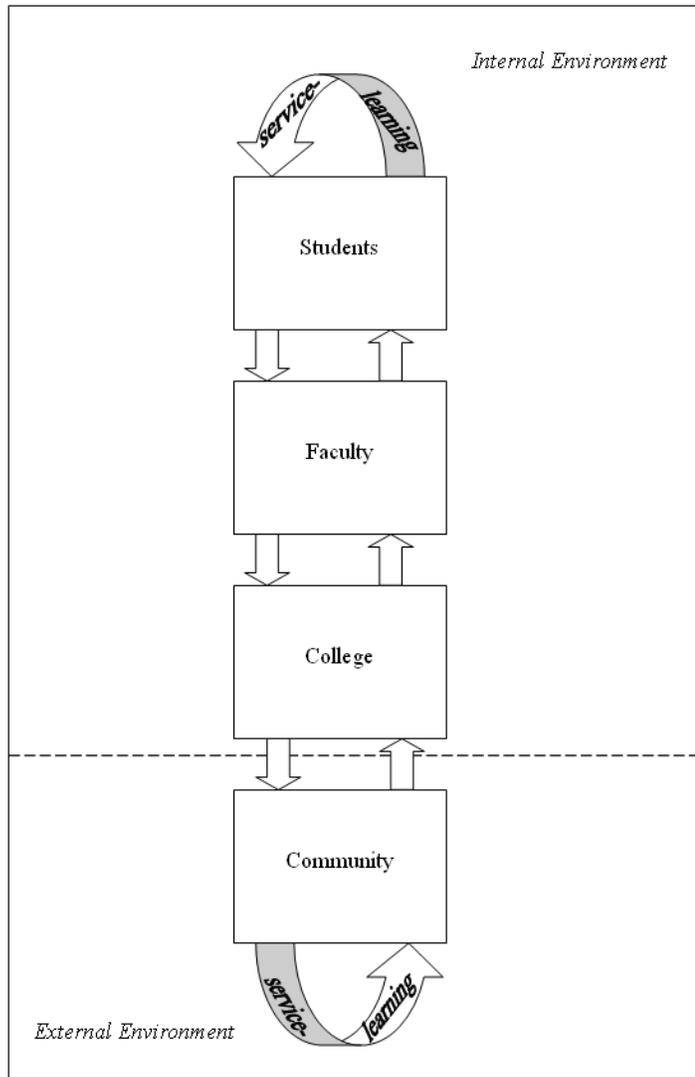


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

### Section Summary

This section discussed the scaffolding for service-learning to explain structural features and criteria of institutionalized programs. The literature pointed to several markers and levels of institutionalization. I posed the question of program survivability and offered new institutionalism—with its focus on internal and external environmental

interdependence factors—as a possible explanation for sustainability of long-term programs. The conceptual framework is informed by Driscoll et al.’s (1996) assessment model with four constituencies which nicely fit with my study’s four stakeholder perspectives. Their model offers multiple categories for monitoring and cataloging service-learning activities on a college campus. The adapted rubric is shown in Table 1, and its application will be presented in detail in Chapter 6.

Table 1

*Impact Variables Rubric*

Student Side			
Variables	Coordinators	Faculty	Presidents
Awareness of Community Involvement with Community Commitment to Service Career Choices Self-Awareness Personal Development Academic Achievement Sensitivity to Diversity			
Faculty Side			
Variables	Coordinators	Faculty	Presidents
Involvement with Community Awareness of Community Level of Volunteerism Professional Development Scholarship Teaching Methods Faculty/Student Interaction Philosophy of Teaching/Learning Role in Community-Based Teaching			

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Community Side			
Variables	Coordinators	Faculty	Presidents
Nature of Partnership Involvement with Community Perceived Capacity to Serve Clients Social Benefits New Insights About Operations/Activities Awareness of College Establishment of Ongoing Relationships Satisfaction with College Interactions			
Institutional Side			
Variables	Coordinators	Faculty	Presidents
Role in Community Orientation to Teaching and Learning Resource Acquisition Image in Community (Local, State, National, International)			

*Note.* Adapted from Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, and Kerrigan's Assessment Model for Service-Learning (1996).

### Methodology

The research is a descriptive case study of service-learning programs. I chose case study because I was interested in: (a) what was happening now with service-learning at particular colleges, and (b) how I could use this information to develop a set of best

practices for service-learning. As Merriam (1998) points out, “by concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. The case study focuses on holistic description and explanation” (pp. 28-29). This study includes a comparison of past and current data, along with surveys and personal interviews, to identify emergent issues. A qualitative approach provides the best fit since qualitative research, as Merriam (1998) notes, “is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (p. 6). The study is designed to document and analyze the current state of service-learning at six community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995. College respondents, consisting of service-learning program administrative personnel and faculty, were interviewed to provide multiple viewpoints of emergent service-learning issues found on their campuses. The goal was to identify phenomena that affect service-learning programs and factors that impact the survival of these programs. Data were collected during the 2008 calendar year. Data sources included a web-based survey administered to six service-learning coordinators, six college presidents, and semi-structured interviews with the 6 coordinators and 16 faculty. Case selection, data collection, and analysis will be discussed in detail in the methodology chapter of this dissertation.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

Civic engagement – considering oneself as part of the larger society by serving one’s community, volunteering, and connecting to others. Civic engagement contributes to social problem solving and is directly related to democratic ideals for developing citizens (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Community engagement – activities through which one serves one’s community, volunteers, and connects to others. Such activities may or may not have ties to democratic ideals.

Community Partner – the local agency or unit collaborating with the college; examples include public health agencies, local government, environmental organizations, social service agencies, and K through 12 schools.

Experiential education – “includes many different kinds of direct, hands-on activities that are meant to help students connect theory with practice and represent and experience theoretical concepts in practical, behavioral modes and real-life settings” (Colby et al., 2003, p. 135). Service-learning is a form of experiential education.

Institutional commitment – the degree to which a college has dedicated its support (e.g., through funding, staffing, space).

Institutionalization – “occurs when colleges and universities align mission, curriculum, resources (human and fiscal), and faculty reward structures to support and enhance community-engaged activities” (Strong, Green, Meyer, & Post, 2009).

Organizational practices – the policies, procedures and processes developed to implement service-learning activities.

Placement site – the off-campus location of the community partner where the student(s) perform service.

Program longevity – refers to the permanence, or long-lasting time frame, of the program's existence.

Program survival – borrowing from new institutionalism, the point at which organizations blend into their environments and become interdependent. Within the context of service-learning, it means programs have become part of the fabric of the college and have become sustainable (see program sustainability).

Program sustainability – “program sustainability exists when elements essential to a program's effectiveness continue to operate over time, within a stable organization, at stable or increased organizational and service capacity” (Cassidy et al., 2006, p. 150).

Service-learning – service-learning “combines community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility” (Prentice, Robinson, & McPhee, 2003).

Student learning – includes six areas using the AACCC definition from the 2010 research brief *Improving Student Learning Outcomes With Service Learning*: critical thinking, communication, career and teamwork, civic responsibility, global understanding and citizenship, and academic development and educational success.

### **Significance**

This study contributes to the literature on institutional sustainability of service-learning programs at the community college level. Specifically, it provides a descriptive account and analysis of the status of organizational issues and use of service-learning in

U.S. community colleges currently offering such programs. It also provides practical factors influencing program survival in terms of internal and external barriers. This information may be of value to college administrators and faculty considering implementing service-learning, or members of current institutions who seek to improve or expand programs, or overcome problems with their current programs. There is a clear need at the community college level to understand sustainable service-learning programs and to gauge the value of institutional and community connections.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study is one step toward understanding program survival factors in long-term community college service-learning programs. While this research addresses organizational issues in a case study format, there are some issues about the approach. First, by using telephone interviews, I have missed out on the direct observation experience. Also, the chosen design, collected data, and resultant interpretation have been filtered through my experiences and explanations. A limitation has to do with participant selection. Participants were selected directly from the colleges that responded to the 1995 and 2003 AACC surveys of community colleges. Thus data was limited to the colleges that were represented in both years. There may be other long-term programs that did not factor into this study because they did not participate in both survey years.

Delimitations associated with this case study were due to the bounded focus of what was happening at the six particular participant colleges during the year of 2008. This study represents viewpoints only from the selected colleges. The findings are not intended to be generalizable, although commonalities found across the selected programs

in this study may lead to transferability that researchers and practitioners may find of value.

### **Organization**

Chapter One introduces the study's main concepts and purpose. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature organized to address: (a) definitions of service-learning, (b) an historic overview of service-learning, (c) higher education and civic engagement, (d) service-learning and the community college, (e) institutionalizing and sustaining service-learning, (f) barriers to implementing service-learning, (g) service-learning rewards, and (h) a review of survey data leading to this study. Chapter Three explains the methodology. Chapter Four provides descriptive information on the case colleges. Chapter Five presents an overview of the findings. Chapter Six discusses the implications of service-learning best practices and includes a conclusion and suggestions for further research. Appendices include an historical time line of service-learning, George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board documentation, survey instruments, and interview guide.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the pertinent literature. The study's aim was to determine best practices associated with long-term, model service-learning programs at community colleges. The research questions are: (a) Why have service-learning programs survived for more than a decade at selected community colleges, including why and how faculty and administrators support their programs; and (b) What practical factors influence program survival at these colleges? The objective was to identify best practices and trends for program sustainability.

My initial understanding about service-learning was that its use was solely for civic engagement purposes. A review of the literature showed a basis of this for service-learning programs, but also revealed more objectives for service-learning. Different scholarly perspectives and various existing studies about practices provided a deeper foundation for my current understanding of program longevity in terms of the case colleges in my study. This study's purpose was to identify factors associated with program longevity found in community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995. Therefore, the literature review includes information about institutionalization and sustainable program efforts. This literature search was not meant to be exhaustive, but was limited to studies that would add to the understanding of

practical program management approaches in order to supplement the body of knowledge related to program implementation and sustainability of service-learning programs.

The review begins by defining service-learning, then provides an historical overview of the movement. Next, service and civic engagement are examined within the higher education context. The review then moves to service-learning practices at the community college level: ways service-learning is being implemented, what institutionalizes and sustains programs, and barriers that programs face. The review concludes with a discussion of the AACC's national service-learning survey data (Robinson & Barnett, 1996, & Prentice, Robinson, & McPhee, 2003) relevant to this research.

### **What Is Service-Learning?**

There are many variations of service-learning. A recent Internet Google search of the term "service-learning" resulted in over 102,000,000 hits. This section lists five widely held interpretations and identifies the particular definition used for this study. It continues with a discussion of different vehicles for service-learning. Further, I provide useful information about what service-learning is not. Finally, I highlight why this pedagogy is important.

- According to the American Association for Higher Education (Campus Compact, 2003), service-learning means a method under which students learn and develop through thoughtfully organized service that: is conducted in and meets the needs of a community and is coordinated with an institution of higher education, and with the community; helps foster civic responsibility; is

integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students enrolled; and includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience.

(p. 15)

- The Corporation for National and Community Service is an organization with a mission “to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering” (Corporation for National and Community Service [CNCC], n.d. A program of CCNC, the Learn and Serve America’s meaning of service-learning “is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” (n.d.)
- Ehrlich (1996), in his Foreword to *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*, notes “service-learning is the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study so that each strengthens the other. The basic theory of service-learning is Dewey’s: the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning. Students learn best not by reading the Great Books in a closed room but by opening the doors and windows of experience. Learning starts with a problem and continues with the application of increasingly complex ideas and increasingly sophisticated skills to increasingly complicated problems.” (p. xi-xii)
- Campus Compact’s interpretation is as follows: “Service-learning incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world

learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community” (Service-Learning, n.d.).

- This study uses the following definition of service-learning from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC): “service-learning combines community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility” (Robinson, 1995, p. 1). This definition provides the best fit for my understanding of service-learning based at the community college level.

While all of these interpretations are similar, the variations illustrate the wide range of service-learning purposes for different audiences. Some service-learning programs emphasize student learning and reflection while others use terms such as “development of workforce and community leadership skills” and “cultivating passion for a just and equitable world” in their program mission statements. While objectives are diverse, in general, the common threads of service-learning involve learning through community service for civic participation and values, with an academic focus by way of experiential education. The service-learning pedagogy brings an element of community service into the classroom, along with reflective thinking about personal responsibility and active citizenship. It is used across subject areas and grade levels from K through 12, as well as undergraduate and graduate curricula (Learn and Serve America, n.d., Bushouse & Morrison, 2001).

Moreover, service-learning activities can be delivered in different ways. Harris and Gaeke (2009) categorize projects as: (a) direct service which involves on-site work at

an organization for two to three hours per week, (b) project-based service where students work with an organization on a specific problem and work on solutions, and (c) community-based action research that allows students to study an issue through “the research process, such as developing the research question(s), identifying the appropriate methodology(ies), collecting and analyzing the data, and interpreting the results” (p. 2). Depending on the institution, there may be other arms of service. For example, an indirect service project may be done on a group basis and with outcomes focusing on teamwork and organizational skills. Programs may also be involved in special projects that focus on social issues such as advocacy.

To further understand the meaning of service-learning, it is also helpful to understand what service-learning is not. In general, service-learning is not:

- completing service hours in order to graduate,
- an isolated experience (as in benefiting only the service recipient), or
- a practicum or internship.

These types of experiences, while commonly used and worthwhile, are not specific to the objectives of service-learning. The service-learning project must be designed within a meaningful community service experience. It is a learning approach that is focused on critical thinking and civic responsibility through reflection and partnership with the community.

Why is service-learning important? Organizations such as Learn and Serve America and the American Association of Community Colleges have engaged in and published research showing service-learning to be an effective strategy for promoting

learning and civic responsibility. Community colleges may also emphasize service-learning. Table 2 shows Chandler-Gilbert Community College in Arizona's list of the benefits of service-learning.

Table 2

*Chandler-Gilbert Community College's List of Benefits of Service-Learning*

Benefits for Students	Benefits for Teachers	Benefits for Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes curriculum relevant to students' lives</li> <li>• Clarifies values</li> <li>• Promotes community and civic responsibility</li> <li>• Encourages multicultural awareness</li> <li>• Develops critical thinking and problem solving skills</li> <li>• Fosters social and personal development</li> <li>• Builds a community within the classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relevance of the experience to students' lives validates teaching and enhances learning</li> <li>• Helps build classroom community</li> <li>• Establishes relationships with people in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides meaningful services to our community</li> <li>• Creates opportunities for community agencies to participate in student learning</li> <li>• Builds community awareness of college programs and services</li> </ul>

*Note.* From Chandler-Gilbert Community College (n.d.).

Clearly, this pedagogy has a valid role in higher education with advantages for several stakeholders (students, teachers, community, and college). Regarding the list of benefits in Table 2, it is interesting to note that promoting community and civic responsibility serves a larger purpose for the notion of citizenship and roles of citizens in a larger society. Also, the focus on critical thinking and problem-solving activities strengthens the learning process. Service-learning results in richer learning experiences for students which are applicable to real life because it occurs within a community

context (Eyler and Giles, 1999). Everyone benefits because the community connections are of value across all stakeholder interests.

To summarize this section, this study used the AACCC definition of service-learning because it is placed in the context of the community college. Service-learning can be used across grade levels in elementary, secondary, and higher education (Learn and Serve America, n.d.). Projects can be conducted in different ways to suit the particular needs of the colleges and communities. While general experiential elements occur in the education process by way of practicum or service hour requirements, service-learning has specific objectives, so it helps to understand what constitutes service-learning and what does not. Many educators agree that this pedagogy brings multiple benefits to students, teachers, community, and college. To further clarify perspectives of service-learning, the next section gives a historical overview of the service-learning movement.

### **Historical Overview of Service-Learning**

Service-learning is one way to encourage civic participation and promote civic responsibility. It has its place in the long line of America's history of education, community involvement, and citizenship. Service-learning is not a new phenomenon. This section will give a historical overview of the service-learning movement by discussing major milestones over the past few decades. It will conclude with reviewing recent initiatives and discussing the state of service-learning today.

Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (n.d.) has provided an informative historical timeline showing a comprehensive interpretation of the

development of service-learning (“Historical Timeline,” n.d.) (Appendix A). However, for the purpose of this discussion, service-learning is placed in a more modern context. Today’s form of service-learning first began within the field of experiential education and is based on a values-oriented philosophy of education. According to Stanton, Giles, and Cruz, service-learning was born during the 1960s and 1970s when the focus of the times was on social problems and education reform (1999). Community activists and educators seeking to link action in communities to structured learning began to form a unique idea that would become service-learning. In the 1960s, service-learning on college campuses was influenced by the Civil Rights movement, and the establishment of the Peace Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) (“History of Service-Learning in Higher Education,” 2008). These outlets allowed young people to become actively engaged in their communities and make a difference in the world.

In the 1980s, educators emphasized active learning pedagogies and volunteerism. It was during this decade that the term “service-learning” was used by Campus Compact, a national higher education organization comprised of college and university presidents working together to strengthen citizenship through community service (Campus Compact, n.d.). The formation of Campus Compact in 1985 aimed to address civic involvement at public and private four-year and two-year colleges. Currently, there are over 1,100 member colleges from public, private, two- and four-year institutions (Campus Compact, n.d.). The 1980s also saw the rise of such organizations as the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), Youth Service America, and the Office of National Service in the White House. These organizations help to promote this

learning method which allows students to associate community service with classroom learning.

Other organizations have come to the forefront to play an integral part in supporting service-learning. The Corporation for National and Community Service, established in 1993, serves as a hub for connecting volunteers and manages three key programs: the Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America (2010). Since 1994, the American Association of Community Colleges' Broadening Horizons through Service Learning project has provided resources, funding and research for service-learning aimed at two-year institutions (AACC, 2010). The Community College National Center for Community Engagement (2010) is another well-organized resource for service-learning at two-year institutions. Associated with Mesa Community College in Arizona, this organization hosts conferences, provides training and technical assistance to community colleges, and makes resources available to anyone interested in community engagement. More efforts to connect service-learning colleagues across the world endure. The International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) began in 2005 and exists to promote research on service-learning and community engagement (n.d.). They host conferences, offer several publications, and recognize contributors to the field.

Today, service-learning continues to evolve. Practitioners and scholars frequently use the term service-learning, but some may refer to community service-learning, and others situate themselves in community-based learning. Whatever the terminology, service in the classroom continues to thrive as colleges integrate this learning method and

users find ways to apply it. Concurrently, scholars are still debating the purposes of a civic mission in higher education and ways to transform citizenship education (Talcott, 2005).

This section summarized a brief history of service-learning by highlighting milestone events and current organizations involved in research and support. The next section continues in this vein to place higher education in a civic engagement context.

### **Higher Education and Civic Engagement**

American democracy ideally relies on an educated citizenry to continuously bolster democratic values such as liberty and equality. The responsibility of citizenship seems a tremendous task. Where do people learn the tools for civic life? What is the civic mission of higher education? This section includes a discussion on the civic purposes of higher education. It is framed within the contexts of liberal and general education. I examine the general goals, perspectives, and current practices that lead to the use of service-learning. Recent reports on civic disengagement of college students reveal ways that colleges use service-learning. Finally, a critique of service-learning is presented.

To recap my definition of civic engagement, it involves considering oneself as part of the larger society by serving one's community, volunteering, and connecting to others. Civic engagement contributes to social problem solving and is directly related to democratic ideals for developing citizens (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*, Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens (2003) debated the public purposes of higher education pointing out,

if today's college graduates are to be positive forces in this world, they need not only to possess knowledge and intellectual capacities but also to see themselves as members of a community, as individuals with a responsibility to contribute to their communities. (p. 7)

Their contention was that education for democratic citizenship should be a priority through the general goal of liberal education. They defined this goal as “the preparation of students for lives that provide personal satisfaction and promote the common good” (Colby et al., 2003, p. 23), and called for liberal education to be revitalized. Their book documented 12 institutions of higher education that have fostered civic education within the undergraduate curriculum. While families and peers certainly play a role in the civic socialization of young people, schools are arguably the most important arena for civic education. Service-learning contributes to this end by linking community service to classroom instruction and civic responsibility. This part of the literature review will examine some reasons for civic engagement within higher education, then move into a contemporary discussion of community-based learning.

The scholarly debate about higher education and civic engagement saw a resurgence since the 1980s (History of Service Learning, 2008). From the educator's point of view, hooks (2003) discussed the concept of conversation as the vehicle for democratic education and emphasized “bring[ing] a spirit of study to learning that takes place both in and beyond the classroom settings, [therefore] learning must be understood as an experience that enriches life in its entirety” (p. 42). While hooks promoted

experience for democratic education, Wofford took this a step further into the working world.

Wofford (2000) pondered the core American value of educating young people for success in life and held that “they will be the productive workers and engaged citizenry upon which this country depends” (p. 14). He believed a committed investment in young people requires leadership from higher education. Higher education can then influence all levels of government to make that investment. His focus was on preparing students for work and careers while preparing them to be engaged citizens. Colleges with service-learning programs serve as natural locales to prepare students for both active citizenship and work life. But the role of higher education has shifted over time.

Snyder (2008) provided an historic overview of democracy and higher education detailing higher education’s foundation in public affairs and moral education with a classic liberal arts focus. However, this initial purpose has changed toward a modern ideal of colleges serving career and vocational goals—moving away from the civic mission. She noted a trend toward readdressing public and societal concerns since the 1990s, and suggested higher education can revitalize its civic mission.

While Colby et al. (2003) called for a revitalization of liberal education, others discuss general education as a way to fulfill democratic education. According to Cohen and Brawer (2002),

general education is for the creation of a free citizenry, the Greek ideal of the citizen participating in the polity. Because we are embedded in families, tribes, and communities, we must learn to be free-thinking citizens, learn the literacy

necessary for life in a civil society, the competence to participate in the broader community, the ability to think critically. (p. 354)

In the literature, there are discussions about liberal education and general education. To help clarify these viewpoints, I looked to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) for definitions. According to the AACU, liberal education

is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change...A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. (n.d.)

Related to liberal education is general education, which the AACU defines as “the part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities.” (n.d.) According to Duesterhaus (2006), universities moved away from the classic liberal education model toward general education when the focus for learning became more for work and career purposes. She noted that work-oriented fields such as teaching and nursing and vocational tracks were incorporated into the curriculum of higher education, and the general education objectives came about by the late 1940s. She explained, “the primary goal of general education is to provide a broad, yet focused, survey of courses that will promote critical thinking and increase students’ awareness of

the world around them.” Service-learning has found a natural place within general education.

It is because of the shift toward rethinking the civic mission, along with liberal and general education goals, that we have service-learning as an option today. For higher education in general, Ostrander (2004) supported the practice of community service in the classroom; instructors and students use course activities to work out problems of democracy and public life. She further identified curriculum transformation as a main component of supporting civic engagement, meaning that faculty have actively incorporated community-based learning into course work. Embedding education in this way “redefine[s] the overall purpose of education ‘to assist students in making the critical transition from receptors of facts to lifelong learners’” (p. 80). This sentiment refers back to Ehrlich’s (2000) definition of service-learning as a way to apply knowledge (through lifelong learning) as participatory citizens to societal problems. Prentice and Robinson (2010) defined academic learning outcomes as having six areas encompassing critical thinking, communication, career and teamwork, civic responsibility, global understanding and citizenship, and academic development and educational success. Clearly service-learning can provide a bridge using general education and serving students academically.

Others target restructuring the curriculum to improve the civic mission of higher education.

Guarasci and Cornwell (1997), proponents of citizenship education and multiculturalism, examined cultural changes in liberal education and advocated to reform curriculum and pedagogy to align more with a civic mission of higher education. They

described service-learning, community-centered programs, and collaborative efforts among faculty as ways to initiate change and move forward while recognizing diversity in the education system. They further provided valuable insight about the impact of folding community service into the learning experience:

Through community service many students encounter persons and contexts quite distinct from their own experience, which helps them understand more fully the “self–other” dichotomy. Students see how they are both different from and yet similar to others outside their immediate biographies; they begin to comprehend how self-respect and regard for others are intimately linked both in their development and in the needs of the communities in which they live. (p. 11)

Their perspective lends itself well to civic responsibility in a diverse and/or global community. Combining learning in and out of the classroom can provide ways for students to consider problems or issues in the local community they may not otherwise find themselves.

O’Connor (2004) provided an accounting of several community-based learning activities geared toward civic engagement in higher education. Service-learning was included as

the best known and most popular way for the academy to encourage greater civic engagement and community participation. Part of the success stemmed from the ways in which service promotes conventional academic learning where building upon the current generation’s interest in volunteerism. (p. 54)

The service-learning pedagogy is one method used to promote civic engagement with an emphasis on student learning during the college experience. But from where did the concern for retooling civic engagement stem?

Educational values often include citizenship, inquiry, and public engagement. There is growing concern that current college students are less engaged in public service and communities. There have been many reports<sup>1</sup> detailing such concerns about the civic purpose of American education. To demonstrate, it is worth reviewing some recent studies.

Niemi and Junn (1998) argued, based on the 1988 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment, “citizens who are more highly educated appear to hold more positive views about American society and government in general” (p. 10). They continued,

political knowledge helps citizens operate effectively in a democracy, heightens their awareness of the limits of both governmental and citizen behavior, increases attainment of democratic goals by promoting more equal access among citizens, and contributes to the extent to which citizens regard their government with confidence and satisfaction. (p. 11)

The place to help cultivate political knowledge is in higher education.

In 2000, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education published *Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*. Ehrlich’s (2000) section titled “Civic Engagement” discussed the problem of declining civic

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive historical study of citizenship education on university campuses, see Talcott’s (2005) “Modern Universities, Absent Citizenship? Historical Perspectives.”

participation by young people and what colleges and universities can do about it. He pointed to service-learning as an important way to promote civic responsibility. He also noted,

institutions of higher education should help students to recognize themselves as members of a larger social fabric, to consider social problems to be at least partly their own, to see the civic dimensions of issues, to make and justify informed civic judgments, and to take action when appropriate. (p. 178)

A 2002 national panel report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*, looked at undergraduate education in terms of the quality of student learning. One of the conclusions focused on personal actions and civic values: “through discussion, critical analysis, and introspection, they [the students] come to understand their roles in society and accept active participation” (p. 23). As a result of recent reports on civic disengagement, colleges have found ways to address this need.

Lopez & Brown (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of civic engagement among two-year and four-year college students and concluded “there is a strong link in the United States between education and political and civic participation. Those who spend more years in school and college are more likely to vote, volunteer, and otherwise participate” (p. 1). Service-learning can help students participate in their communities and develop critical thinking skills to enhance their roles as members of a democracy.

One initiative exists on colleges campuses today. The American Democracy Project (ADP) (n.d.), a program of the American Association of State Colleges and

Universities (AASCU), has linked higher education and community service to address these concerns. The ADP, for example, specifically focuses on “preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy” (n.d.). According to ADP’s web site, over 220 participating colleges and universities have programs encouraging such activities as public deliberation, using technology tools for citizens interacting with government, and use of public lands (n.d.).

While there is a strong call for colleges to prepare students for civic responsibility, service-learning is not always the answer for all. Kirlin (2002) critiqued the design of some service-learning activities and contended there is little evidence that this pedagogy helps to develop certain civic skills. She felt that pre-determined activities with “canned” individual projects were not enough for students to develop active participation proficiency. She concluded that

democratic society inherently demands collective decision making...participation in organizations provides the opportunity for hands-on development of foundational civic skills such as working in groups, organizing others to accomplish tasks, communicating, and working out differences of substance or process on the way to accomplishing a goal. (p. 573)

Effective projects should address these dimensions and can provide constructive learning for citizenship. Likewise, Boyte and Farr (1997) supported citizenship as public work and envisioned service-learning more as citizen education through deliberation and solving problems by working together. All in all, an active pedagogy contributes most effectively in service-learning. According to Boyer (1990), “service is not just something students do

in their spare time; it connects back to the core curriculum and the search for shared values” (p. 26).

The public purpose of higher education holds many meanings among scholars. The main point stems from liberal education with broad general education objectives. Public concern has grown in the face of lost civic engagement ideals of people in the United States. The quality of undergraduate education has been called to question and reports have specified reforms. Service-learning is one way to prepare students as contributors to their communities. While service-learning has its critics, there is a likely place where this learning method can thrive: at the community college level. The next section situates the movement within the community college and concentrates on the distinctions of the two-year institution.

### **Service-Learning and the Community College**

The community college serves as a model for both open access for educational attainment and local community involvement. Some community colleges are actively using service-learning programs today. This learning method allows students to associate community service with classroom learning, and students develop critical thinking skills that enhance their learning. Most of the literature focuses on service-learning at the four-year university level. Kozeracki (2000) challenged us to consider the distinctions between two- and four-year institutions and raised the question of different approaches to serve different student constituencies (p. 65). As this study is situated at the community college level, this section serves to describe and justify service-learning programs at two-year institutions.

Community outreach is a positive move toward democratic ideals, and the community college can play a major role here. Lifelong learning and open “access to the form of general studies that leads to an understanding of self and society” (Cohen & Brawer, 2002, p. 353) are community college values that guide students toward responsibilities of democratic citizenship. Community college services to the local citizenry come in many forms: Career, developmental, and community education are objectives and are essentially tailored to the needs of each college’s own community.

Wofford (2000) painted a stirring picture of the community college as having incredible potential to put more active-duty citizens on the home-front because they serve so much of our population and help to make the dream of higher education a reality. Community colleges offer inspiration and a catalyst to so many young people, recent immigrants, adults returning to school, and people aspiring to move beyond poverty, move beyond welfare, move beyond low skills—to achieve the promise of living in a democracy. (p. 15)

Centered in its community, the mission of the American community college is to provide educational opportunity and lifelong learning for, according to the American Association of Community Colleges, “all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience” (n.d.).

Schwinn and Schwinn’s (2000) article, “A Call to Community Service: The Community College Role in Comprehensive Community Development,” identified two challenges ripe for community colleges to develop: civic engagement and dialogue, and civic and citizen leadership development (p. 26). They contended community colleges are

uniquely situated to promote community development by doing more “to see our communities more whole, our role more pivotal, and our citizens more vital” (p. 26). Service-learning contributes to both of these values by linking students directly to the community.

Some community colleges have exciting citizenship programs in place now. In particular, the service-learning movement which “combines community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility” (Prentice, Robinson & McPhee, 2003) has been happening in various forms on college campuses. Service-learning involves student participation in organized, community-based experiences that are tied to a school’s curriculum, and require reflection and connection to personal and civic responsibility (Robinson, 1999; Wade, 1997). The aim of this experiential learning method is to empower students to serve communities and become engaged as active citizens (Stanton et al., 1999).

Between 1995 and 2003, service-learning in community colleges increased (Prentice, Robinson, and McPhee, 2003). For example, out of 173 total respondents, 62 community colleges offered service-learning activities in 1995. As of 2003, an additional 69 new colleges had initiated service-learning on their campuses. Between 1995 and 2003, the number of community college service-learning programs doubled (Prentice, Robinson & McPhee, 2003). While these programs are frequently supported by foundations, grants, and college funding, it is imperative to find ways for them to survive.

As my study shows, there are some active service-learning programs happening at community colleges now. This section covered the lifelong learning and open access

missions of two-year institutions. The community college is the natural locale for this community-based pedagogy. The purposes of service-learning are to connect community service with classroom instruction and to link students, instructors, the community, and the college in a shared experience. Studies have shown that programs have increased on community college campuses and should be supported. For service-learning, institutional leadership and community connections need to be in place. Although student outcomes of service-learning have been studied, a relatively new area of research focuses on the administration of such programs in terms of implementation and sustainability. The next section will review main trends and issues with institutionalizing and sustaining programs.

### **Institutionalizing and Sustaining Service-Learning**

The community college mission is closely related to the purposes of service-learning: to promote civic and community engagement. For this pedagogy to endure, there needs to be a level of institutionalization in place. Institutionalization “occurs when colleges and universities align mission, curriculum, resources (human and fiscal), and faculty reward structures to support and enhance community-engaged activities” (Strong et al., 2009). Hand-in-hand with this is institutional commitment, the degree to which a college has dedicated its support (for example, through funding, staffing, space).

Johnson (2000) notes “the historic mission of higher education in this country...has been to help individuals responsibly and intelligently achieve satisfaction in their lives and to promote effective citizenship” (p. 4). It is thus advantageous to include service-learning in the curriculum. Rubin (1996) addresses the fit-to-mission as she

astutely observes, “effective service-learning models must complement the particular culture and environment, as well as mission, of their institutions” (p. 299). To cement institutional support, “successful programs...intentionally develop strong ties with many other campus units and, in turn, receive the support of various constituencies” (p. 302). Prentice (2001b) outlined best practices revolving around student and faculty orientations, celebrating successes, focusing on the institutional context, including reflection, and tracking outcomes. At the Community College of Vermont, the dean of Academic Services was so impressed with how the college was interconnected with the community that he worked to expedite the approval process for their service-learning program (Matkowski, 1997).

One example of institutional commitment is the Miami-Dade Community College *Faculty Guide to Service-Learning*. As an institution, Miami-Dade Community College consistently appears in the literature as maintaining a model service-learning program. Their *Faculty Guide to Service-Learning* (Johnson, 2000) outlines the purpose of the program (why and how to use it), recognizes faculty concerns, and includes a list of support services for faculty. Indeed, President Eduardo J. Padron of Miami-Dade Community College praises their system and explains how, in six years, service-learning began with nothing and grew into a network of internally funded campus centers employing directors, coordinators, and assistants (Padron, 2000). Some points of insight from President Padron include the importance of faculty training and administrative support, customer service orientation, space and staff, and continuous documentation and evaluation.

Although faculty incentives play a key role in involvement for faculty, colleges varied widely on the types of incentives. Some colleges have official service-learning directors on site; others take a team approach or house the service-learning effort in the career or counseling office (Prentice, Robinson, et al., 2003). Support at the administration level is another key indicator of institutionalization. Prentice, Robinson, et al. (2003) reported on a chief academic officers summit on service-learning institutionalization. They identified several themes which centered mainly on the faculty, college culture, community partners, and civic responsibility. The report also describes four program models and the role of service-learning in accreditation. They examine a 2001 report which looked at service-learning in community colleges in terms of culture and sustainability. Successful programs had involved leaders and faculty development opportunities. Other key success pointers were external funding, regular program assessment, recognition events, and faculty support (for example, orientations and faculty involved as coordinators).

Bringle and Hatcher (2000) also look at institutionalization. They considered mission and service in higher education and determined factors of institutionalization included involvement of Campus Compact, a centralized service-learning office on campus, and a funded coordinator. In a previous study, Bringle and Hatcher (1996) presented a “comprehensive action plan for service learning” and provided elaborate lists across institution, faculty, student and community activities—all ending in indicators of institutionalization. For example, to be institutionalized at the faculty level, service-learning should be considered when making personnel decisions, feature prominently in

the curriculum, and be involved in faculty professional development (p. 229). Other key components are supported in the literature. Hinck and Brandell (2000) discuss five markers of a strong program: strong presidential support, clearly defined mission, faculty roles and rewards, centralized service-learning office, and public awareness of service-learning.

While it is important to have a dedicated office and staff for service-learning operations, other institutional structures, according to Mutascio and Plaut (2008), can help sustain and institutionalize service-learning: leadership positions for community partners and students, advisory councils, and high-level administrative positions (such as a director or vice president position appointed to advocate for engaged initiatives).

Scholars are interested in institutionalizing and sustaining programs. Furco (2002) developed a useful schematic to determine stages of institutionalization along a five-dimension structure: mission, faculty support, student support, community partnerships, and institutional support. The stages go from initial building components to fully sustained institutionalization. Other researchers have applied the Furco rubric; for example, Chadwick and Pawlowski (2007) used it as an institutional assessment tool to understand service-learning at their own institution while developing a theory for organizational change.

Pontbriand (2003) studied the level of institutionalism of a model high school service-learning program. One of his recommendations focuses on a deep understanding of the core values of the community. He maintains that in order to be successful, service-learning need not just be used as a learning method, but “intrinsically connected to the

foundational values and the worldview of the school and its surrounding community” (p. 119).

My study is based on long-term service-learning programs that show promise of being institutionalized, and the premise that institutionalized programs are good. My assumption is for service-learning to be meaningful, programs must have a chance to last. Jacoby (2009) challenges practitioners and scholars to examine whether service-learning should be institutionalized. Indeed, she poses the very question, “if, in fact, the purpose of service-learning is transformational, to challenge the status quo of power and privilege, can this be accomplished if service-learning is part of the fabric of the institution?” (p. 101). Although one should take into account nuances between a given institution and its community, I contend that embedded programs can better serve multiple purposes. Programs become embedded because of the particular balance that faculty, administrators, students, and community partners have found. And, yes, transformation and innovation can still take place as time goes on and those relationships change and develop. One of the hallmarks of the community college is lifelong learning—a long-term commitment to the community. It is definitely appropriate to legitimize the sustainability of service-learning.

### **Barriers**

Even though programs have been formalized, characteristics of institutionalization have been categorized, and practitioners and scholars have spent time studying programs, some institutions find barriers to implementing their programs. Funding can be a critical barrier to program implementation. Grants play a vital role in

starting service-learning at a college. Several service-learning programs have been initiated with funding from external programs. For example, the Manassas Campus of Northern Virginia Community College “began its service-learning initiative [in 1994] with a small technical assistant grant to revise curricula in political science and English courses” (Robinson & Barnett, 1998, p. 11) from the American Association of Community Colleges and the Corporation for National and Community Service. This three-year grant resulted in faculty development workshops and student recognition programs, and it established a faculty service-learning network. But service-learning did not take off as expected. One faculty champion gathered resources, but the multiple-campus environment made it difficult to sustain. Service-learning efforts existed as a loose network of interested individuals. Sustaining service-learning after the initial start-up can be problematic for some institutions.

The role of the faculty can prove crucial to the success of the service curriculum. Many programs began with committed faculty members, often in voluntary roles. One interesting study, although focused on K-12 teachers, transfers across education levels. Wade (1997) interviewed and surveyed a number of elementary and secondary education teachers and found key challenges revolved around the time commitment: developing custom-made plans for unique community experiences, collaborating with others, and handling unforeseen project-related difficulties.

Although situated at the four-year university level, Underwood, Welsh, Gauvain, and Duffy (2000) looked at sustainability challenges in terms of service-learning and found the following obstacles: lack of faculty recognition, reward or credit for engaging

in community service; service-learning was not equally valued as a standard academic course; conducting research at field sites was considered complicated; and lack of resources to support service-learning courses.

Not fully understanding community nuances can lead to barriers. Rue (1996) looked at how successful programs were managed and asserted, “the student, faculty, and community cultures each have their own political realities that shape the environment for service-learning” (p. 247). For program administrators, this means there is no one-size-fits-all answer for programs and expected student outcomes.

### **Rewards**

But the rewards of service-learning are pervasive. Participating in service provides important personal growth and learning opportunities for students. Garcia and Robinson (2005), in *Transcending Disciplines, Reinforcing Curricula: Why Faculty Teach With Service Learning*, looked at faculty motivations for using the pedagogy and found they offered service-learning for their professional development, to support student learning and civic responsibility, and to meet local needs (pp. 4-5).

The hands-on aspect of service-learning also enhances new skills. The community partner can provide educational experiences that the class instructor alone cannot. By bringing the lived experience into the classroom, students can apply what they have learned to real life. Monroe Community College lists the benefits for offering service-learning at the very beginning of their faculty manual (2006). These include enhancing citizenship skills, applying class concepts to their service in the community, and providing ways to accommodate different learning styles (p. 2).

## Summary

Some community colleges have established ways to institutionalize their programs. Scholars have identified markers of institutionalization and studied it in stages. Programs are not necessarily implemented easily, and barriers to institutionalization affect the longevity of such programs. It is important to understand the context of institutionalized programs and how to sustain them over time so that the college mission can persist. Service-learning can be a teaching method using experiential education concepts appealing to varied student learning styles. It can fulfill the community college mission of lifelong learning and general education. It can also enhance students' civic responsibility and contribute to their understanding of self and society. And it improves student learning outcomes. It provides an ideal connection for service to the local community. Service-learning programs on community college campuses are essential for all these reasons. Programs that endure have positive effects on everyone involved.

The service-learning path is well worn. Experienced administrators and scholars have looked at many factors leading to successful programs. Recurring themes for institutionalization include:

- service-learning is tied to the college mission,
- there is dedicated space for the program,
- there is presidential and administrative buy-in,
- a college culture of service exists, and
- there is faculty development and support

Overall, the distinctions of the college-community relationship and the multiple objectives of service-learning show the individuality and level of complexity that programs have. More information about these relationships is derived from the national survey data leading to my study. The next section describes the two surveys and analysis that formed the basis for this study.

### **National Survey Data Leading to This Study**

In 1995, the AACC conducted a national survey of community colleges to collect information on programs and resources for service-learning, *Service Learning and Community Colleges: Where We Are* (1996). The AACC built upon the data collected by surveying community colleges again in 2003 with *Service Learning in Community Colleges: 2003 National Survey Results* (2003). The comprehensive survey effort was funded in part by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the AACC. This section explains the two surveys and summarizes the analysis. It also clarifies how the data was used to identify this study's participant colleges.

#### **American Association of Community Colleges 1995 Survey: *Service Learning and Community Colleges: Where We Are***

The AACC's 1995 survey (1996) was mailed to community colleges and requested information about the institution; volunteer community service activities; specific service-learning activities; student, faculty, and staff participation; program administration; and community connections. The aim of this survey was to establish a baseline to gauge the existence of service-learning programs on community college

campuses in the U.S. According to this 1996 report, out of a total of 1,100 colleges, 719 initially responded to the surveys (65%). Some major findings include:

- 80% of colleges were using service-learning or were interested in using it.
- Rural colleges were more likely to have service-learning programs.
- Most colleges relied on their own institution to provide program funding.
- Programs were most often administered by student services personnel or individual faculty members in different disciplines. (Robinson and Barnett, 1996).

**American Association of Community Colleges 2003 Survey: *Service Learning in Community Colleges: 2003 National Survey Results***

The 2003 survey (2003) duplicated many of the themes asked in 1995, and asked additional questions as well. The aim of this survey was to track changes in service-learning programs across the nation. Contrary to the 1995 survey, this survey was conducted electronically. The survey instrument was distributed to 1,300 colleges as an online survey. From this survey, 261 colleges responded, with a response rate of 19%. The report conceded that the respondents were not representative of the general population of community colleges, however, AACC assumed that more service-learning users would respond to this version of the survey (2003). Major findings from this 2003 report include:

- 90% of colleges were using service-learning or were interested in using it.
- Urban and colleges in the suburbs of large cities were more likely to respond to the survey.

- Most colleges still relied on their own institution to provide program funding.
- Programs were most often administered by a designated service-learning director or coordinator, or individual faculty members in different disciplines (Prentice, Robinson, & McPhee, 2003).

### **Comparison Between the 1995 and 2003 Surveys**

The information from the two surveys provides a good opportunity for further study. The survey comparison shows 173 colleges responded to both the 1995 and 2003 surveys. Interestingly, 62 of these colleges indicated yes to using service-learning in both years, and 69 colleges did not use service-learning in 1995, but did in 2003. It is worth looking at the 62 service-learning colleges to determine more details about the growth and maintenance of successful service-learning programs.

**Analysis of the 62 colleges.** Background for this study is provided by the 62 colleges that used service-learning in both years of the national survey. These colleges are well represented across the United States. Categorized by region, the colleges are located in six states in the Northeast, six in the Midwest, nine in the South, and nine in the West. Community populations range from 4,630 at the lowest, and 457,719 at the highest, according to 2000 census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

My sample from the 62 colleges was based on the following criteria: (a) there is a service-learning program in place, (b) the program is based at a U.S. community college, (c) the program has been in place for more than 10 years, and (d) the college answered in the affirmative to using service-learning in the AACC national surveys in 1995 and 2003.

Eight colleges met these criteria and were invited to participate. Six colleges responded and formed my final sample.

This section summarized two surveys of community college service-learning engagement conducted in 1995 and 2003, and explained how I selected my research sample from respondent colleges based on specific criteria. Six participant colleges form my study to document and analyze the current state of service-learning at community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of higher education is not only to help students acquire knowledge but, equally significant, to produce active and informed citizens. College students, in order to engage in a democracy, should participate in their communities and gain civic knowledge through education to help them along the path to becoming active citizens. Higher education in general, and the community college in particular, are the places to serve students and cultivate core values of community service. The service-learning movement provides an answer to contributing to the civic mission of higher education.

Experiential education is not a new idea. College students have engaged in internships and other community activities over time. Service-learning has been uniquely designed to bring community service to the classroom for students to develop critical thinking and civic responsibility skills. Use of this pedagogy has increased since 1995, particularly at the community college level. The open enrollment and lifelong learning aspects of the community college form a natural connection for service-learning. The field has matured and is supported by many national and formalized organizations.

However, there are still barriers to overcome. Funding, faculty roles, and community understanding are some areas to focus on. Programs that are institutionalized have a better chance at surviving. Many scholars have examined this concept and collected several indicators of successful programs.

My study contributes to the institutionalization and sustainability literature because it looks deeply at six exemplar programs to uncover factors contributing to their longevity. It adds to the 1995 and 2003 AACC survey data by providing another data collection point (my data were collected in 2008) and rich description to reveal what these programs are doing as of 2008.

Readers of this review may find it helpful to review results of successful programs if they are interested in beginning a service-learning program, improving an existing program, or restarting a dormant program. A greater understanding of the organizational factors and alternative ideas may be of service to some faculty, administrators, and community members to explore service-learning avenues for their institutions.

Bowen (1982), in *The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Higher Education*, poses three critical questions worthy of reflection:

- What kind of people do we want our children and grandchildren to be?
- What kind of society do we want them to live in?
- How can we best shape our institutions to nurture those kinds of people?

Service-learning outcomes offer a solution for engaging our children in our communities. Although the service-learning pedagogy is one method used to promote democracy

during the college experience, there is a clear need at the community college level for institutional and community connections. The survival of service-learning programs helps to maintain these ties to the community while simultaneously promoting student development.

### 3. Methodology

This chapter will examine the research approach used in this study to explain connections within community college service-learning programs and why the programs endure. This approach helped to explain some unique perspectives about service-learning programs and the people involved in them. The purpose of this study was to identify key factors associated with service-learning program longevity found in community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995. A multiple-case, descriptive case study approach was used to better understand institutional sustainability at six community colleges. Service-learning program coordinators, faculty, and college presidents were surveyed and interviewed. Participant perspectives contributed to the understanding of the current state of service-learning at their colleges. Information derived from this study can be used to develop best practices for service-learning programs.

#### **Design of the Study**

My case study focused on the program practices and culture of the selected colleges and their communities. My research questions were: Why have service-learning programs survived for more than a decade at selected colleges? What practical factors influence program survival at these specific colleges? My general approach was to carry out a qualitative study in order to record experiences and perspectives from my

participants. Denzin (2000) maintains qualitative researchers “seek strategies of empirical inquiry that will allow them to make connections among lived experience, larger social and cultural structures, and the here and now” (p. 375).

A case study design was appropriate because of the qualitative nature of this study. Pertinent characteristics of this design made it suitable for my purposes. Stake (2003) discusses the distinctiveness of cases where the researcher considers: “1) the nature of the case; 2) the case’s historical background; 3) the physical setting; 4) other contexts; 5) other cases through which the case is recognized; and 6) those informants through whom the case can be known” (pp. 438-439). I was interested in the distinctive perspectives of those people who are directly involved in service-learning. This case study used explanatory qualitative methods to identify patterns in the context of long-term programs. Indeed, “contexts are unique and dynamic, hence case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 181). Because participants in the study were in positions to share their experiences and insights, this approach was a good fit for my study because the uniqueness of service-learning activities relies on personal interactions and social connections.

The participants in this study were in positions to tell the story of service-learning on their campuses. They were invested in this learning method and had much to share about their experiences and impressions. Narrative analysis through interviews (Merriam, 1998, p. 157) was used as a research technique to collect first-person accounts about practitioner experiences with service-learning. Some stories were quite personal and

showed individual motivations. Overall, the case study research design was the best way to learn about service-learning program structures through these stories. This design supported the purpose of identifying key factors associated with long-term community college service-learning programs to impart useful results from this study and formulate best practices.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I first became acquainted with service-learning as a doctoral student during a “Current Issues in Community College Education” class in summer 2000. One class assignment entailed pairing up with a classmate to collaborate on a research paper on any topic in higher education. My partner was an instructor at Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland and she was quite excited about something happening at her college at the time: service-learning. Together we explored this concept and ended up with an extensive, combined research piece that detailed historical and current information about this distinctive learning method.

After the class was over, that research paper did not really concern me much until later in my program when it was time to decide on a dissertation topic. I was struggling to find a topic that related to both my background in public administration and interest in the community college. Then, during another class in spring 2004, I reflected on that team paper and the idea crystallized for me. Service-learning was the ideal starting place for my own research path.

In preparing for my proposal, I found myself drawn to organizational theory and practical aspects of program management. I was somewhat certain about the purpose of

my study as far as finding out why long-term programs have survived. The data collection process progressed fairly smoothly: people actually wanted to talk to me. But the real journey for me was discovering myself as a qualitative researcher. While part of my conceptual framework stemmed from service-learning practitioners, organization theory, and community college practice, the framework was also informed by the qualitative research discipline. There are certain qualitative methods scholars I connected with as I have developed my own researcher identity: Sharan B. Merriam, Robert E. Stake, Anselm Strauss, and Juliet Corbin have influenced my understanding of the qualitative process.

My dissertation journey has led to my personal growth as a scholar. In 2008, I co-presented my research at the Community College National Center for Community Engagement annual national conference. In 2009, I presented preliminary findings in a poster session at the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement annual international conference. Participation at these academic conferences gave me exposure to current researchers in the service-learning field and opportunities for my own advancement as an emerging scholar.

I was fortunate to have access to the previous national survey data and college personnel who participated in my study. The director of service-learning at the American Association of Community Colleges was a key contact for me in this study. She granted permission for me to use the 1995 and 2003 data. She provided contact information for the prospective participants in my study. Also, I consulted with her periodically throughout the research process and to share preliminary findings. Merriam (1998)

defined peer examination as “asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge” (p. 204). My contact served in a peer examination role and provided valuable feedback and guidance during my study.

This study meticulously followed the standards set forth by the George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). It includes only adult participants who gave their voluntary and written consent (Appendix B). College and participant identities were kept anonymous and confidential. All documentation and taped media were organized and retained in a secure location.

Participants were promised anonymity so they could speak freely about their programs. The research presented in this dissertation was based on their narratives and voluntary participation. I have made suitable efforts to preserve the confidentiality of my participants and the names of their colleges.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Surveys, interviews, and document analysis were used to collect the data. While the study is primarily qualitative by way of case study method, surveys were administered to two sets of participants. A web-based, questionnaire-type survey approach served two purposes. First, it was a way to make initial contact with potential service-learning coordinator participants. Whoever answered the initial call to tell me about the status of their service-learning programs would likely agree to participate in my study. Second, it was a straightforward approach to obtain responses from busy college presidents. It customized a way to collect data from different participants with multiple viewpoints. Next, interviews helped gain an understanding about service-learning

program survival from those who were involved in it. The interviews occurred in two phases. First, I interviewed the six coordinators, then I interviewed referred faculty. The interview was a key approach in my study. According to Stake (1995),

two principle uses of case study are to obtain descriptions and interpretations of others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone. Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities. (p. 64)

To further validate the findings of my study, another angle proved useful: document analysis. Merriam (1998) defines *document* “as the umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (p. 112). Would published information support what participants were saying? Would the documentation shed light on why service-learning persisted? The next section explains how the colleges and participants were selected.

### **Site Selection**

Site selection was based on the following nonprobability sampling initial criteria: (a) there is a service-learning program in place, (b) the program is based at a U.S. community college, (c) the program has been in place for more than 10 years, and (d) the college answered in the affirmative to using service-learning in previous American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) national surveys in 1995 and 2003. The aim was not to obtain a random sample from national community colleges; rather, I was looking specifically for colleges with existing, long-term service-learning programs.

Merriam (1998) discussed sample selection and pointed out that “nonprobability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research” (p. 61).

The first step was to identify the potential colleges via a purposeful sample, which “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Once the initial criteria was determined, specific survey questions were designed to hone in on prospective participants.

The AACC conducted two national surveys in 1995 and 2003 to determine the state of service-learning at community colleges across the United States. I used these data sets to determine the participant colleges. First, in looking at long-term programs, the college respondents had to answer “yes” in the 1995 survey to using service-learning. Second, they answered “yes” to using service-learning, and to these three 2003 survey questions: service-learning appears on college transcripts, there is a primary person or coordinator for service-learning, and there is a designated service-learning office on campus. These three indicators are physical arrangements that demonstrate the college’s commitment to service-learning on their campuses. Eight colleges answered yes in 2003 across these three indicators. The survey (Appendix C) was sent electronically to all eight coordinators; in the end six coordinators responded and agreed to participate.

The 1995 and 2003 AACC survey results (Robinson & Barnett, 1996, Prentice, Robinson, & McPhee, 2003) show a small piece of service-learning activity within the community college realm. Overall, the activity appears to be increasing, which shows a positive national trend toward commitment to service-learning in community colleges.

However, for this study, I wanted to further understand the contexts, relationships, and program survival factors. Thus, this study examines colleges with committed, long-term programs. Data collected from this study provided both a 2008 data point, and a deeper understanding of service-learning at the community college level. Ultimately, 6 coordinators, 16 faculty, and 6 presidents participated.

### **Description of Participants**

To gain insight into exemplar service-learning programs, program coordinators, faculty, and presidents at six community colleges located across the United States were contacted. Three coordinators brought service-learning experience from previous institutions, one had a social work background, one had a background in nonprofits, and the other previously served as a Peace Corps and VISTA volunteer. The coordinators were well established in the field. Years in service-learning spanned from 7 to over 30. Five of the coordinators held full-time positions, but surprisingly, one worked half-time. Three coordinators were male; three were female.

The coordinators referred faculty actively engaged in service-learning. This snowball sampling technique “involves asking each participant or group of participants to refer you to other participants” (Merriam, 1998, p. 63) and proved effective for my study. As a result of the sampling technique, faculty participants came from several disciplines: Biological Science, Communication, Education, History, Nursing, and Sociology. Their experience with using service learning ranged from 1 to 13 years. All faculty participants were female and all but one were full-time. Of the college presidents, three were male and three were female. They all agreed that service-learning was a high priority to the

college mission, and they all knew who their service-learning coordinator was. Four presidents felt that it was “extremely important” for faculty to use the service-learning pedagogy; two indicated that it was “very important.”

There were similarities between the programs as to how service-learning began. Three of the programs started out with Campus Compact connections. One started out with a VISTA grant; another with an AmeriCorps grant. The final program was first established as a community service center then received funding from a Learn and Serve grant. Participants were eager to share their stories and provided rich information.

Participant colleges – relative to student population size, metropolitan statistical areas, and location within the U.S., the six selected community colleges are described as:

- large, suburban college in the South Atlantic region;
- small, urban college in the Middle Atlantic region;
- medium, urban college in the East North Central region;
- large, suburban/urban college in the Mountain region;
- large, metro college in the Mountain region; and
- medium, urban college in the Pacific region.

The main goal was to find out what was happening with these long-term programs. What mattered to these people about the service-learning pedagogy, and why was it important to keep it going? Following is a chronological explanation of the steps and instruments used in the data collection phase.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

**Web-based survey.** I designed a web-based survey using Survey Monkey and sent it to service-learning coordinators of the eight colleges that had answered yes in 2003 across the three physical arrangement indicators. Survey questions asked about current program background, program administration, and community connections. The coordinators were chosen because they could provide current, insider, expert viewpoints of program administration, institutional issues, and community connections. They were in positions to refer other participants. Six coordinators responded to my initial web survey and their respective colleges comprised the case study.

**Semi-structured interviews.** Semi-structured interviews followed first with the service-learning coordinators and then referred faculty. A semi-structured interview allows for both structure and flexibility (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). The interview guide (Appendix D) was developed to focus on a specific question about why programs have survived over time. Subsequent questions were open-ended to explore other issues such as barriers participants had found. This type of interview is the best plan, where

the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and...this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and the new ideas on the topic. (Merriam, 1998, p. 74)

Keeping in mind the research questions, the interview questions revolved around coordinator and faculty perspectives on reasons for program longevity, personal motivations for using service-learning, organizational culture, and barriers found at the

organizational and community partner levels. Questions were based on the literature on program institutionalization and sustainability.

I interviewed the coordinators by telephone and tape recorded our conversations with their permission. During each interview, I recorded notes about main ideas we talked about on reference sheets. Also, if needed, I asked follow-up questions to probe for more information or to clarify my interpretations. During the data collection process, I also recorded my personal observations and feelings on the reference sheets. These personal notes helped me recall conversations later when detailing the methodology and describing the case colleges. The coordinators provided specific background on their colleges and contributed to the story of how service-learning began on their campuses. These interviews were conducted in March and April of 2008.

Each set of interviews built upon the previous set. For example, I next interviewed faculty members. Because I reviewed the coordinator transcripts beforehand, I had a solid understanding of each program before speaking to the faculty members. I used the constant comparative method where “the researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview,...and compares it with another incident in the same set of data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 159). Additionally, reference notes from the coordinator transcripts contributed to the interview process for the faculty. For example, because a common theme for the coordinators was their personal motivations and background for service, I considered personal motivations for faculty as well.

Faculty participants were aware that I had spoken to the coordinator in advance. Faculty interviews consisted of five questions and occurred in May, October, and

November of 2008 (Appendix D). I interviewed faculty from five colleges by telephone and tape recorded our interviews with their permission. I personally interviewed the faculty from the sixth college in a group format, and I met four faculty members from the sixth college at a conference and had the opportunity to sit down and interview them together. The interview was tape recorded. This interview proceeded much like the telephone interviews. We sat in chairs in a circle, I asked a question, and each faculty member provided one answer in order of their seating. The difference for this college, however, was that each participant heard each other's response. Some agreed and built on what was previously said. Others had different experiences and shared those. Although some participants may have been influenced by what they heard, in comparing other single interviews, the results were quite similar.

The faculty interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. During the initial reading of the printed transcripts, I made notes, highlighted terms, underlined pieces of text, and began to organize ideas around major themes. It was important to keep the research purpose in mind while interpreting the transcripts. I developed categories for the coding process (to be discussed later in this chapter) directly from the interview questions.

**Brief Web survey.** In March and April of 2009, a brief web survey was administered to the six participant college presidents (Appendix E). All of the coordinators and faculty indicated there was support from the administration or college president for service-learning. The survey was designed to confirm the presidents' awareness of service-learning. Questions asked about the extent of institutionalization of

service-learning, how it was related to college mission, service-learning coordinator and faculty involvement, and why it has endured at their college.

**Document analysis.** Document analysis was used to augment further description and understanding of the programs. To see if colleges were committed to service-learning, I looked for documents related to mission and accreditation. Therefore, the document analysis phase included reviewing college mission statements, faculty, student, community partner manuals, websites, brochures, accreditation self study reports, annual reviews, strategic plans, and research and conference papers. Merriam (1998) offers, “the data found in documents...can furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, track change and development, and so on” (page 126). Additionally, as Stake (1995) notes, “documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly” (page 68). Viewing program websites, in particular, offered insight into the different emphases of service-learning at the participant colleges.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Once I collected the surveys and interviews, I needed a way to make sense of the data. I used ideas based on grounded theory from Strauss and Corbin (1998) to begin the process of analyzing themes, interpreting patterns, and making connections. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory means “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (p. 12). They further explain, “grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action” (p. 12). The nature of

qualitative inquiry is interpretive and seeks to make meaning from those who experience a phenomenon. Also, the constant comparative method allowed me to build an understanding of why and how practitioners support service-learning. Analysis is also informed by analytic induction in that it is “a strategy for engaging in qualitative inquiry and comparative case analysis that includes examining preconceived hypotheses” (Patton, 2002, p. 493).

Recall that the research questions were intentionally designed to look for emerging trends from the data to consider why and how faculty and administrators support their programs. From the literature, I had some expectations about what I might find, therefore I planned some specific questions to ask participants relating to program survival, organizational culture, and internal and external barriers. In chapter five, the findings are organized by research question. Although I have referred to grounded theory techniques, this study has been modified to report out specific information leading to best practices. College sites and participants were selected as exemplars by way of the research design; findings are reported by research question in order to build an understanding of program survival factors and influences.

The analytic induction process also gave me a mechanism for assigning descriptive, abstract labels to the participant colleges. These labels reflected my interpretation of the settings through the words of the participants.

The overall data analysis dynamic fit nicely with my study and the coding process associated with it provided a necessary and systematic way to interpret and analyze the data. The coding process is further discussed in the next section.

## The Coding Process

Data analysis was a continual process from the interview phase to the reporting phase. For the actual data analysis procedure, open, axial, and selective coding discerned meaning from the tape-recorded interviews as I entered pieces of text into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The overall process is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998):

in open coding, the analyst is concerned with generating categories and their properties and then seeks to determine how categories vary dimensionally. In axial coding, categories are systematically developed and linked with subcategories. However, it is not until the major categories are finally integrated to form a larger theoretical scheme that the research findings take the form of *theory*. Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the categories.

(p. 143)

The first steps to organizing the data allowed me to become familiar with the main ideas coming from my participants. The coding structure provided a way to sort through the information in a systematic manner.

**Open coding.** Strauss and Corbin (1998) define open coding as “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data” (p. 101). Before assigning codes in my spreadsheets, I read through the transcripts to get a general idea of participants’ viewpoints. I recorded ideas and impressions in my research notes. I started with the faculty transcripts first since they were the most recent. I developed specific codes based on my interview questions. I had intentionally asked my participants about survival reasons, personal motivations,

organizational culture, organizational barriers, and community partner barriers. Because the purpose of my study was to identify key factors associated with program survival found in long-term community college service-learning programs, I collected this information to gain an understanding from participants and formulate best practices.

Once I completed coding all of the transcripts, I combined the individual spreadsheets into one. This allowed sorting the data by college, faculty, coordinator, president, code, or theme, or to search for keywords. In order to make meaning from the data, I used constant comparative analysis throughout the study. Merriam (1998) defines the constant comparative method as “a process whereby the data gradually evolve into a core of emerging theory. This core is a theoretical framework that guides the further collection of data” (p. 191). This method allowed me to relate the data back to the research questions centering on program survival factors. I again referred to previous reference notes throughout the process to help me recall my procedures, anticipate preliminary findings, and think about reorganizing categories.

**Axial coding.** Axial coding refers to “the act of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124). During this phase, I looked at how the individual codes might relate to each other. One relationship that became evident had to do with structure. Participants reported formalized structures around service-learning: an advisory board; community liaison; grant, stipend and course off incentives; honors requirements. I then developed themes by combining related codes. Additionally, I reviewed the existing codes and found some duplication. In some cases, I could eliminate codes that occurred only once

by reviewing what the issue was. I recategorized codes that fit better under a different heading.

Upon review, I felt that some codes were too general. I made notes on my code sheet and referred back to the transcripts for follow-up. Some of the same ideas appeared as a survival reason and an organizational culture feature. That is, different participants honed in on the same concepts, but it might have been a survival reason or related to their personal motivation. This back-and-forth scrutiny helped make deeper sense of the data. By combining across codes and looking at trends in a larger context, I began to understand what was happening on the campuses and sort out unique activities and linkages.

Also during this phase I saw a divergence between the analysis of my results and what I was asking. It turns out my data gave me two separate strands. The first, encompassing the first three codes (survival reasons, personal motivations, organizational culture), appeared to be more general and related closely to the organizational culture. This strand was appropriate to use in explaining program survival. The second strand, targeting the barriers at the organizational level and the community partner level, was more specific and targeted toward practice. Stakeholders could apply this information in managing their programs.

**Selective coding.** As I continued to review the relationships and patterns in the data, I sought to identify the central, overall theme. For me the main theme was program survival. All other ideas, issues, and related occurrences launched from the central idea of why the programs endured over time.

## **Methods for Verification**

Stake (1995) provides a discussion of triangulation protocols in terms of validating case studies: “to gain the needed confirmation, to increase credence in the interpretation, to demonstrate commonality of an assertion, the researcher can use any of several protocols” (p. 112). One such protocol occurred during the analysis process where interview transcripts were shared with participants and “member checked” to enhance reliability. Stake (1995) explains this is when the transcript is provided to the participant for his or her review for accuracy and feedback (p. 115). I emailed the transcript to each participant and gave him or her an opportunity to respond with any changes or comments. The multi-site design also added to dependability of results.

The data analysis phase was a chance to review and compare data. For example, I missed an important clue during the open coding phase. By using constant comparison and referring back to the data as I moved between coding phases, I discovered that three out of six colleges had a connection to Campus Compact when they first started their programs. I had failed to initially code for “Campus Compact,” coding this instead as “networking among colleagues, local and across U.S.,” although the Campus Compact organization played a significant role in the inception of service-learning at three participant colleges. This review served as a validity check to enhance the consistency of results and address data quality issues. Additionally, during the findings stage, I revisited raw transcripts to reread each interview repeatedly. This helped solidify my understanding of each participant’s viewpoint, added to each college’s narrative description, and gave the opportunity to review issues again in a fuller context.

To address internal validity, peer examination was used by “asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge[d]” (Merriam, 1998, page 204). One comment that recurred during peer examinations was: What about a program where service-learning did not succeed? Reacting to this feedback, I conducted one interview resulting in a negative case what I term a “null” case. Patton (2002) identified negative case as something that disconfirms or add variability to the study (p. 493-4). He categorized negative case analysis as part of the analytic induction process of examining and interpreting emerging ideas from the data (p. 493). In my study, the null case serves both as another point for comparison among the cases and a way to address internal validity. This null case interviewee was recommended by the AACC director of service-learning. This case started out much like the others: with seed funding from a grant, existing volunteer connections already on campus, and initial interest at the presidential level. However, the service-learning initiative did not continue after the three-year grant concluded. Further discussion of this case is found in the findings chapter of this dissertation. I also shared the participant college narratives and findings chapters with the director of service-learning, and her expert comments were extremely valuable.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed this research’s case study method and research processes. Data from AACC 1995 and 2003 national surveys provided a foundation to build upon previous research on the status of service-learning. This study focused on six community college service-learning programs that I have designated as exemplar programs. Surveys and interviews with coordinators, faculty, and presidents illustrated the myriad

perspectives inside and outside each college. Analysis resulted in two aspects of data reporting. One pointed to program survival reasons and organizational culture. The other related to challenges and barriers to carrying out service-learning programs. The next chapter describes each case college in detail.

#### 4. Participant College Narratives

The six colleges represented in this study not only serve as model service-learning programs, but each has embraced this learning method in unique ways. This chapter will provide descriptive information about the case colleges and recount how service-learning got its start. Each college has its own story. What keys do they offer to sustain service-learning?

A common thread runs through the case colleges: the dedication and enthusiasm exhibited by the program coordinators. As a vast resource for their college histories, and in some cases, the spark that ignited and kept the program burning, the service-learning coordinator played an integral role in each college's story. All data is as of 2008. As expected, there are similarities and differences among the colleges. Some of these characteristics are depicted in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 provides an overview of the college demographics while Table 4 looks more closely at service-learning operations by college. I have organized the information and provided the descriptions by college to offer vignettes or points of reference for the reader in order to gain an enhanced understanding of each site. In the next chapter, each of the findings from this study is also organized by college.

Table 3

*Participant Colleges' Demographics*

College	Location by Region/ Community Type	Year College Established	Campus Type	Student Enrollment	Service-Learning Enrollment	Stated Mission/Values	College Accredited By
The Cadillac	South Atlantic Suburban	1960	Multi	25,000	Over 4,000 per year	Meet individual and community needs	Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
The Up-and-Comer	Middle Atlantic Urban	1967	Multi	13,745	Between 350 – 400 per year	Lifelong learning	Middle States Commission on Higher Education
The Learning College	East North Central Urban	1914	Single	14,000	About 300 per semester	Involved in the community through outreach, partnerships, and resources	Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
The Connected Campus	Mountain Suburban/Urban	1965	Multi	27,000	966 per year	Encourages active citizenship	Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
The Showpiece	Mountain Metro	1948	Multi	60,000	Over 700 per year	Active participation and service in a healthy democracy	Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
The Work in Progress	Pacific Urban	1966	Multi	11,000	About 300 per year	Programs to reflect and anticipate community needs	Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Table 4

*Participant Colleges' Service-Learning Operations*

College	Year and How Service-Learning Began	Original Location of Program	Current Location of Program	Funding	Coordinator Status/ Staffing	Number of Placement Sites*	Service-Learning Requirement	Advisory Board
The Cadillac	1988, three-year grant, President/Dean/Coordinator formalized the program with Campus Compact	Open Campus	Academic Umbrella	Weaned from grant/sustained by institution	Full-time (FT)/ 4 FT staff, student workers	350	Varies by instructor: usually 20 hours/semester; 300 hours for Citizen Scholar	Yes
The Up-and-Comer	1987, VISTA three-year grant	Career Services	Career Services	Weaned from grant/sustained by institution	Full-time/ 2 FT staff	200+	30 hours per semester	Yes
The Learning College	1990, started as volunteer/community service center, new college president had Campus Compact ties	Student Affairs	Academic House	Campus Compact support	Full-time/1 FT community liaison, 1 FT volunteer coordinator, 1 faculty liaison with course release time	147	15 to 25 hours	Yes
The Connected Campus	1992, faculty driven, Campus Compact grant	Own Department	Own Department	Permanent budget item from the beginning	Full-time/ 3 FT staff, 3 part-time staff, 12 student workers, 40 student leaders	250	Varies by instructor: usually 10 to 40 hours, 50 hours for Honors	Yes

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

College	Year and How Service-Learning Began	Original Location of Program	Current Location of Program	Funding	Coordinator Status/ Staffing	Number of Placement Sites*	Service-Learning Requirement	Advisory Board
The Showpiece	1993, Learn and Serve three-year grant	Student Services	Student Services	Weaned from grant/ sustained by institution	Full-time/ 5 FT staff	200	Varies by instructor: 15 hours/semester is suggested	Yes
The Work in Progress	1995, started as AmeriCorps program, became Service-Learning program	Academic Unit	Academic Unit	Hard money	Half-time/ minimal admin assistance	Hundreds	16 hours per quarter	Yes

*Note.* \* Sites may not be used every quarter or semester; this number represents the potential sites that service-learners could participate in.

Participants also shared examples of their service-learning projects, and an example is included within each college narrative. Narratives are in the participants' own words; however, I made some changes to ensure privacy and for stylistic reasons only to fit within the narrative format.

With respect to maintaining privacy and in accordance with my university's human subjects policies, all participants were assured that the colleges would remain unnamed. To track information through the research process, each college was assigned a number. To be more expressive, I tried to capture the spirit of each college by also naming it with a phrase based on my interpretations of the overall picture after talking with participants, reviewing survey responses, and examining related documents.

### **College 1: The Cadillac:**

#### **Medium, Suburban College in the South Atlantic Region**

This multi-campus college, established in 1960, has a total enrollment of over 25,000 students. This college is well known in the field of service-learning and has been studied extensively as a model program. Much credit goes to the program's coordinator who has over 30 years experience and has led the college in its efforts. He is revered by the faculty members who participated in this study.

The service-learning program officially began in 1988, but the college already had ties with Campus Compact as early as 1986. According to the service-learning coordinator, in 1987 service-learning became a formal priority of the college when the administrative dean noticed that the coordinator had extensive experience with service-learning at a previous university. It started with a survey of existing practices, attitudes,

and beliefs about service-learning and that led to a three-year grant consisting of \$15,000 the first year, \$10,000 the second, and \$5,000 the third. The coordinator began to lay the foundation by speaking to everyone at the college—the students, the board of trustees, and management council—about what service-learning was and how important it was as a possible structure in the college. He drew on his university experience and noted that the community college was an ideal place to grow their program. From his viewpoint, he observed,

and what I find is that most things, structurally, worked here that worked at a university—some things better than others. For example, the teaching priority of a community college helped. Student leadership came later here versus student leaders I had at [my previous university] because of time constraints. But now we do have excellent service-learning leaders; that took a little longer to develop.

Overall, community colleges have an advantage over universities as far as getting started.

Taking a team approach, he gathered together people representing experiential education, administration, faculty, community partners, and students. This “institutionalization team” played an important role in rooting service-learning at the college. He reflected on how vital this body was, because “after that three-year grant ran out,...because of that team and how well we did, it helped us to establish more funding from the institution and we were able to access more grants at that time.” In addition, he reflected on the importance of these relationships in the early stages of service-learning.

Holding workshops with the community partners helped to establish crucial relationships in the beginning. While trying to create a base of student volunteers, he noted that

student voluntarism at the time was not a big concept in [our county] because of the amount of senior citizens that do volunteer work, who had more time for a larger commitment. So we had to create that whole niche, not only on campus but off campus.

Also, service-learning at College 1 had strong roots in part due to the coordinator's efforts. He recalled that he was able to demonstrate early successes because he (a) used a centrally coordinated center for service-learning, (b) worked closely with all the stakeholders, and (c) located the center under the academic umbrella.

This college is undergoing a transition because the long-time coordinator is retiring and the college president is new. Faculty members expressed concerns. They felt there was not enough communication from the top and they were worried about being in a state of flux. A faculty member summarized the general feeling, remarking,

while there may not be immediate visibility as far as direction and mission and culture at the current time, I think that because service-learning is so embedded in the institution, that we don't have despair; we don't have fear that the whole concept of service-learning is ever just going away. We just may have a little trepidation as far as the immediate and foreseeable future as to constraints or possible limitations or normal concerns or worries when any new person comes in or any organization changes. But there is definitely not a sense of despair. It's

definitely a positive sense of “we will continue, it will go on” and we will find ways to always utilize service-learning in our classrooms.

During the faculty and coordinator interviews, there was consistently a feeling of solidarity and encouragement about what they do.

The requirements for service-learning hours vary by instructor, although most require 20 hours per semester. However, to qualify as a “Citizen Scholar,” students must complete 300 hours of service. Service-learning was initially housed in Open Campus, but now is located under the Academic Umbrella. The coordinator position is full-time and there are hundreds of community placement sites.

### **Project Example**

One of the faculty participants provided the following example of a service-learning project.

First, I use a PowerPoint slide show at the beginning of each semester to let my students know what they can expect. My service-learning project is embedded into my non-majors biology course; I have continued it every semester since we started in January 2004. Each semester, we continue the goals of keeping a local park's streams clear by removal of invasive exotic plants. In addition, we perform other tasks upon request of appropriate agencies (for example, the county parks and recreation department), examples include vegetation surveys and wildlife surveys.

Is it a success? According to anonymous student evaluation of instruction performed each semester, it is the best thing about my biology class. In many

cases, it is the first thing mentioned by previous students when I encounter them off-campus. They tell me they had fun, no longer dislike or avoid science topics, remember a lot about ecology and native plants, and encourage their friends to take my class.

### **Summary**

This college is nicknamed “The Cadillac” because its program is well known in the field as a top-tier service-learning program.

### **College 2: The Up-and-Comer:**

#### **Small, Urban College in the Middle Atlantic Region**

This small college (student enrollment is about 14,000) was established in the 1960s and has seen a great deal growth over the years. In 1987, the college applied for a VISTA grant for the purpose of creating or establishing a community service program on campus. The coordinator stressed, “it was a three-year grant, so the intention was to wean the college off the money and hopefully then sustain the program.” By all accounts, the program did indeed develop over the years and became fully supported by the college. Of note, this college had the benefit of already having a relationship with the local volunteer center which has continued to play a key role in offering services. The coordinator shared insights:

having the volunteer center as our formal clearinghouse for community need, that was great. We didn’t have to go out and do a community needs assessment—our partner kind of did that for us. So we’ve always had a menu and a listing of

volunteer opportunities, service opportunities before us. So it was our role to then fill those needs.

The requirement for service-learning is 30 hours per semester. The service-learning office began in Career Services and remains there today. The coordinator has a full-time position and the program participates with over 200 community agencies.

### **Project Example**

One of the faculty participants provided the following example of a service-learning project.

Service-learners go to a community agency and complete a teaching project for a group of individuals at that agency. It has to be something health related because this is a nursing class. They can choose from a variety of organizations from preschools to senior centers. Projects are set as groups of three students and they contact the agency and make two visits to the agency. The first visit entails meeting the director, touring the facility, and gathering information. During the second visit, the students carry out their project.

One project example is based at a group home for adolescent girls. This location is popular but it is also a very challenging group. The girls range between 14 to 18 years old and they are in that group home for a variety of reasons. The department of youth and family services may have taken them from their home because of abuse, or they are homeless, or for other reasons. In one case, one of the girls had lost both of her parents.

Service-learners have done presentations about sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, and other issues. The interesting thing is that I always tell the groups, you can't just go and lecture to these girls. When the students go on their first visit, they sit down with girls and ask the girls what topic they want them to address, that way they get firsthand information from them. Sometimes students will go during the dinner hour and bring something to make like brownies. That activity allows the students to get to know the girls a little bit and develop a rapport before they actually sit down and start talking about the topic. The students always come away with such a great feeling that they were able to connect with these girls.

### **Summary**

College 2 started out with good community connections and continues to refine its efforts in service-learning as "The Up-and-Comer."

### **College 3: The Learning College:**

#### **Small, Urban College in the East North Central Region**

College 3 is the oldest participant institution. Its campus was established in 1914. Current student enrollment is about 14,000. Service-learning began at this campus with help from Campus Compact. The coordinator reported, "in the late 1990s, there were several visits from [the state] Campus Compact to the campus." There was also some changeover in presidential leadership at the college at that time. The coordinator recalled the strategic moment for service-learning when the new president became involved in the state Campus Compact as the chair of the board, which influenced the president and he

made service-learning a priority. As the coordinator noted, “[the president] started to put some things in place—giving faculty more funds for professional development and encouraging deans to make this part of review in tenure and promotion around the service element of that.” Having his leadership was extremely instrumental for College 3.

College 3 underwent some organizational changes to find the best location for its program. The coordinator detailed the start:

I think, like a lot of institutions, it was kind of like one of those things that started more in student life, and probably around 1990 or so, it was housed in student affairs, student life umbrella, under a dean of student life and it was really more of a kind of volunteer center, a community service center, drop-in referral, and then it merged kind of into a series of alternative spring break opportunities. It was driven certainly by some leadership in student life but also some deans as well.

And I think when the deans got more involved, we started to see it move a little bit more into the academic side of things.

As the program developed on campus, the center moved from student life into the academic house. That was a significant shift, plus there was a growing number of faculty using service-learning, spurring more discussion on campus around it. In 2006, the center was reorganized to more effectively address service on campus and define clearer roles.

When asked about the staffing setup, the coordinator reported that they have a community liaison and a faculty liaison. He clarified the roles:

our community liaison is basically charged with working with our community partners, coordinating some of their training, helping to do some of the logistical

work in getting students placed. Our faculty liaison, who is a faculty member from the English department with course release time, is charged with doing faculty professional development as well as curriculum work around service-learning.... The two liaisons really serve to help faculty connect to community partners in meaningful ways.

As service-learning continues, the coordinator reported more recent efforts are underway

to formulate a policy which will make the opportunities clearer. That would also involve us doing some review of service-learning courses for best practice standards to make sure we're getting more consistent in our definition across campus of what meets a good quality service-learning experience.

His position is full-time and he works with 147 placement sites. The service-learning requirement ranges from 15-25 hours.

### **Project Example**

One of the faculty participants provided the following example of a service-learning project.

We partner with the local children's museum. It's one of our community partners for the whole school so I think other classes are doing projects with them. My particular project with them since I teach Anatomy and Physiology is looking at the fine and gross motor skills that children are developing as they play with the permanent exhibit at the museum. So last winter I had a group of 10 go to the museum and observe children at play on all the exhibits and then do a write-up for

the museum on what kind of fine and gross motor skills were being used and any suggestions for improvement that they had. It went pretty well but, you know, there is always a learning curve, getting students to keep their eyes open and do a little more background research. We decided to repeat that project for the museum this semester so that was what I considered to be my direct group; even though they are not interacting with children they are physically going to the museum and making some observations. So what I did, the other two-thirds of the class, I divided into two groups; one group researched about 50 children's museums in the surrounding areas, not just in our state but in other states nearby. We kind of focused on the region.

So I had them contact the other museums and get a complete listing and description of all their permanent exhibits and try to assess through the descriptions whether the fine or gross motor skills were being used, and then to talk to the museums and ask them if they ever had a research project like this at the museum, what were the outcomes, and did they have any tips on exhibit maintenance (for example, a sand table or a bubble exhibit).

So one group is doing that and they have just concluded their project. They are now passing their information about other museums to our groups that are going to our children's museum. I'm hoping they can expand upon recommendations for changing or updating the exhibits here based on what other museums are doing. Then the final group is going to compile all of this data into one report to describe what was going on and some ideas for changes and updates,

and another brochure for the museum to hand out to families that come to the museum highlighting exhibits for gross motor skills, and exhibits for fine motor skills with ideas that can be used at home. Finally, the students are also making a brochure to send back to all of the museums that participated in the project as a thank you and to share information from other museums that they use for families and children.

### **Summary**

I call this college “The Learning College” because it appears the players have a keen interest in technology and in making continued improvements in the program.

#### **College 4: The Connected Campus:**

##### **Large, Metropolitan College in the Mountain Region**

This college was established in 1965 and has a student enrollment of 27,000. Service-learning was faculty driven here. According to the coordinator, a group of faculty members established service-learning as a learning objective with the college president in 1992. At this college, the coordinator reports directly to the vice president of instruction and the center is basically its own department. The physical location of the center is in the student union which is next to student life. The coordinator reported,

the college president at one point told me he wanted me here specifically so that one side of the house could build the student leadership, clubs and organizations, and our side of the house would kind of build the academic experience through service and service-learning.

The program started as its own department and has stayed as its own department.

This center is well staffed. When asked about staffing, the full-time coordinator described the setup as: director, full-time administrative secretary, full-time community partner advisor, and a service-learning assistant. He also has other part-time personnel who deal with grants and other campus programs. Focused on students, they also have a staff of student workers and over 40 student leaders work with the center as well. This program works with 250 community partners. They have two service-learning options. Students have an in-course option as a class activity. The number of required service hours varies by instructor, but it usually ranges from 10 to 40 hours. The second option is called independent service-learning. The student works on an individual basis with an instructor. Fifty hours per credit hour are required for this option and the student can graduate with honors. Students may earn up to three credits on an independent basis.

### **Project Example**

One of the faculty participants provided the following example of a service-learning project.

I remember one group wanted to do something with animals so they were all set with the local Humane Society. Unfortunately, something happened and it completely fell through. The students were at their wits' end and were anxious because they think their entire grade depends on it (they forget that it's only part of it). I advised them to regroup and identify what skills they have, what knowledge they have, what resources they have, and to go back to the drawing board. They found that someone in the group owned a carpet cleaning business. They weren't sure what to do with that, but they had to work together to figure

out a suitable project. That group member taught the rest how to use the machinery. In our community, we have a local organization that houses families who are needy. It's a transitional place. The service-learners went in and cleaned all of the carpets for all the units in this place and they were having such a good time that they also cleaned two homes for independent care for the elderly. They documented their project with video. They were hysterical! And they had such a good time. They were so glad that the Humane Society plan fell through. I knew that for the revised project to work it had to come from them. Service-learning—it's all magic.

### **Summary**

This is a strong, multi-campus program with strong connections throughout the college, administration, and community, so I call it “The Connected Campus.”

### **College 5: The Showpiece:**

#### **Medium, Suburban/Urban College in the Mountain Region**

This college, first established in 1948, began its service-learning program in 1993 when the vice president of student services wanted to create a community service center. Although the center was mostly focused on community service efforts, service-learning was a small piece of it. It grew because of the efforts of Student Services and some key faculty. The coordinator noted the key effort that kicked off service-learning for College 5,

I think the big thing that really pushed it was in 2003, we got a Learn and Serve America grant. And service-learning was a big part of that, and also I should say

in 2003 we got...a full-time director, and some part-time staff, but in 2003, the institution funded a full-time service-learning coordinator.

For College 5, service-learning became rooted and was backed by the institution. About the Learn and Serve grant money, the coordinator commented,

a big chunk of that was specifically devoted to building service learning infrastructure and really working to develop some faculty training and some models around that. Those two things, between the coordinator—somebody who could do this full time—and then the funding to actually do it, really catapulted service-learning to more of a forefront. And then in 2006, when the Learn and Serve grant ended, we still had institutional funding, because at that time the institution had stepped up to say “we value this” and they started funding some of the things that previously the Learn and Serve grant had.

College student enrollment is at 60,000. Service-learning began and has stayed within Student Services. The coordinator is full-time and the program participates with 200 community agencies.

### **Project Example**

One of the faculty participants provided the following example of a service-learning project.

I was teaching women’s studies, so I gave my women’s studies students the option to volunteer at the local YWCA which has battered women’s shelter and transitional housing for battered women here in [our city] or the rape crisis center as an alternative to writing a research paper. Then I became a volunteer alongside

them and then, while I was there I happened to say, “I teach technical writing too, do you need that?” And it turned out that they needed that more than anything. So my tech writing students wrote a proposal, got the YWCA networked, got them printers, and designed a web site for them—and they weren’t online before that. So that kind of got me hooked because in technical writing for whatever reason, even though this is a community college and it’s a basic class, I get people who have years and years of experience. I get really serious professionals in my classes sometimes. We don’t have internships but if the students can have an applied place where they can take their talents and really do something beyond the basics of the class, that’s a great option for some of those people. Also it’s a positive way to serve the community with the talent we have. Also, I believe service-learning works beautifully into the learning objectives of everything that I teach, including folklore, too. I give the students an option of collecting oral histories in partnership with a nonprofit organization. I like how it’s applied learning and also how connecting the learning to something larger than the immediate context of the class is really important to me.

### **Summary**

There may be questions about the organizational culture here. The program is indeed strong, formalized, and institutionalized, but about the commitment to service-learning, one faculty member noted,

it’s definitely a showpiece for our institution even if there isn’t always the money behind it. I think the administrators realize the great publicity it brings to us and

not just in the classroom but in our center for service and learning. The things like the alternative spring break and the big service projects that students do really help the institution's ethos with the public and with our legislators and they do get that. They just need to put more money behind it, which is hard to do, especially right now with the way the economy is. It's just really bad timing for anything nonprofit or extra.

I call College 5 "The Showpiece" because a participant used this term, the service-learning program is frequently lauded by the administration, and its service-learning center has developed into a formalized structure that is named and well-known in the community.

### **College 6: The Work in Progress:**

#### **Small, Urban College in the Pacific Region**

This college was established in the 1960s and has a student population of about 11,000. Service-learning initially found its way onto this college's agenda in 1995 as an AmeriCorps program. When service-learning became significant, the AmeriCorps coordinator became the service-learning coordinator. There are a variety of programs of study from English as a Second Language, to college transfer, community and continuing education, and technical certificates.

Unlike the other college programs, the coordinator at College 6 holds a half-time position and has minimal administrative assistance. Her emphasis has been on developing one-on-one personal relationships to strengthen service-learning on campus. She serves as a resource for service-learning and works individually with faculty. Hundreds of

community agencies work with service-learners. The requirement for service-learning is 16 hours per quarter. The program began and remains in the Academic Unit.

### **Project Example**

One of the faculty participants provided the following example of a service-learning project.

I've offered [a service-learning project] to my social problems class. I teach it in Sociology in a 200-level class. First, they had to identify an organization. I think a good thing about service-learning on this campus is, particularly with social problems, they can do their service-learning on campus. For example, they could be a tutor in our basic studies department or a conversation partner with an international student.

Students were required to write a proposal before they even started their service-learning, and they had to meet the requirement of 16 hours a week. For their project, they had to do a portfolio which included a number of things. They had to keep a journal of all of their hours of service and I gave them specific questions to focus on in their journal entries. They also had to write a reflections paper that connected what they learned in their project to the learning objectives of the class.

Throughout the term, I also added roundtable reflections where students talk about their service-learning experiences. I did this twice throughout the quarter. The first time I organized the students according to the type of organizations they were doing their service-learning in. For example, all of the

ones related to education were together, then the ones related to social services were together. That was helpful because students were able to talk about common problems or issues or questions that they had. Then the second time they were randomly placed so they could learn about other people's service-learning projects. The final roundtable was a presentation to a third different group sharing what their service-learning project was, what they learned, and how the experience led to a solution towards social problems.

### **Summary**

This college highlights service to the community in its mission statement. However, but I named College 6 "The Work in Progress" because, from what participants have said, there are some characteristics about this program that are different from the others. This program has positive points, but it appears more work needs to be done in terms of sustaining and strengthening the service-learning program.

### **Conclusion**

All college participants provided a rich record of what is happening on their respective community college campuses for service-learning. Not only did they share constructive information about their specific programs, but they also provided candid viewpoints about stumbling blocks they encountered during their service-learning journey. The next chapter will provide more detail about the factors leading to program durability and offer practical perspectives on college and community matters related to service-learning.

## 5. Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to identify factors associated with program longevity in community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995. Programs that have become institutionalized have college support, dedicated faculty, and can devote resources to making strong ties to the community. My assumption was that for a service-learning program to be meaningful, it must have a chance to survive. This chapter will reveal the findings.

Two research questions guided further understanding of this educational movement on the six participant colleges. The first: Why have service-learning programs survived for more than a decade at this select group of six colleges? The six colleges have demonstrated program longevity based on a longitudinal study from the American Association of Community Colleges (1996 and 2003). I connected with the 6 program coordinators, 16 faculty, and presidents at these six community colleges located across the United States. The interview process elicited information directly from participants to gather their perspectives on the sustainability of their programs. I also reviewed documents such as college mission statements, catalogs, websites, brochures, accreditation reports, and strategic plans to gain more information about service-learning on each campus.

My second question probed further: What practical factors influence program survival at these specific colleges? To better understand the answers, I reviewed the program survival reasons and organizational culture perceptions the participants disclosed. I was primarily interested in the coordinator and faculty perspectives on the challenges they had experienced with service-learning. In particular, I asked about barriers they found within the college, and issues that arose when working with the community organizations, to shed light on sustaining or growing program operations.

### **Overview of the Findings**

Five main themes emerged from the coded data: strong foundations, connections across the college and throughout the community, organizational practices, student learning, and service experience as career track potential. The program's organizational location is important to each college as are the foundations or beginnings of each program. To be embedded in the culture and institutionalized, service-learning needs to be present among all of the college elements. This way, students, faculty, administration, and the community have a keen awareness of service-learning on campus. The information collected also showed that there were certain organizational practices in place that contributed to service on campus, for example, the service-learning center and staff setup, community and faculty liaisons, advisory boards, and evidence of service-learning directly on transcripts. Additionally, student learning was a recurring theme, meaning using service-learning for instructional purposes, critical thinking, and experiential education for application to real life. Finally, service-learning was often seen as connected to experiential education for career and work purposes.

## **Overview of Presentation of Results**

The participants' experiences and reflections revealed numerous explanations for continued survivability of service-learning programs. Although participants shared different experiences, they had similarities in their deep connections to the service-learning pedagogy.

First, I present the results of the web surveys of coordinators and presidents. The coordinator survey was conducted in 2008; the president survey was conducted in 2009. Next, findings are presented by each research question and are organized by theme. Finally, I include a discussion of the negative case which I call the "null" case to show why service-learning did not take root at a different college.

### **Coordinator Web Survey**

The coordinator web survey served two purposes. First, it was the initial contact with potential participants. Second, it acted as another data collection point to confirm continuance of service-learning since the previous AACC survey years (1995 and 2003), and to obtain information about the current status of service-learning at the six campuses. Some questions that were asked in the earlier surveys were repeated. When asked about program background to make sure service-learning was still operational, all participants answered yes.

The survey also asked about program administration to obtain data about the current coordinator position and program operations. The coordinator positions were established during years ranging from 1988 to 1995. The coordinators have been involved in service-learning at their institutions from 2 to 30 years. Program information

included funding sources, types of agencies served, and methods of collecting community input. Programs received funding from diverse sources. Over the life span of the programs, all six have received funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service and their own institution; five have been supported by Campus Compact. All six programs placed students in varied community agencies, including K-12 schools, social service agencies/organizations, environmental agencies/organizations, health agencies/organizations, local government, pre-K/Head Start programs, animal care facilities, cultural/arts organizations, faith-based organizations, and senior citizen centers/elder care. The programs are well-connected to their communities through these activities. Additionally, all of the colleges indicated they have a service-learning advisory board.

According to the previous AACC surveys (1996, 2004) (Table 5), community colleges increased their use of service-learning from 1995 to 2003. Of the colleges that used service-learning in both survey years, there was an increase in administrative support in terms of coordinator position, separate service-learning office, and transcript designation, thus demonstrating each college's commitment to service-learning on campus.

Table 5

*American Association of Community Colleges Survey Information*

Survey Sample		
Survey Year	1995	2003
Total Respondents	836	261
Number Using Service-Learning	248	184
Survey Comparison		
Colleges That Responded to Both Surveys	173	
Colleges That Indicated Yes to Using Service-Learning on Both Surveys	60	
Colleges That Indicated They Did Not Use Service-Learning in 1995, but Did in 2003	69	
Of the 62 Service-Learning Colleges, Number With		
Survey Year	1995	2003
Designated Service-Learning Coordinator Position	19	29
Separate Service-Learning Office	23	33
Service-Learning Noted on Student Transcript	9	13

*Note.* From Prentice, Robinson, and McPhee's *Service Learning in Community Colleges: 2003 National Survey Results* (2003).

**President Web Survey**

The president survey was administered at the end of the data collection phase (2009). Recalling data collection process steps, the web survey was administered to coordinators first, then telephone interviews were conducted with program coordinators. Next, telephone and in-person interviews with faculty were held; finally, the web survey was administered to the college presidents. This input was intended to gauge the presidents' awareness of service-learning on their campuses and to gain an understanding of their rationale for service-learning. Presidents appeared to be aware of this happening on their campuses. They all said it was a high priority to their college missions. Service-

learning was important, to various degrees, as a pedagogy; they viewed the coordinator's role as extremely important in most cases.

### **Research Question One: Program Survival Reasons**

This section will present the five main findings through descriptive quotations from participants.

#### **Finding One: Sustainable Programs Start With a Strong Foundation as Appropriate for the Individual College**

The idea for this finding (also connected to Finding Two) came from the coordinator from "The Cadillac." We were talking about program survival and he said, like I tell people, start where you're strongest in the beginning. Where it should be placed is under the vice provost or vice president of academic affairs. For example, the importance, I think, of trying to have your tentacles, if you will, encompassing. It starts with a good foundation and then permeating the institution is the main thing.

Service-learning researchers have considered the reporting structure and relation of programs to where they are located in the organization (Furco, 2002; Strong et al., 2009). Three of the six programs presented in this study are located in the academic side of the college (see Table 4). Of the remaining three, one is its own department, one is within career services, and one is under student services. Of note, two programs began elsewhere and reorganized into the academic unit. The other factor pertaining to a strong foundation had to do with a core of stakeholders who instigated the movement on their campuses.

**The Cadillac.** The coordinator of the Cadillac explained his approach to a core group of leaders when first setting up the program:

And I certainly got together a team of people representing experiential ed, administration, faculty, community partners, students too in the beginning. And most important for the first couple of years, this body was very, very important. And also we made it a part of an institutionalization team.

Regarding the placement of this program, he continued with,

I work from a model that I knew before that was centrally coordinated—a center for service-learning—working closely with all the stakeholders and, again, centralized staff that seems to be the model that most people are doing right now, but there were a lot of other models that could be used, whether it be student driven. Also, they didn't know where to put it when I came, the main thing is that it was put somewhere. It was under the open campus [which is like continuing education], and then we were able to move under the academic umbrella in a couple of years.

**The Up-and-Comer.** The Up-and-Comer's program has always been based in the career services department. The coordinator attributed the program's strong start partly due to career services' connection to an existing county volunteer center. The volunteer center coordinator initially guided the placement of the service-learning students. Then the formal program evolved from there.

Over the past 20 years, she concedes, the career services department has undergone major reorganizations. At first, service-learning was a stand-alone program

with its own director. There were separate directors for internships and co-ops, placement services, and other programs. Now the title of service-learning coordinator has changed into “director of experiential learning and career services.” And the other programs such as internships, work study, and placement have moved under the one director.

**The Learning College.** Here the service-learning program began within student life and was housed in student affairs under a dean of student life. At first, the coordinator noted, “it was really more of a kind of volunteer center, a community service center, drop-in referral, and then it merged kind of into a series of alternative spring break opportunities.” Then, four shifts happened: (a) deans became more involved, (b) activities had more of a course connection, (c) more faculty used service-learning in academic classes, and (d) involvement with Campus Compact gave the program legitimacy. About 10 years after being established, service-learning operations moved to the academic house and reported to an academic dean.

**The Connected Campus.** Interestingly, the program at the Connected Campus started out as, and continues to be, its own department. The coordinator credited the strength of this initial set up to: (a) a core of faculty established service-learning as a learning objective with the president, (b) the coordinator position was established as a full-time faculty position, and (c) it was a “board approved created position from the very beginning...[with] a 100% release time dedicated to supporting service-learning.” The coordinator reports to the vice president of academic services. As to the physical location of the service-learning center, it is placed in the

student center which is right next to student life. The college president at one point told me he wanted me here specifically so that one side of the house could build the student leadership, clubs and organizations, and our side of the house would kind of build the academic experience through service and service-learning.

**The Showpiece.** A Showpiece faculty member shared why service-learning was initiated at this campus: “it was because we had some dedicated faculty who continued to do it without any sort of institutional infrastructure or any monetary support or any re-assign time, but simply out of conviction.” The program started out and has stayed within student services. It initially received base funding out of student services, but, as the coordinator noted, “we now have a lot more support and funding from academic affairs to support specifically faculty development initiatives around service learning.” At this college, as opposed to The Up-and-Comer, the program is under student services and has its own director, but there are coordinators separately for Alternative Spring Break, America Reads, community service, and community partner outreach. As to the support from the administration, a Showpiece faculty member noted,

We have also had some great support, maybe not from our entire administration but from certain key administrators. We had a dean who was very supportive; he was our academic vice president. He retired. Our president right now is very supportive of service-learning. Our vice president, as far as I know, is supportive so I think it was just the initial faculty commitment and then the infrastructure followed the commitment.

**The Work in Progress.** This program has consistently been housed in the academic unit. Service-learning is physically located with other initiatives. For example, the office is in the same general location as registration and career services. The service-learning office space is shared with the multicultural center, which is under student affairs. Initially, career services was contained in the service-learning center, but now it is centralized elsewhere under student services.

**Summary.** A strong foundation pertained to a base of support for service-learning and the connections that allowed it to grow. While the six colleges had their own stories as to how service-learning got its beginnings, there were some commonalities across the colleges which helped to place the importance of a strong foundation into context. Examples included a core of faculty and/or leaders present from the beginning, a centralized location for service-learning activity, and reliance on existing connections such as shared interests with experiential education programs, volunteer centers, or Campus Compact.

### **Finding Two: Sustainable Programs Have Positive Connections Across the College and Throughout the Community**

A recurring theme at all six colleges was a concept of linkages across the college and within the community. At these places, there appeared to be a degree of service-learning embedded in the college culture. Following are observations about positive connections and networking that occurs on multiple levels.

**The Cadillac.** Faculty from The Cadillac echoed the connectedness. One used the phrase “it’s interconnected” when asked about program survival. Another faculty

member commented on The Cadillac's culture, "it was embedded at every level at our institution." The president shared these reasons for survival:

the College has had, until his recent retirement, the long-term leadership of [our service-learning coordinator] whose dedication, expertise, and reputation earned national acclaim for [our college] as a premier service-learning institution....

And...the faculty of the College, rather than the administration, have ensured the program's continuing success by adopting, refining, and promoting its advantages to students and to other faculty.

The connection with Campus Compact was strategic for The Cadillac, particularly in its beginnings. First, two years before the program was established, the college took part in some Campus Compact initiatives. This helped set service-learning on the president's agenda. Second, the coordinator explained,

one thing happened with us, which was an anomaly for most programs, but not most Campus Compacts. I was director of [our state's] Campus Compact in the beginning. Not in the beginning of this program, but...when [our state's] Campus Compact began. So I had a dual role and I was able to take our model as a priority or resource training tool; that's a lot of universities and colleges, so it really strengthened how we were viewed.

**The Up-and-Comer.** The Up-and-Comer continued with the connectedness theme. A faculty member from this college said, "there is a real collective, positive approach, a positive feeling about using service-learning and it is encouraged." A second faculty member added another dimension: "having a statewide network of colleagues

who are in the same exact boat we are in here, to keep our program alive in...[our state], as well as keep the heart pumping here on our own campuses has been key.”

The coordinator offered, “I’ve been able to develop long-lasting relationships with the agencies and the people within the agencies, so there’s a personal satisfaction of my networking that I get.”

**The Learning College.** Community connections were illustrated by a faculty member from the Learning College when she remarked,

I think why it has endured is because we are a community college and we do focus very strongly on how we can essentially link ourselves to what the community needs are, and so I think it provides a really important perspective to the students in a way that maybe other ways of bringing it to them wouldn’t necessarily do. I think because the college, as a whole, continues to emphasize that connection to community and exploring ways to, again, link those services to the community, both linking the students to the community and the community back to the students. I think that’s why it’s probably lasted as long as it has.

This college also had early connections with Campus Compact and strong leadership of the president. The Learning College coordinator noted,

I really think that was kind of a turning point for the interest in service on campus because when [the president] started to see what was happening at the institutional campuses and chaired that [state’s] Campus Compact board, he was very interested in seeing that work happen here, started to put some things in place—giving faculty more funds for professional development and encouraging deans to

make this part of review in tenure and promotion around the service element of that, and so his leadership was really instrumental.

**The Connected Campus.** Community connections were a strong theme for The Connected Campus. One faculty member described their approach for service-learning as three-pronged: involving a community advisory board, faculty, and staff. Regarding the community partners, she said,

we have tremendous partnership with them; some of them through our advisory board, along with faculty and staff. So we have this three-pronged approach. I guess you would say we're all heading in the same direction and I think that has...been a major part of its success.

Knowing the needs of the community factored into strong relations with community placement sites. When asked about obtaining input from the local agencies, the coordinator at this college pointed out,

we also try to look at the needs in our community. I recently met with the United Way and what are some concerns that they have and how we can partner with them in an area? I went to a community block meeting and looked at some of our concerns, and so that's one area. We also have lots of faculty who are involved, so they have their own initiatives because of their expertise and their professionalism, and how they address it and what they do specifically in their discipline.

There are other ways of networking at this college. About her student service-learning project options, a faculty member observed,

most of my students do pick programs that help at-risk kids. I have a good friend and colleague over at one of the other community colleges and I understand they're bringing in service-learning over there and their focus is going to be more on the elderly.... I thought, oh, that's a great idea, too! So I may expand into that, too.

This program has placed a priority on developing ties to the community and on collaborations.

Campus Compact featured prominently as a tie-in to strong beginnings here. The coordinator was contacted by a colleague from a neighboring state's Campus Compact with a partnership grant opportunity. He said, "I told them what we do and we were included, and we started with two or three hundred members because we built it into our nursing, our education, our fire science; it's just part of our culture now."

**The Showpiece.** The coordinator from The Showpiece said key faculty members were important during the early stages of their program. Their program started with internal institutional support and she noted they

had administrators who really believed in it and then slowly, once some of the academic administrators started seeing the success, then they started buying into it. So I think having administrative support, I think having some faculty who really were passionate about it and some influential faculty, getting them involved [was key]. We had some, for example, we had a research cohort that we were about to find a couple of faculty members to do a bunch of research on service-learning and we strategically picked people who were quite influential, and then

they [the initial service-learning faculty] got excited about it and they were able to talk to different departments.

Once ignited by faculty members, service-learning gained a foothold within their college.

The president from The Showpiece commented on the current status of internal connections: “It is valued as a pedagogy. It fits with the values of the college. Civic and community engagement exists in almost all programs at the college, [and we offer] administrative support.”

**The Work in Progress.** Similarly, internal workings is a theme for The Work in Progress. A faculty member explained that faculty commitment was the reason for their program’s survival. She said,

I think there has been a core group, of course we always like it to be more, but there has been a core group of faculty who really believes in the principles of service-learning and what they provide for our students.

The coordinator honed in on developing relationships on campus. For her, meeting individually with faculty and working within campus organizations was an important feature of their program.

The president from this college summarized her assessment this way:

To view service-learning as an integral part of a college experience, it must become embedded in the student support/career building, academic/instructional, community-based, and administrative components of the institution's culture.

Only when all components see the benefits and connecting of the dots does this find success and sustainability.

**Summary.** Positive connections across the college and throughout the community pertained to the interconnectedness and linkages that enhanced a culture of service-learning. The common themes revolved around noticeable connections on campus, accepted approaches for faculty to use service-learning, and available support mechanisms for service-learning. Externally, the colleges nurtured community connections through networking approaches such as Campus Compact. Also, they embraced their natural relationships as community colleges to focus on community needs.

**Finding Three: Organizational Practices Aligned With a Service Mission Promote Program Sustainability**

While deep connections were vital for program survival, another dimension was needed for program sustainability at the organizational level. Organizational practices have to do with the college culture, resources, and personnel to support service-learning. All participants met the initial criteria of institutional commitment showing physical evidence of support in these ways: (a) service-learning appears on college transcripts, (b) there is a primary person or coordinator for service-learning, and (c) there is a designated service-learning office on campus. Resoundingly, participants from all of the colleges indicated that the service-learning coordinator position was integral to program survival. Building on Finding Two, this key position had opportunities to reach out across the college and community making connections. There were informal connections as in talking about service-learning, meeting one-on-one with faculty, and formal connections

by way of orientations, workshops, serving on community networks, and representing the college in public reports through the coordinator mechanism.

**The Cadillac.** This college has formalized its process at all levels. It is well-known in the field of service-learning and their forms, handbooks, and materials have been used as models for budding service-learning programs across the county. Sharing practices is a value held by this coordinator. Some examples of how they have formalized their program include training workshops for faculty, students, and community agencies, and an accessible directory to the placement sites. They go beyond the standard service-learning notation on the transcript by administering an additional program. The coordinator explained,

we have something that is called a Citizen Scholar program that was, I think, in 2000 when it started, and if you get 300 hours, and you take service-learning courses in regular class, including our stand-alone, separate course, you have to take one, a three-credit hour or three one-credit hours, and you write up very extensively, and you do a final, integrative essay, you can graduate as a Citizen Scholar.

The program is well-supported financially and has the backing of the president, who pointed out, “throughout the past two decades, the presidents of the college...have consistently made service-learning a budgetary priority each fiscal year.”

**The Up-and-Comer.** At The Up-and-Comer, service-learning as a requirement was an important factor. As one faculty member remarked,

we are probably one of the only departments that have a course that requires that all students who are in the program do a service-learning project.... So we definitely are committed, so there is no thought at all of ever changing that. That is something that is definitely going to be continued.

This relates to the nursing department. They have a course that mandates service-learning projects.

Another faculty comment related service-learning to the college mission:

I think that's really in keeping with the sort of community college's mission to give back and serve the community as well, and to get the students out in the community and to have a visible presence. It kind of goes hand in hand, I think, with the overall philosophy.

**The Learning College.** The Learning College incorporates an advisory council and liaison structure that has been quite effective. The coordinator explained,

we have a faculty liaison that kind of works concurrently with the community liaison and myself and the faculty member to make sure that you are able to assess what you are doing and that it's actually meeting some course objectives. So just content, objectives, and then the idea of civic responsibility, so just an incredible amount of support, and they check in with us all the time so we appreciate that. If there are problems in the middle of the semester, they have been terrific in dealing with them immediately.

The Learning College president supported faculty engagement and provided further comment: "The leadership has supported the concept of service-learning to the

mission; furthermore, the faculty who are engaged in the program are committed and well-versed in service-learning as a teaching/learning concept.”

There are also accessible resources for faculty. They can take advantage of the fundamentals of service-learning course offered at this college where, as a faculty member said,

you learn about service-learning, how to assess it, reflection and all the things that go into it, how to have it match course objectives and...one of the major outcomes of the course was to actually develop a project for one of our classes and have it meet specific course objectives

Finally, access to the service-learning staff was key. As a faculty member noted,

the staff was always available to me. I think they really do a great job down there, I can't say that enough. They would help me set up the appropriate things, even on my BlackBoard site, helped me, came in and did classroom orientation, helped with the formation, [and] they were with me at all of the community partner meetings because you don't know what questions to ask at those community partner meetings when you are first setting up your project.

**The Connected Campus.** The Connected Campus participants talked about professional development, services for adjuncts, and strong staff support as indicators of longevity. A quote from a faculty member concentrated on the center itself,

[the service-learning center] has more staff, clearly, I think the procedures and so forth have been really streamlined and they're really anxious to make it easy for

the instructors to build it in, if they want to build it into their curriculum; to make it an outside extra event if that's what they want.

More comments on the college culture from a faculty member: "we're all about community;...we have many community partners;...the culture has a lot to do with meeting the needs of the community as well as providing education."

The coordinator connected the mission to longevity and weathering budget cuts. He clarified,

we'll continue to receive the same support because of our mission. Our mission is to promote excellence in teaching and learning. And that's what the focus of our new president is as well. We engage in our community and make our community better.

The president outlined these organizational reasons for program survival: "faculty initiated, faculty support and participation, administrative support, a faculty member devoted to directing the program; financial support from the college." About structure, a faculty member noted,

Faculty are on one side of the house and students services is on the other side of the house and so you really have to have a link to connect what we're doing in the classroom with the student services.

Service-learning provided that vital link within the organization.

**The Showpiece.** The role of the faculty mentor was a predominant factor at The Showpiece. As one faculty member pointed out, the "faculty mentor...works sort of as a liaison between the service-learning coordinator and faculty of the college to help train

and promote service-learning.” The faculty mentor plays a key role in linking the service-learning program. In fact, another faculty member mentioned, “when I became the faculty mentor last year, I had to do a presentation [to the advisory board] explaining why or how I would serve the college in the role as mentor.” Here, this position functions both as a resource to the faculty and reinforces the connections into the community through interaction with the board.

When asked about how the service-learning initiative got started at The Showpiece, a faculty member shared her perceptions about the key players: after the college

got a center for service and learning and we...[had] an advisory board, we were able to network all of these isolated practitioners together and offer them grant incentives to formally designate their classes as service-learning classes and make sure they had commonalities with hours of service, reflection, things like that. That started a momentum.

**The Work in Progress.** The main focus for the Work in Progress was the importance of service-learning credit on the student transcript. Faculty at this college repeatedly mentioned the transcript. One said, “I think that’s really attractive to students because it then means that they are...being recognized for the extra work they are doing.” Another said, “students become even more interested [in service-learning] because they realize that their transcript will stay intact. Faculty may move around and move on, but the transcript, with all its notations, is there for them and they love that.”

The college mission impacted a faculty member. While reflecting on the culture now as compared to five years ago, she said, there is a general familiarity and it [service-learning] fits so nicely with our very name; we're supposed to be a community college so we're kind of fond of saying we're the ones who put the community in the community college. People pretty much agree, of course they don't want to think that's the only way of doing it, but we like to say it's one of the closest ways of doing it because, in fact, we're giving back to community organizations and there's a much more direct relationship—not just sort of the general good we hope we're creating by educating more students and all of that.

**Summary.** Organizational practices aligned with a service mission pertained to factors related to college culture, resources, and personnel at the operational level. Collectively, the colleges have developed targeted practices for their programs that support a mission of service.

#### **Finding Four: Using Service-Learning to Enhance Student Learning Strengthens Program Sustainability**

Student learning encompasses academic learning outcomes such as critical thinking, communication, career and teamwork, civic responsibility, global understanding and citizenship, and academic development and educational success (Prentice & Robinson, 2010). Faculty members and coordinators across the colleges voiced different opinions about using hands-on service experiences to enhance student learning.

**The Cadillac.** At The Cadillac, faculty pointed to service-learning as a way to reach goals for what they want to do in class. For example, a communications professor said,

you have to have the “otherness” in communication. That’s the issue to buy in for my students—that you must think about your audience; you must adapt to your audience. It’s not about you, it’s not about performance, it’s what you give to the other person.... Whether intercultural communication or public speaking or group work or collaborative work on any level, you have to view the other first and that is to me why service-learning incorporates with my discipline.

Furthermore, the coordinator mentioned, “what happens to students so much as far as learning outcomes [and] personal development outcomes, it’s something that’s really special about this as a learning method.” He also explained that they successfully established their program because the teaching priority of a community college was a key factor.

**The Up-and-Comer.** Up-and-Comer faculty shared much about the academic learning component of service-learning. Of the students, a faculty member said,

the learning is much greater when they have the opportunity to participate and identify a project that supports the didactic content of the course. It raises the thinking to the critical level that we want them to be exposed to rather than just participating in a classroom.

Another faculty member continued with,

I think the learning as a whole provides opportunities to enhance those active courses [where they go out to a community agency, identify a need, and then implement a teaching project with the people at that agency] in ways that can bring those experiences that we talk about in the classroom to students in a real way.

The coordinator noticed faculty using service-learning “see it as such a viable learning tool.” She attributed changes in student population to a more traditional, younger student base and observed, “with the demographic changes and the need for creative teaching tools, those that have prescribed to service learning in their classrooms see it more valuable now than probably 20 years ago.”

**The Learning College.** At The Learning College, one faculty member brought out the importance of working with the community. She pointed out, “[the community partner] can provide educational experiences that I alone could not provide if I tried to do that. I don’t think you can place a value on that as far as what the students get out of that.” Another faculty member stressed the importance of experiential learning: to take “something we are talking about in the classroom and be able to apply it to real life.” She also emphasized doing community service “with the academic goals in mind, doing it intentionally, and doing it in such a way that you’re accomplishing those academic goals, both inside the classroom and outside the classroom.”

**The Connected Campus.** The Connected Campus president set the tone for this finding: “connecting service-learning to academic learning and student development is really important.”

Similar attitudes about experiential education were found at this college. A faculty member shared,

I also believe that people learn best through experiencing and when I can tear down the walls and have them go out into the community and take what they are learning in the classroom and apply it, I just think it’s better.

Another one said that service-learning “seems very natural for me to begin to build [a background of service] into my classroom.... I see it as an outcome of learning in the classroom.” She further shared personally why she uses this method for teaching:

I have a very firm belief that public education exists for the purpose of developing informed citizens who can then not only become active informed citizens and leaders, I think that is the purpose of education. It’s [service-learning] what creates a democracy and I am a firm believer that that is the purpose of public education, to integrate what we know and what we learn with what we do in society.

**The Showpiece.** The Showpiece faculty members gave detailed descriptions of their use and effects of service-learning. One discussed her incentive for using this method:

the primary motivation for me is the student learning outcome. I realize that there are others that are out there getting students involved in communities. I think it’s

important and I place a high premium on that, but I probably wouldn't justify it on that alone. So, yes, it's still student learning for me.

Another faculty member discussed her subject area and how service-learning can enhance learning in particular:

History is, many students have the perception that you...just read, and for some that works really well—studying historical documents. I know I love that kind of stuff, but for others something more experiential is, I think, very effective.

Likewise, an English faculty member said,

I teach composition and the focus of the course is rhetorical strategies and techniques in both academic and public writing. So my students are doing both writing for school but also writing for the community. And they seem much more invested in the work that they do since they're doing that work for community partners. So I think they learn more and it's easier for me to get my outcome, and I think they learn more because they are more engaged.

**The Work in Progress.** Personal connections for teaching with service were found at The Work in Progress. A faculty member recounted,

when I saw what students' experiences were with [service-learning], I realized that I had found my calling, that this was it; that it could really make things come alive in ways that the best written book and the most provocative lecture and all of that really couldn't do.

Another echoed, "I think service-learning becomes a really natural connection to [the issues I talk about in class] where we don't just theoretically talk about making a

difference, but that they can actually see how that can happen at whatever level right in real life.”

**Summary.** Using service-learning to enhance student learning pertained to the experiential component of classroom and service activities. For all of the faculty, service-learning was key for reaching class goals, objectives, and outcomes. They recognized in it the opportunities for greater learning in terms of critical thinking and relevance of the course material to real life.

### **Finding Five: Practical Application of Service-Learning Outcomes Specifically for Career and Work Purposes Justifies Its Use**

To continue with the relevance of the course material to real life, the practical nature of service-learning activities allowed students to use and develop hands-on skills which could be used in work situations.

**The Cadillac.** Cadillac faculty members connected service-learning experiences to career experiences. One said, “I also like seeing people get to safely explore career options and I’ve enjoyed watching people make decisions based on the service-learning.” Another supported that point and further noted that as a potential career experience, service-learning can be beneficial for students who do service in a class that is outside of their major. To underscore the work-related aspect, she went on to say, “every recommendation letter that I have been asked to write in over 15 years has asked about community involvement, and this makes it a matter of record.”

**The Up-and-Comer.** The president of The Up-and-Comer listed three reasons for his program’s survival: “real world exposure for younger students becoming more

essential; resume material and future references; it enhances the college's exposure in all arenas.” A faculty member continued along that line with

real-life experiences for students are much better than anything that you can get in the classroom. It gives them the opportunity to see, because this is in a community health nursing class that they do this project, so to sit in class and listen to it is one thing, but to have to get out there and get a chance to do it is so much more.

Also, faculty made comments such as “it brings the lived experience into the classroom.”

**The Learning College.** For the coordinator at The Learning College, the practical purpose of service-learning appealed to him and he questioned, with service-learning being the answer, “how do you combine this work in higher education with the definite need that was out there for work in nonprofit[s] that could employ students with very high skills and also help to meet a very pressing need?”

**The Connected Campus.** The coordinator for The Connected Campus clarified, our definition for service-learning states that we have a focus on career exploration. I think that it is one of the most important outcomes of a service-learning experience. Many students have solidified their career and or changed their career because of their service-learning experiences.

He also saw this career exploration element as a major opportunity for service-learning in the current higher education climate.

**The Showpiece.** Faculty at The Showpiece found practical applications to service-learning, conceding that may be the most important aspect of it for many students. A faculty member commented,

when orienting students to the service component in my classes, I found that their interest was usually more centered in how it could make them more marketable. In truth, I would prefer that students would be more motivated by learning outcomes rather than job possibilities, but that may be asking too much. Most students want to see a direct link between what instructors have them do and how that will transfer into the workplace. Service-learning is very attractive to such students for obvious reasons. The experience can also teach them about themselves in terms of future employment. I have had several students who, after completing their service learning assignments and journals, actually changed their majors and career paths based on their experience. That's pretty powerful.

**The Work in Progress.** A faculty member at The Work in Progress shared student feedback: “students commented on the practical application of service-learning for enhancing their resume and helping them to both choose careers they were interested in and not interested in.”

**Summary.** Practical application of service-learning outcomes specifically for career and work purposes pertained to using learned skills in a real-life context. Clearly, experiential learning for career development was a universal factor for all of the colleges.

### **Research Question One Findings Summary**

The participant colleges demonstrated that their programs have survived over time because they started with a strong foundation, are connected within their colleges and communities, and have the organizational practices to support and sustain the programs. When these conditions occur, it allows for enhanced student learning. Finally, when

service-learning is placed within a career and work context, it appeals to a wider audience and gives it an added purpose.

### **Research Question Two: Factors Influencing Program Survival**

This section highlights barriers to effective service-learning practice which may influence sustainability. These factors relate to college and placement site challenges. Table 6 shows examples of barriers on both sides. This section is intended to be of practical use to practitioners. While all participants cited positive features of using service-learning, they also shared areas they found to be problematic, including organizational issues, student-related problems, faculty-related problems, staffing concerns, and communication issues.

Table 6

*Examples of Participant College Barriers to Service-Learning Program Survival*

Issue	College Side	Community Partner Side
Nature of the Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuter school</li> <li>• Quarter system makes it hard to fit in projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run by volunteers</li> <li>• Some partners do not want student involvement</li> </ul>
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work part-time or full-time, have work/family commitments, course load</li> <li>• Lack of transportation</li> <li>• Students start project but do not finish</li> <li>• Keeping students motivated</li> <li>• Lack of student rewards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students not showing up for service</li> <li>• Personnel too busy/overworked</li> <li>• Too many students knocking on door to do service</li> <li>• Restrictions for volunteering—hard to fit service-learners</li> </ul>
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctant to change</li> <li>• May have negative perception of Service-Learning</li> <li>• Lack of faculty rewards</li> <li>• Labor intensive for faculty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have safety concerns for students out in community</li> <li>• The partner may drop out or may not have opportunities every semester</li> </ul>
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service-Learning Center is understaffed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High personnel turnover</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses not noted as Service-Learning sections in schedule</li> <li>• Adjuncts unaware of Service-Learning services</li> <li>• Adjuncts unaware of Service-Learning requirements across sections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems with keeping contact info current</li> </ul>

**Organizational issues.** The overall nature of the community college as a commuter school was seen as a problem by participants. There could be less opportunity for students to participate fully in service-learning activities because they are commuter students, or, as in one participant college, they operated on a quarter system. This fed into more issues on the college side, particularly with student and faculty concerns (see below). The nature of the nonprofit world came into play when talking about working in the community. Many sites were run by volunteers, the personnel were often overworked, and some places did not want students to participate. The coordinator from The Connected Campus expressed dismay when, after five years of working with one community partner, no one knew who he was or that the college was even doing work when he visited the site because the volunteer coordinator position had changed so often.

**Student-related problems.** Some barriers for students to using service-learning were that they work full- or part-time, have family commitments, and lack the transportation to get to and from service sites. Faculty noticed some students started a project but do not finish it, it was difficult to keep students motivated, and there was a lack of student rewards. At placement sites, there have been complaints of students not showing up for service, not enough opportunities for service-learners, restrictions for volunteering, and problems fitting volunteer opportunities within service-learning time frames. A faculty member from The Up-and-Comer said, “There are scheduling issues, obviously because we have day students, evening students and at some agencies there’s no opportunity for them to do an evening program.”

**Faculty-related problems.** The most often-cited barrier to using service-learning was time constraints for faculty. Other faculty issues were: faculty reluctance to change, they may have a negative perception of service-learning, and there was a lack of faculty rewards for using service-learning. A faculty member from The Showpiece revealed a serious faculty concern:

I have personally known a professor in [a certain discipline] who loved service-learning who used to come to all the conferences and was an engaged practitioner, and then he felt that within the culture of his own department, it was kind of looked down upon to the point where he even wondered if his tenure would be jeopardized over it. For whatever reason, people didn't quite approve of it and his participation and so he's backed off.

In reference to working with the community partner, one faculty member voiced concerns over safety in the field, and another talked about when project plans fall through because a community partner has dropped out.

**Staffing concerns.** The main staffing issues had to do with the college service-learning center being understaffed, for example, The Work in Progress has a half-time coordinator. There were reports of high personnel turnover at the community agency sites.

**Communication issues.** Problems occurred here with regard to not having courses noted as service-learning sections on the course schedule. Faculty recounted students who signed up for their section not knowing service would be a major

component, and then the non-service classes were closed. A Learning College faculty member said,

One of the greatest challenges, I think, is that that courses that are currently offered with academic service-learning component are not noted when the student signs up for the course. So I would say that it is a college-wide challenge. So you end up with students who signed up for courses and suddenly now they are in two or three academic service-learning courses.

Communication issues for adjunct faculty was another recurring problem. At times, adjuncts were unaware of service-learning services. Participants reported in some cases service-learning objectives were not uniform across sections of the same class because adjuncts would use service-learning in different ways for their classes.

### **Research Question Two Findings Summary**

The nature of the community college brings its own set of constraints when operating programs. Non traditional, commuter students have competing demands and varying class schedules. Faculty, uncertain about service-learning resources or requirements, may not care to engage. Staffing issues relating to both service-learning centers and at the service sites are problematic. Finally, communication problems persist with service requirements for undesignated classes for students, or even among part-time and full-time faculty teaching the same class across sections. Uncovering barriers and challenges for programs can help us better plan for the long term.

### **The Null Case: Why It Did Not Work**

To further understand why programs endure, it was helpful to review a case where service-learning did not work. The following section presents a negative case.

The story of this college sounds similar to the others. The director of service-learning at the American Association of Community Colleges referred me to a community college where service-learning did not become institutionalized. I interviewed the would-be coordinator. A professor of English, she was involved in an existing service initiative at her college and had been interested in service-learning for pedagogical reasons. At the time, only two or three faculty members were doing some form of service-learning on their own. She shared her personal motivations for teaching:

I really believe in service just as a philosophy. When I read about service-learning and read about people who were serving their communities and meeting these ever-present community needs at the same time that they were learning about something in the classroom, I thought: This is cool!

The college is located in the mountain region of the United States and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Established in 1973, this community college has a current student population of about 8,000.

The would-be coordinator described how service-learning was initially considered at her college. A small team of faculty worked together to apply for a grant from a national organization. In 2000, the college was awarded the three-year grant to train her as coordinator, train faculty, and establish community partnerships. The college was

responsible for setting up a service-learning office, supporting a half-time coordinator, and creating a grant writing position. About the initial college reaction to the grant, the coordinator commented, “my current administration really wants to look good and this [national] grant—even though it was a very small grant—it was talked about a lot and it was seen as a feather in the cap of our college.” The positive signs were there: a core of committed faculty, support from the administration, seed funding, and an existing community education program at the college. Why did this initiative fail to sustain itself?

The coordinator cited several reasons for the disappointing result revolving around organizational culture, vague administration priorities, and college increased growth. She recalled,

once the grant was over, the promises that were made regarding service-learning just did not continue. I think what happened is that there’s a long institutional history of applying for grants, getting the grants, and then going on to the next thing, the next grant, when the grant is over.... I have been here almost 20 years and I’ve seen this pattern unfortunately through a series of administrations.

Something else comes down the pike and people decide just to do the next thing instead.

When asked about the organization’s culture, she used terms such as unfocused, disappointing, scattered, and mistrust. About college leadership and goals, she said, “they are not clear and they change; there’s no follow-through on anything.”

To add to institutional issues, the college has undergone tremendous growth recently with double-digit growth annually for the past six years; the coordinator noted

student population has gone from under 5,000 to nearing 8,000. Growth was also associated with development of new programs and an increase from two satellite campuses to four. The coordinator noted, “there’s just been a huge amount of growth, a lot of emphasis on new things that are happening. I think there was just some loss of integrity of some of the ideas of what we are, who we are.”

Several key sustainability factors were missing in this case. For example, this college did not have strong support from the president or administration. As the coordinator pointed out, the college leadership was noncommittal and tended to invest in short term outcomes rather than the long term. With competing short term priorities, there was no chance for buy-in from administrators or faculty. Also, there was not actually a core group of faculty to advocate for the cause. At the onset of the grant, only two or three faculty were engaged in some form of service-learning. Finally, the coordinator attempted to champion the effort, but was simply hampered by a dysfunctional organizational environment combined with unprecedented growth of the college.

The grant program lasted from 2000 to 2003 with no signs of sustaining the program from the college. It was unfortunate to the coordinator, but she reported that various forms of service-learning done on an individual basis are still happening on campus. With the new growth, many new faculty have come on board, but there is no one to train them in service-learning. She said she tries to help when she can and gives out materials to those who are interested. She does have one piece of advice she would give to future grantee colleges: “if something had been put in writing, our current president,

...I think she would have been more embarrassed about not following through on it. I think getting things in writing is important.”

### **Conclusion**

This study has reported reasons for program survival based on six model service-learning programs. First, a program should start with a strong foundation, housed where appropriate per the individual college, and actively encourage service-learning activities within the college and across the community. Second, once connections have been established, organizational practices develop to carry out the service-learning program objectives. Third, service-learning enhances both student learning and career development. Further, recognizing barriers that can occur both at the college and with community partners can provide the service-learning practitioner with useful information to plan and sustain programs. Finally, understanding why programs fail provides another useful angle for program implementation and sustainability.

## 6. Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to determine why service-learning programs at six community colleges have sustained over time, and to better understand how administrators and faculty meet shifting demands for service-learning. This chapter presents the implications of the findings presented in Chapter 5. I will analyze the findings as related to the research questions, relate the findings to my conceptual framework, and include implications for service-learning best practices. Finally, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are addressed.

### **Discussion of Research Questions**

This section discusses the trends that emerged from the surveys, interviews, and document analysis from within and across the six cases. Research questions were: (a) why have service-learning programs survived for more than a decade at six exemplar community colleges; and (b) what practical factors influenced program survival at these colleges? For the first question, I was particularly interested in finding out why and how faculty and administrators supported service-learning. The second question was aimed at building on the programs' survival reasons by uncovering factors related to internal and external barriers that influenced program sustainability. Survey and interview questions revolved around service-learning beginnings, organizational structures and culture, personal motivations for using service-learning, perspectives on why service-learning has

endured, and barriers experienced by the coordinator and faculty participants at the colleges and community partner levels. Various documents support and clarify the findings. Discussion of the findings is organized by research question. Following, each finding for research question one is discussed, related to existing literature, and related to the conceptual framework.

### **Research Question One: Program Survival Reasons**

Finding One stated that sustainable programs start with a strong foundation as appropriate for the individual community college. Of the six programs, four were located under the academic umbrella or as a separate department, one was under student services, and one was grouped with career services. Of note, two programs began elsewhere and reorganized into the academic unit.

Program placement within the institution has been explored in the literature. Most scholars agree that a central office, coordinator, and staff are significant variables for institutionalization (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, 2000; Hinck & Brandell, 2000). A point for debate, however, is the location of service-learning offices. In their study of institutionalization of service-learning, Bringle and Hatcher (2000) looked at the centralized program office's reporting structure and determined those offices that reported to chief academic officers showed a higher level of institutionalization. However, Strong et al. (2009) reviewed a range of approaches from six colleges and universities and questioned the structural arrangements to sustain programs. They studied the benefits of academic affairs/student affairs/centralized/decentralized structures and concluded that whatever approach a college takes, it is critical to take a community-based

approach, not just an institutionally defined approach. Finally, Rue (1996) made a point to recognize the unique institutional and community contexts that require an understanding and balance specific to “the institution’s focus on the learning and developmental outcomes of the service-learning experience for the students involved” (pp. 247-248).

This current study supports the strength of a unique contextual view for positioning the service-learning office. Once a program has a strong foundation organizationally within the college—wherever positioned—it can then reach out to other units within the college and to community organizations.

Finding Two stated sustainable programs have positive connections across the college and throughout the community. Participants from all six colleges talked about service-learning being tied to the college mission, linked to the community, and linked throughout the college. They frequently used the phrase “embedded in the college culture” and indicated an awareness of service-learning on campus as well as service-learning being talked about among colleagues.

Prentice, Exley, et al (2003), in their study of chief academic officers, recognized the interconnectedness among faculty, students, administrators, and community partners for service-learning to be integrated into the college’s fabric. Evidence of service-learning’s important role was found in participant documentation. For example, the accreditation self-study report from this current study’s college I dubbed the Work-in-Progress specifically mentioned service-learning faculty engaged in partnerships with organizations outside the college. The three-year strategic plan of the Learning College

included action items to expand service-learning opportunities and implement a process to strengthen community service areas to advance the college mission. The Connected Campus published a service-learning database with statistical information about service-learning activities which was accessible on the Internet to students, faculty, and the public. The Up-and-Comer emphasized organized service experiences coordinated in collaboration with the college and community in its letter to community partners.

Based on the findings from this current study, it would seem that colleges with sustainable programs emphasize connections to the internal community of students, faculty and the college climate, and the external environment of community partners and the public. The interdependence of four groups or stakeholders (students, faculty, internal college community, and external community) are key to institutionalized programs (Driscoll et al., 1996; Prentice, 2001a).

Finding Three stated organizational practices aligned with a service mission promote program sustainability. Participants reported the importance of the service-learning coordinator and staff, a critical resource for faculty members. Other structures that were discussed included advisory councils, workshops and training opportunities, and student and faculty resources and support mechanisms. Most importantly, recognizable support from the presidential level was a key factor for all participants.

When asked about using service-learning as a pedagogy at their colleges, half of the presidents in this current study rated this factor as extremely important; the other half rated it as very important. All of the presidents indicated they were aware of service-learning personnel and activities on their campuses. In their study of community college

presidents, *Sustaining Service Learning: The Role of Chief Academic Officers*, Prentice, Exley, et al. (2003) concluded,

the association that these CAOs [chief academic officers] made between service learning and enhanced student learning may explain why, in the face of the most severe budget cuts many had ever experienced, all affirmed that service learning will be sustained on their campuses. (p. 6)

By including the participating colleges' presidents' perspectives, this study adds support to the literature on program sustainability by emphasizing support from the college leadership. This study also connected sustainability to the role of the president in both recognizing committed faculty and staff, and valuing service-learning as a teaching and learning concept.

The six colleges have demonstrated their commitment to service-learning as a philosophy and mission goal by building on early signals of institutionalized programs to create their own culture and practices for the long term. These practices have helped the colleges to deal with growing demands as they have increased service-learning on their campuses. For example, the Cadillac coordinator explained how some formalized operational procedures for the service-learning center were initiated at his college. A faculty-led conference presentation outlined the paperwork to document service to include evaluations, partner site proposals, and student development plans—all within the realm of service-learning.

While all six colleges have dealt with expansion of their services, the Work-in Progress was a peculiar case when it came to staffing. Surprisingly, this was the only

college with a part-time coordinator position. This coordinator, compared to the other colleges, relied on working individually or “person by person” to market service-learning. She said, “people know me either through lots of emails that I send out now and then about getting on board with service-learning...or I go to new faculty orientations.” She emphasized building relationships within the college community, but when I asked how she built relationships externally with her community partners, she replied, “I don’t usually use the term ‘partners’ or ‘partnership’ because, to me, that runs deeper than what we really do.” Although the Work-in-Progress met my criteria of being institutionalized, the organizational piece was questionable in terms of staffing and connectedness to the community. As to why this program has sustained itself, I surmise that the faculty commitment is what keeps it going. Also, the number of placement sites, in the hundreds, indicates potential for activity. One Work-in Progress faculty member noted the downtown location and an “activist oriented” student body.

Finding Four stated using service-learning to enhance student learning strengthens program sustainability. Throughout the interviews and document analysis, the emphasis on student learning and was clear. For example, the Connected Campus detailed its dedication to student learning through service; student life activities; and faculty, staff and administrator community service in its accreditation self-study report.

Prentice and Robinson’s 2010 research brief, *Improving Student Learning Outcomes with Service Learning*, showed a step towards exploring learning outcomes and service-learning. Their three-year study of student and faculty focus groups showed increased learning outcomes in career and teamwork, civic responsibility, and academic

development and educational success for service-learners as compared to non-service learners.

Based on the strong responses from faculty and coordinators in this current study, I anticipate a move away from civic responsibility as the primary purpose for service-learning and toward an experiential learning strategy to strengthen classroom content framed by community service. Within the context of this study, there was less of an emphasis on civic engagement and more so on community engagement. In fact, I suspect that many practitioners are using the terms civic engagement and community engagement interchangeably. The democratic ideals for developing citizens objective may be realized for some service-learners or it may not.

Finding Five stated practical application of service-learning outcomes specifically for career and work purposes justifies its use. All participants confirmed an element of career preparation for service-learning. For example, the Work-in-Progress coordinator, along with faculty, surveyed service-learners from 2008 and 2009 at their institution. One outcome was students gained insight into careers through their service-learning experience. In their study, students commented about “test driving a career” resulting in helping them choose careers they were both interested in and not interested in.

The service-learning brochure of the Connected Campus lists career exploration as its first area of focus. Kozeracki (2000) addressed the career preparation process as a benefit in her study of service-learning at the community college level. But Snyder (2008) noted in her discussion of civic mission and higher education that “cold war universities began to pioneer the ideas that higher education should serve the public by

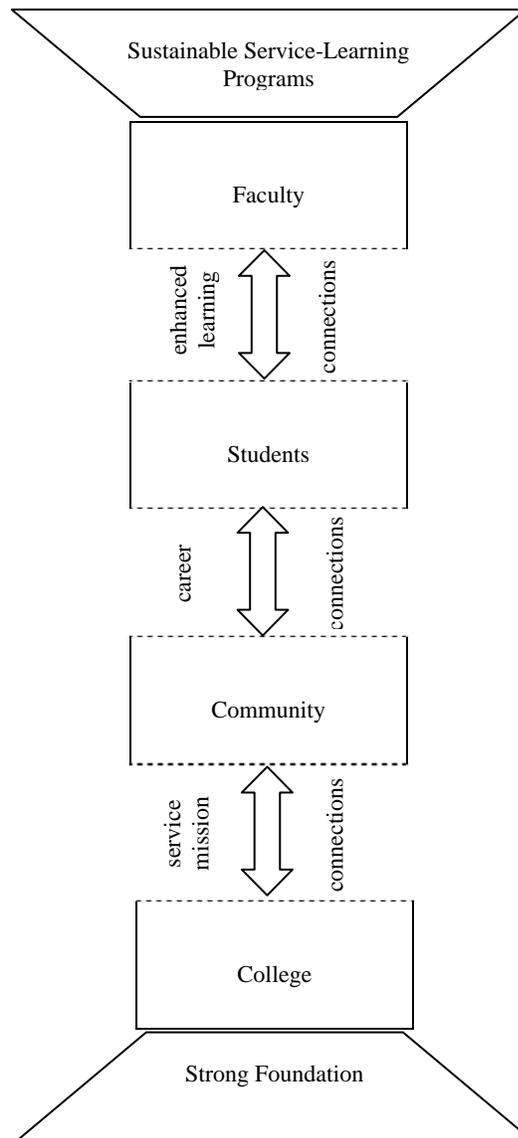
advancing the career goals of individual students, rather than by preparing them for civic participation” (p. 66). My study discovered that participant colleges emphasized career preparation, and not necessarily civic responsibility goals for service-learning.

While there were some vestiges of the importance of civic responsibility for some participants, this current study suggests that the tie-in to career development is still there, perhaps alongside the civic mission. One possible explanation for the career- or resume-building focus voiced by the study participants is the community college environment with its specific audience of older, part-time students. Their primary purpose for higher education might be for career preparation. Another explanation might be that emphasizing the job skills and knowledge angle appears to be a way to market service-learning to new students. As commuters, community college students have competing priorities such as work, families, and transportation constraints. Students may consider classes with a service-learning component more closely with an incentive for career skills development. They might invest their energies in classes that offer such a value-added component.

To sum up, the participant colleges demonstrated that their programs have survived over time because they started with a strong foundation, are connected within their colleges and communities, and have the organizational practices to support and sustain the programs. These conditions allow for enhanced student learning. Findings pointed to prioritizing service-learning more as a teaching tool and less for civic responsibility education. Finally, when service-learning is placed within a career and work context, it appeals to a wider audience and has an added purpose.

**Discussion of findings relative to conceptual framework.** My conceptual framework (Figure 1) helped visualize the relationships between the stakeholders, environments, and the connections to service-learning in the context of research question one. Figure 2, as an illustration of findings, presents the results of research question one and it is derived from my conceptual framework.

This study looked at service-learning from an institutional perspective. New institutionalism theory provided a suitable lens to examine the survival reasons of service-learning programs by way of the stakeholders (students, faculty, college and community) within internal and external environments. Impact variables (Driscoll et al., 1996) pertinent to each stakeholder group further clarify each group's perspectives.



*Figure 2.* Illustration of findings.

Participants shared details about program operations, college culture, personal philosophies, and experiences having to do with the service-learning pedagogy. My conceptual framework offered one way to study the survivability of this phenomenon.

Three relevant points from new institutionalism came into play for this study:

- Institutional isomorphism: Meyer and Rowan (1991) discussed the interdependency of organizations with their institutional environments and argued that isomorphism contributes to the organizations' survival. The indicator of longevity means the organization, in this case the community college, has blended into or become interdependent with its environment, in this case meaning the college administrative structure as well as its external community. For long-term programs, Meyer and Rowan (1991) explain, "incorporating externally legitimated formal structures increases the commitment of internal participants and external constituents" (p. 49).
- Internal environment: The college administrative structure featured prominently in this study. All programs had a service-learning center positioned appropriately within the college organizational structure (e.g., student services, academic unit, or career services), administrative staff, service-learning notations on transcripts, and formalized procedures. College presidents were aware of service-learning activities and contributions. Service-learning activities were included and sometimes lauded in documentation such as accreditation self-study reports, brochures, and strategic plans. The organizations' internal cultures supported a mission of service. Faculty perspectives noticeably pointed to institutional buy-in and a committed faculty base for each of the six colleges.

- External environment: Linkages to the community as its external environment further cemented the commitment to service-learning. All six programs had external affiliations with Campus Compact, statewide networks with colleagues, or state universities. The teaching priority and service mission also were factors for legitimizing service-learning and were evidenced in public reports.

Figure 2 displays the relationships between the stakeholder groups. First, at the bottom, sustainable programs start with a strong foundation as appropriate for the college. Second, the right side shows connections across the college and throughout the community. The dotted lines between stakeholders symbolize the interdependence between the internal and external environments. Third, between college and community, is the focus on the service mission for organizational practices. Fourth, the interplay between faculty and students is shown by enhancing student learning. Fifth, the service experience as having career track potential is depicted between students and community. The arrows throughout the figure are intended to show reciprocal relationships among the stakeholder groups. Next, research question two is discussed and related to implications for best practices.

### **Research Question Two: Factors Influencing Program Survival**

This question focused on the barriers as perceived by participants to determine practical factors influencing program survival. The main barriers shared by this study's participants were organizational issues dealing with the commuter student aspect of a community college campus as well as the nonprofit nature of the community partners.

Student-related problems revolved around the commuter aspect of a community college campus such as time constraints and matching schedules at community partner sites. Faculty-related problems centered on time constraints for faculty incorporating a new pedagogy into their teaching load. Staffing concerns had to do with understaffed centers and community partner administration. Finally, communication issues dealt with improperly designated service-learning courses and lack of communication with adjuncts regarding the courses.

**Implications for service-learning best practices.** To devise a set of best practices, analysis of major feedback from participants is displayed in two tables. Table 7 shows a synopsis of the main program survival reasons indicated by participants. (Examples of college and community partner barriers as seen by the participants were previously displayed as Table 6 in chapter five.) Study participants also offered lessons learned and constructive ways to deal with barriers; these responses are collected in Table 8.

Table 7

*Main Reasons for Program Survival*

College	Coordinator Perspectives	Faculty Perspectives
The Cadillac	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. President's priority</li> <li>2. Coordinator's own efforts</li> <li>3. Teaching priority of the community college</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Institutional buy-in</li> <li>2. Coordinator is renowned</li> <li>3. Center/professional staff</li> <li>4. Service-learning is embedded in the college culture</li> </ol>
The Up-and-Comer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administration's commitment to service-learning, community and mission</li> <li>2. Efforts of coordinator/ center</li> <li>3. Faculty encourage the use of service-learning, belief in it, see it as a "viable learning tool"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student interest</li> <li>2. Using service-learning to supplement the class experience</li> </ol>
The Learning College	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faculty interest and strong commitment</li> <li>2. President's support/ president is advocate for service-learning</li> <li>3. Dean's level support</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mission of community college to link to community needs</li> <li>2. Support from center</li> <li>3. Center has a community liaison and faculty liaison</li> </ol>
The Connected Campus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Service-learning was a faculty-driven movement</li> <li>2. Coordinator position was a permanent budget item from the beginning</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strong start through proponents and advocates</li> <li>2. Support by president/ administration</li> <li>3. Center staff</li> <li>4. Focus on student services</li> <li>5. Strong connections with community partners</li> </ol>
The Showpiece	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Institutional support/ buy-in from administration</li> <li>2. Connections with key faculty</li> <li>3. Good infrastructure with a named center to organize around</li> <li>4. Five full-time staff</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Center and staff support</li> <li>2. Coordinator is exceptional with working with faculty</li> <li>3. Dedicated core of faculty</li> <li>4. Support by president</li> </ol>
The Work-in-Progress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building relationships on campus</li> <li>2. "We just keep going"</li> <li>3. "Nobody seems to bother us"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support from coordinator</li> <li>2. Reputation of college for using service-learning</li> <li>3. Faculty commitment/ core group believes in it</li> </ol>

Table 8

*Counteracting the Barriers*

Issue	Solution
Nature of the Organization	Cadillac coordinator: “The teaching priority of a community college helped. Student leadership came later here versus student leaders I had at [my previous university] because of time constraints. But now we do have excellent service-learning leaders; that took a little longer to develop... Overall, community colleges have an advantage over universities as far as getting started.”
Center Staffing Concerns	Connected Campus coordinator: “In every one of our classes that incorporates service-learning, we identify a student leader. That student becomes part of our office as what we call our service-learning assistance team. Those service-learning assistants meet with one of my staff on a regular basis and they coordinate all the paperwork in the classrooms, help us do the certificates, help us track and coordinate, and then reports back to the instructors. And so we are creating a servant leadership model, you might say, where the students are the ones helping to incorporate and promote service-learning in the classroom. And we have 30 to 40 of those a year that are involved.”
Student Time Constraints	Up-and-Comer coordinator: “Those taking full loads, it’s often a challenge to find time to do service. We work really hard with students to look at their schedules and the benefit of them being commuters is most of them have cars and most of them go back to their community, so that’s actually a benefit in that we can work to find an agency that’s realistic in travel to them and time and fitting within their schedule. So if they’re only available on a Saturday evening, we work hard to try to find an agency that has opportunities for service on a Saturday evening.”

(continued)

Table 8 (continued)

Issue	Solution
How to Get Faculty Involved	<p>Cadillac coordinator:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They have to know about the program</li> <li>2. They have to know they have a resource</li> <li>3. The center staff can free up their time.</li> </ol> <p>“Most faculty are too busy to do [their own projects]. We do the placement and the follow-up in conjunction with the faculty member. We let them teach! We let them foster learning through service. They do the evaluation of that. We suggest the process.”</p>
Faculty Reluctance	<p>Work-in-Progress faculty: “We host a faculty development forum. Faculty present from different disciplines: sciences, social sciences, history, international students and new immigrants, share assessment tools. They act as a core resources and show faculty you can really do it.”</p>
Problems With Community Partner Fit	<p>Up-and-Comer coordinator: “To manage a volunteer is the same as managing an employee and they need the resources on their end to take our students and supervise them in quality learning experiences. So we had to look for places that were receptive to students.”</p>
Communication Problems With Community Partners	<p>Up-and-Comer coordinator: “When we had 20 students from a psychology area wanting to go out and get the service done within a semester, we had to have some trained, receptive agencies. So we did a lot of community training and meetings with them.”</p>
Availability of Community Partners	<p>Showpiece faculty: “[the potential for community partners to drop out] that’s one of the obstacles that people need to be aware of if they want to get into this work. It’s good to have a backup plan always. I tend to rotate my partners a lot, especially in tech writing, because if someone needs a web site this semester, that doesn’t mean they need one every semester.”</p>

(continued)

Table 8 (continued)

Issue	Solution
Recognizing Community Partner Needs	<p>Learning College: Coordinator formed core community partners who commit to minimum three-year partnerships. They host a training day where they “have an opportunity to do the brainstorming around what projects and needs are in their agency, and then they actually complete a more formal proposal for their needs that would align with our different programs meaning how would they envision using service-learning students that could commit this 20 hours per semester. How could they use a work study student that would be there 150 hours? How could they use an AmeriCorps student that has 300 hours of service throughout the year? How can they use students on a volunteer basis? So we do a fairly formal needs analysis across all the programs, and then we keep that information on record.”</p>
Why Programs Fail	<p>Cadillac coordinator: “We augmented our ‘fund one’ funds from the college, but we always should start, at least in my experience, with the commitment by the institution. That doesn’t always happen. And we saw that, still today, people who get grants—once they’re over, if everything isn’t done well, if you don’t support the program effectively, they’re starting again. I know some programs in [this state] have started 3 or 4 times, because a key person left or there wasn’t the buy-in and the wide base of support, because one year is not going to work. Now if you have to do it that way, you do it that way. But it usually doesn’t work.”</p> <p>Null college: “I felt like our institution made a commitment to saying yes we believe in service-learning and we want to continue with it [but]...I wish I would have gotten things in writing because if I had pushed for that, [the administration] might have still discontinued the program, but then I think there would have been some real embarrassment involved.”</p>

This section summarized participants' shared perceptions of program survival reasons and solutions to counteracting barriers they have experienced. From this collection, two sets of best practices were developed. Staff, faculty and administrators at community colleges can benefit from these insights for building, sustaining, or renewing their service-learning programs. The key survival components are: a core of committed faculty, awareness and commitment by the college president, and a steadfast coordinator and dedicated center staff. These components are tied to institutional buy-in which encourages the vibrant connections between and among the college, community, students, and faculty. Also of value for program longevity is devising ways to neutralize barriers to sustainability. When faced with organizational, student, faculty, and community partner challenges, the exemplar programs endeavored to improve processes in the interest of the service mission. Together, the best practices offer ways to better understand how program administrators and faculty meet shifting demands for service-learning on their campuses and within their communities.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

This study contributes to previous literature on institutionalized service-learning programs as well as their sustainability. This study also extends an understanding of service-learning program longevity through qualitative inquiry to provide contextual detail. This was achieved by asking coordinators, faculty, and presidents from six exemplar community colleges to explain their direct involvement with service-learning programs as to why their programs have endured, and barriers experienced by the coordinator and faculty participants at the college and community partner levels.

Future research should examine the impact variables directly from the community partner and student stakeholders to bring additional perspectives into the context of community college service-learning programs. More information from those sides of the equation can help program faculty and administrators support their activities over the long term.

This study's results are intended to be of use to college administrators and faculty considering implementing service-learning, or members of current service-learning institutions who seek to improve or expand programs, or overcome problems with their existing programs. Overall, this study's participants provided positive feedback on the status of their programs and reported positive experiences. Participants were selected specifically from community colleges with existing, long-term, exemplar service-learning programs. Although one "null case" was included where service-learning did not take root, studying more program failures could help determine more reasons for survivability.

A recurring theme in the literature, mirrored in this study, was the collective, four stakeholder approach regarding who is involved in service-learning: student, faculty, internal college, external community. A future study that includes the community partner side in detail could be of tremendous value. This study looked at the community partner side through the lens of the coordinator and faculty participants. Would community partners echo the same barriers pertaining to their dealings with the students, faculty, and college? What additional reasons would they contribute to help explain program longevity? Are there actual long-term relationships with certain service providers, and

why? From their external community perspective, do they detect any interdependency between the college and community?

It would be pertinent to explore further the idea of where the service-learning center is located within the college organizational structure. In this study, I recorded this information, but did not probe further about it. A subsequent study could look at this factor to determine its significance.

### **Limitations**

This study is one step toward understanding program survival factors in long-term community college service-learning programs. While this research addresses organizational issues in a case study format, there are some issues about the approach. First, by using telephone interviews, there was no direct observation experience. Also, the chosen design, collected data, and resultant interpretation have been filtered through my experiences and explanations.

Participants were selected directly from the colleges that responded to the 1995 and 2003 AACC surveys of community colleges. Thus data was limited to the colleges that were represented in both years. There may be other long-term programs that did not factor into this study because they did not participate in both survey years.

Another limitation had to do with adapting Driscoll et al.'s (1996) impact variables model. For example, on the student side of the model, Driscoll et al.'s last three variables of "autonomy/independence," "sense of ownership," and "communication" were omitted because this current study did not include the opportunity to have a class observation and was not directly focused on the students' learner roles. Likewise, on the

community side, the two variables “economic benefits” and “identification of prospective employees” were omitted because this current study looked at cost of services provided by faculty/students or actual employee hiring. Also, the authors used “awareness of PSU [Portland State University]” and “satisfaction with PSU interactions” as community variables; this current study replaced PSU with “college.” In addition, some indicators pertained to this case study, some did not (for example, “content of dissertations”). Some measurements were used (for example, this current study also used surveys, interviews, and review of documents), and some were not (PSU-specific reports and logs, focus groups, and class observations). My adapted rubric included the remaining pertinent variables and present indicators through the viewpoints of participants: coordinators, faculty, and presidents.

This case study only represents viewpoints from the selected colleges. The findings are not intended to be generalizable, although commonalities found across the selected programs in this study may lead to transferability that researchers and practitioners may find of value. Indeed, this study is bound by the case study as its qualitative research method: The study is bound by what was happening at the six particular participant colleges during the calendar year 2008.

### **Conclusion**

This study was about program survival reasons for long term service-learning programs at six exemplar community colleges. There is a clear need at the community college level to understand sustainable service-learning programs and to gauge the value of institutional and community connections. As the Showpiece president pointed out,

to view service-learning as an integral part of a college experience, it must become embedded in the student support/career building, academic/instructional, community-based, and administrative components of the institution's culture. Only when all components see the benefits and connecting of the dots does this find success and sustainability.

Findings revealed that robust programs started with a strong foundation, made positive connections across the college and throughout the community, had organizational structures aligned with service, used service-learning to emphasize student learning, and recognized the practical application of this method for career and work purposes. These findings have added to the interpretation of 1995 and 2003 AACC surveys results by looking closely at program administration and institutionalization. The six colleges have demonstrated that long-term service-learning offers practical, real-world learning opportunities for students, each college, and its community.

My goal was to examine coordinator, faculty, and college president perspectives on service-learning program survival, personal motivations for using service-learning, organizational culture, and barriers found at the organizational and community partner levels. Through participants' responses and shared experiences, two sets of best practices were developed. The first dealt with program survival reasons; the second offered practical counteractions against the challenges and barriers faced by service-learning coordinators and faculty members. Together, the best practices offer ways to better understand how successful program administrators and faculty meet shifting demands for service-learning on their campuses and within their communities.

Appendix A. Historical Timeline in the Development of Service-Learning  
From Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

### Historical Timeline

This **brief historical timeline** highlights some of the most important dates in the development of service-learning.

- **1903** — Cooperative Education Movement founded at the University of Cincinnati
- **Circa 1905** — William James, John Dewey developing intellectual foundations to service-based learning
- **1910** — American philosopher William James envisions non-military national service in his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War"
- **Circa 1915** — Some Folk Schools in Appalachia become two- and four-year colleges with work, service, and learning connected
- **1933-1942** — Through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), created by Franklin D. Roosevelt, millions of young people serve terms of 6 to 18 months to help restore the nation's parks, revitalize the economy, and support their families and themselves
- **1935** — Work Projects Administration established (needed public work for people who needed jobs)
- **1944** — The GI Bill links service and education, offering Americans educational opportunity in return for service to their country
- **1960s** — The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program are developed to engage older Americans in the work of improving the nation
- **1961** — President John F. Kennedy establishes the Peace Corps, with authorizing legislation approved by Congress on September 22, 1961
- **1964** — As part of the "War on Poverty," President Lyndon B. Johnson creates VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), a National Teacher Corps, the Job Corps, and University Year of Action. VISTA provides opportunities for Americans to serve full-time to help thousands of low-income communities. White House Fellows program established
- **1965** — College work-study programs established
- **1966** — Urban Corps emerged, funded with federal work-study dollars
- **1966-1967** — "Service-learning" phrase used to describe a TVA-funded project in East Tennessee with Oak Ridge Associated Universities, linking students and faculty with tributary area development organizations
- **1968** — National Service Secretariat Conference on National Service held in Washington, D.C

- **1969** — Atlanta Service-Learning Conference (sponsors included Southern Regional Education Board, U.S. Dept. HEW, City of Atlanta, Atlanta Urban Corps, Peace Corps, and VISTA)
- **1970** — The Youth Conservation Corps engages 38,000 people age 14 to 18 in summer environmental programs
- **1971** — White House Conference on Youth report full of calls for linking service and learning. Also, the National Center for Public Service Internships was established, and the Society for Field Experience Education (these two merged in 1978 to become the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education)
- **Circa 1971** — National Student Volunteer Program (became the National Center for Service-Learning in 1979) established. Published Synergist, a journal promoting linking service and learning
- **1976** — California Governor Jerry Brown establishes the California Conservation Corps, the first non-federal youth corps at the state level
- **1978** — The Young Adult Conservation Corps creates small conservation corps in the states with 22,500 participants age 16 to 23
- **1979** — "Three Principles of Service-Learning" published in the Synergist
- **1980s** — National service efforts are launched at the grassroots level, including the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (1984) and Campus Compact (1985), which help mobilize service programs in higher education; the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (1985), which helps replicate youth corps in states and cities; National Youth Leadership Council (1982), which helps to prepare future leaders; and Youth Service America (1985), through which many young people are given a chance to serve
- **1981** — National Center for Service-Learning for Early Adolescents established
- **1989** — Wingspread Principles of Good Practice in Service-Learning written—more than seventy organizations collaborate to produce the ten principles
- **1989-1990** — President George Bush creates the Office of National Service in the White House and the Points of Light Foundation to foster volunteering
- **1990** — Congress Passes, and President Bush signs, the National and Community Service Act of 1990. The legislation authorizes grants to schools to support service-learning and demonstration grants for national service programs to youth corps, nonprofits, and colleges and universities. Learn and Serve America established (as Serve-America). The legislation also authorizes establishment of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
- **1992** — The Maryland State Board of Education adopts mandatory service requirement which becomes effective in 1993 and affects the graduating class of 1997 and beyond
- **1993** — Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development endorse the importance of linking service with learning
- **Sept. 1993** — President Bill Clinton signs the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, creating AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service. The legislation unites Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, VISTA and Learn and Serve America into one independent federal agency

- **1994** — Congress passes the King Holiday and Service Act of 1994, charging the Corporation for National Service with taking the lead in organizing Martin Luther King Day as a day of service. The Stanford Service-Learning Institute created. The Ford Foundation/United Negro College Fund Community Service Partnership Project (a 10-college program linking direct service and learning) begun
- **1995** — Service-Learning network on the internet, via the University of Colorado Peace Studies Center
- **April 1997** — The Presidents' Summit for America's Future, chaired by General Colin Powell, brings together President Clinton, former Presidents Bush, Ford, and Carter, and Mrs. Reagan to recognize and expand the role of AmeriCorps and other service programs in meeting the needs of America's youth
- **1997** — Fourth of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education published — Wingspread Declaration Renewing the Civic Mission of the American University published
- **2001** — First International Conference on Service-Learning Research held — Wingspread conference on student civic engagement held
- **2002** — The USA Freedom Corps, a coordinating council and White House office, was launched to help Americans answer President George W. Bush's nationwide call to service
- **2003** — President Bush created the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation to find ways to recognize the valuable contributions volunteers are making in our Nation. The council created the President's Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service

## Appendix B. George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board Consent Form

Phase 2 and Phase 3 Consent Form

### *SUSTAINING SERVICE-LEARNING: BEST PRACTICES AND TRENDS AT SELECTED U.S. COMMUNITY COLLEGES*

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

##### RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to develop a set of best practice models based on surveys and interviews with personnel associated with community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed by telephone about the status of service-learning activities at your organization. The interview will be audio taped and should take about 30 minutes to complete.

##### RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

##### BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in service-learning, explore the conditions associated with model programs, and point to trends found in long term programs.

##### CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. (1) your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data; (2) a code will be placed on the survey and other collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your survey to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key.

##### PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

##### CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Ann Ludwick, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Program at George Mason University. She may be reached at [REDACTED] for questions or to report a research-related problem. The faculty advisor is Dr. John O'Connor, 703-993-2310. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

##### CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature

Version date: 02-05-08

Revised 07/2005

1 of 1

Approval for the use  
of this document  
EXPIRES

NOV 27 2008

Protocol #: 5591  
George Mason University

## Appendix C. Phase 1 Web Survey to Program Coordinators

Dear Respondent,

Your college participated in the 1995 and 2003 American Association of Community Colleges Surveys on Service-Learning in Community Colleges. This follow-on survey attempts to gather more information about your current service-learning program. It includes questions on faculty, community partners, and program administration from the previous surveys as well as other questions. This web-based survey should take you about 10 minutes to complete.

### **My project is entitled:**

Sustaining Service-Learning: Best Practices and Trends at Selected U.S. Community Colleges

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

#### **RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

This research is being conducted to develop a set of best practice models based on surveys and interviews with personnel associated with community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a web survey about the status of service-learning activities at your college.

#### **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

#### **BENEFITS**

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in service-learning, explore the conditions associated with model programs, and to point to trends found in long term programs.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data in this study will be confidential. (1) your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data; (2) a code will be placed on the survey and other collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your survey to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

**CONTACT**

This research is being conducted by Ann Ludwick, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Program at George Mason University. She may be reached at xxx-xxx-xxxx for questions or to report a research-related problem. The faculty advisor is Dr. John O’Connor, 703-993-2310. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

**CONSENT**

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

The George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board has waived the requirement for a signature on this consent form. However, if you wish to sign a consent, please contact Ann Ludwick at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.

Contact Name			
Title			
Institution Name			
Mailing Address			
City	State	ZIP	
Phone	FAX		
Email			

PART I – Program Background

1. How was service-learning introduced to your campus? (Circle all that apply)

- a. From a senior administrator
- b. Faculty member
- c. Student affairs
- d. Grant opportunity
- e.

Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. As of 2003, your college showed a commitment to service-learning by engaging in these three actions: a) service-learning appears on student transcripts; b) there is a coordinator designated for service-learning; c) there is an office designated for service-learning. What is the current status of these actions at your college today?

- a. Still operational
- b. Formal commitment but lacking in practice
- c. Some actions ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) have been dropped
- d.

Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Why does your college engage in service-learning today? (Circle all that apply)

- a. Service to the community
- b. Effective learning pedagogy
- c. Civic education
- d. Community partnerships
- e.

Other \_\_\_\_\_

PART II – Program Administration

4. When was your college's service-learning coordinator/director position established?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How long have you been involved in service-learning at your current institution?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Describe your responsibilities at the college as they relate to the service-learning initiative. Do you have a position description you can share?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Identify funding sources that have contributed at any time to your college's service-learning initiatives. (Circle all that apply)

- a. Corporation for National and Community Service (Learn and Serve America, Senior Corp, AmeriCorps)
- b. Federal work-study funds
- c. Other federal government
- d. State or local government
- e. Community organizations
- f. Local business/industry
- g. Foundations
- h. American Association of Community Colleges
- i. Campus Compact
- j. Your institution
- k. Tuition/student fees
- j. Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. Does your college's strategic plan include service learning?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9. Does your college's regional accreditation report include service learning?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. What are your college's policies and guidelines that impact the use of service-learning? Are they available on a website or in print material?

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11. May I have access to and quote your college's service-learning documentation such as: program reports, websites, brochures, media examples, and/or any other written or electronic material describing campus service-learning activities?

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PART III – Community Connections

12. What types of agencies are served by your service-learning activities? (Circle all that apply)

- a. K-12 schools
- b. Social service agencies/organizations
- c. Environmental agencies/organizations
- d. Health agencies/organizations
- e. Local government
- f. Pre-K/Head Start programs
- g. Animal care facilities
- h. Cultural/arts organizations
- i. Faith-based organizations
- j. Senior citizen centers/elder care
- k. Other \_\_\_\_\_

13. At approximately how many different sites are your college's service-learning students placed? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How does your college obtain community input for its service-learning initiatives? (Circle all that apply)

- a. Advisory board or committee
- b. Collaborative partnerships
- c. Environmental scanning processes
- d. Personal contact with community members
- e. Community assets/needs assessment or survey
- f. \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix D. Interview Guide for Service-Learning Coordinators and Faculty

### Internal College

How did service-learning initially find its way on the college's agenda?

What are some reasons why service-learning has endured on your campus? (Program survival)

What are your personal motivations for managing or engaging in service-learning activities?

Where is your program housed? (career ed / sociology / humanities / experiential ed)

How would you describe the organizational culture at your college?

What do you consider your challenges or barriers to be at the organization level?

### Community Connections

When identifying needs in your community that warrant service-learning, how do you obtain input from community partners?

What do you consider your challenges or barriers to be at the community partner level?

May I have access to some of your publications—on web? By mail?

## Appendix E. Phase 2 Web Survey to College Presidents

Dear Respondent,

Your college participated in the 1995 and 2003 American Association of Community Colleges Surveys on Service-Learning in Community Colleges. I have interviewed your service-learning coordinator and selected service-learning faculty members. This follow-on survey attempts to gather more information about your perceptions, as college president, concerning your current service-learning program. This web-based survey should take you about 10 minutes to complete.

**My project is entitled:**

Sustaining Service-Learning: Best Practices and Trends at Selected U.S. Community Colleges

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

This research is being conducted to develop a set of best practice models based on surveys and interviews with personnel associated with community colleges where service-learning has been consistently used since 1995. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a web survey about the status of service-learning activities at your college.

**RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

**BENEFITS**

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in service-learning, explore the conditions associated with model programs, and to point to trends found in long term programs.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data in this study will be confidential. (1) your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data; (2) a code will be placed on the survey and other collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your survey to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

**CONTACT**

This research is being conducted by Ann Ludwick, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Program at George Mason University. She may be reached at xxx-xxx-xxxx for questions or to report a research-related problem. The faculty advisor is Dr. John O’Connor, 703-993-2310. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

**CONSENT**

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

Contact Name	
Title	
Institution Name	
Phone	FAX
Email	

1. To what extent is service-learning institutionalized at your college?
  - a. It is fully integrated into the college culture and important to the community
  - b. It is important, but not vital to the college
  - c. It exists as a program but it not supported by the college in any way
  - d. Service-learning is not yet institutionalized at this college.
  
2. How central is service-learning to your college mission?
  - a. It’s a high priority
  - b. It’s a medium priority
  - c. It’s a low priority
  - d. It is not central in any way to the mission

3. Do you know who your service-learning coordinator is?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
4. How important is the coordinator's role to your service-learning program?
  - a. Extremely important
  - b. Very important
  - c. Somewhat important
  - d. Not important
  
5. Are you aware of the faculty who engage in service-learning?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. How important is it for faculty to use service-learning as pedagogy?
  - a. Extremely important
  - b. Very important
  - c. Somewhat important
  - d. Not important

7. In your opinion, why has service-learning endured at your college?

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8. Please share additional comments or insights about service-learning:

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Thank you for your participation.

## REFERENCES

## REFERENCES

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Ann Martha Ludwick graduated from Robinson High School, Fairfax, Virginia, in 1984. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages from Longwood University in 1988. In 1995 she received her Master of Public Administration from George Mason University. Employed at George Mason University since 1993, she currently holds an administrative faculty position as graduate student coordinator in the Department of Public and International Affairs.