



EDITOR'S NOTE

Service Learning in the JMC Curriculum

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From the inner city of South China to the rural outposts of North Carolinas, the academy is taking classes to the streets with service learning projects that acquaint students with real-world problems and some insight in ways to provide solutions.

Last summer, editor Vivian Martin of Central Connecticut State University suggested the Small Programs Interest Group explore the topic in a special issue of its online journal. We liked it because we believe in it. In this edition of *Teaching Journalism and Mass Communication*, you'll see service learning unpacked in many ways by your colleagues.

Dr. Carolyn Kim of Biola University credits the term "service learning" to Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 2). The term may have its genesis with the Citizenship Education Project of the 1950s (Kraft, 1996, p. 134) where active learning might have influenced the idea of service learning. Regardless of its genesis, at its best service learning helps students while contributing to the common good of the community at large.

Contributors to this issue examine service learning and its best practices in communication applications. An added feature is the digital content that supplements the research. At the request of Martin and TJMC production editor Mitzi Lewis of Midwestern State University, who not only edits articles but also posts them online, contributors have taken advantage of the journal's online features by submitting digital video and photographs to amplify the scholarship.

In the pages ahead, theory-driven research offers insight into the many manifestations of service learning. For instance, research by Kim uses Coor-

dinated Management of Meaning Theory to explore how students and others interpret and act on their service-learning experience.

Mia Moody and Cassy Burleson of Baylor University provide examples and practical suggestions for service-learning opportunities, particularly through non-profit agencies. In a similar vein, Sonya R. DiPalma, of University of North Carolina Asheville, explores service-learning benefits when students help clients in their public relations practicum.

Carrie M. Buchanan and Margaret T. Finucane of John Carroll University examine Participant Action Research, presenting a collaborative model where undergraduates teach media literacy to school children.

Amanda Sturgill, Phillip Motley and Staci Saltz, all of Elon University, evaluated service learning's role in a foundational course in media writing wherein students have direct contact with the poor. They found that students involved in service learning gain a critical eye for the way the media portray the poor and how they, as professionals, need to be cautious with fragile sources.

Sturgill and Motley also joined forces for a second research article on the trade-offs of students working on a service-learning project with and without direct client contact. The research suggests that students need direct contact to gain the maximum benefit of reflection from civic engagement.

David Remund and Kelly Bruhn of Drake University explored problem-based learning and evidence-based practices and service learning in a public relations capstone class. The team learned that students profit from exposure to professionals who of-

fer insight on their work using the standard of best practices.

Service-learning pedagogy takes topics taught by SPIG colleagues in journalism, public relations and strategic communications and brings them into the streets and community centers. There, students take the hands-on approach to learning, using guided problemsolving and application of theory.

Co-editor Michael A. Longinow of Biola University and I hope this edition stimulates readers to explore service learning as part of the expanding learning frontier, and to replicate the approaches pioneered by our colleagues.

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Works Cited

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- Kraft, R. (1996). Service learning: An introduction to its theory, practice, and effects. *Education and Urban Society*, 28(2), 131-159.