



Using Service-Based, Collaborative Teaching in Journalism Courses

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Abstract:

New media technologies, changing student learning styles and high employer expectations in a tightening job market necessitate innovation and constant adaptation of journalism and public relations teaching materials. Building on a constructivist paradigm, this essay proposes a service-based, collaborative approach to teaching that involves students, peers, employers and faculty. It offers a model, strategies and a case study using this teaching style. Faculty, students and employers benefit from departments that maintain a good relationship with key stakeholders and incorporate convergent media into course assignments. Collaboration and service learning also are essential to keeping up with emerging trends.

Introduction

One challenge facing today's journalism and public relations (PR) departments is predicting the future to ensure that the curriculum produces highly marketable graduates. Twenty years ago, graduates were expected to be good writers. Today great writing is still essential—but may not be enough to land a job. Media convergence and current employer expectations demand curricula that maintain students' traditional professional competencies and ensure graduates can independently perform multi-media tasks across multiple platforms.

Staying ahead of this new landscape requires an ongoing assessment of the curriculum framework and frequent collaboration with all the stakeholders. Successful instructors think outside the box, creating course goals, objectives, and methods that allow them to become interactive life-long learners with students, employers, other faculty and the community. This article describes how service learning—from a constructivist approach—can facilitate such goals.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines service

as “an act of helpful activity.” Conceptually, service learning is a pedagogy that engages students in community service and fosters guided reflection on service. Scholars have concluded that such interactions deepen learning and enrich communities (i.e., Novek, 1999; Crews & North, 2008; Felder & Brent, 2003). As such, pedagogy scholars often praise service learning for developing students' critical-reflection skills and their understanding of social issues and human disparities (Britt, 2012).

A survey of the Public Relations Society of America's Educators Academy members indicated nearly 75% of respondents used service learning as a central classroom tool (cited in Serini, 2003). Universities often reach service-learning goals with on-site work centers. For instance, universities help journalism students develop “learning-a-living” skills via university-based PR agencies. A recent census found 34 such agencies in the Associated for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications-accredited institutions (Bush, 2009). Depending upon the agency's structure, students may perform PR func-

tions in the same way students have produced student publications, such as newspapers and yearbooks for decades. Students simultaneously garner workplace skills in convergent journalism while maintaining the support of professors and helping communities reach their goals. Newsroom examples include Temple University's Multimedia Urban Reporting Lab, which offers students hands-on experience in print, broadcast and Web media. Both the University of California-Berkeley and the City University of New York have students engaged in what is described as "hyperlocal" reporting (Pomoni, 2009, Smith 2008).

Studies have suggested such methods offer benefits for both students and nonprofit organizations. For instance, Addams, Woodbury, Allred, & Addams (2010) found that incorporating real-world situations into assignments motivated students to write more because they concurrently witnessed the difference their contributions made to their clients. Similarly, Crews and North (2008) suggest that incorporating service learning gave students the chance to improve their real-world writing skills and develop their skills in communicating with the public.

This article proposes a service-learning model from a constructivist's approach. Constructivist theorists encourage student ownership and self-awareness in the learning process (e.g., Dewey, 2007; Pailin *et al.*, 1999; Driscoll, 2000; Kolb & Fry, 1975). In a traditional classroom setting, teachers often teach what they believe is important. In a constructivist setting, this paradigm shifts. Teachers facilitate learning as it takes place among the students themselves (e.g., Pailin *et al.*, 1999; Driscoll, 2000; Knabe, 2004), and learners share a responsibility for creating a learning environment by expressing their learning goals, taking an active role in monitoring their learning trajectory, and reflecting on their growth.

Recent social media advancements allow professors to take constructivism and service learning to a new level. The participatory flow of information made possible by the Web has expanded access to learning tools for teachers and youth (Kellner, 2010). Students' inclination to experiment with innovation often makes them extremely knowledgeable about technology trends (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and professors can capitalize on this phenomenon by implementing projects that encourage collaboration with peers, community members, and employers.

Review of the Literature

The literature review suggests people responsible for curriculum development still have a long way to go when preparing tomorrow's PR practitioners (Hurme, 2001; Alexander, 2002; Carpenter, 2009). The most-mentioned recommendations for improving the PR curriculum have included providing students with a broad liberal arts background in research, ethics, theory, writing, technology, and internship opportunities (Cole, Hembroff, & Corner, 2009; Coombs & Rybacki, 1999).

While employers have traditionally deemed writing the most desired expertise for PR graduates, recent research in the United States and Canada suggests PR supervisors report the level of writing ability among entry-level PR employees (just as with entry-level employees across the business world) is not up to par (Berry & Cole, 2012). Complicating this finding is that entry-level practitioners overestimate the level of their writing skills. This study also suggested that both in the United States and Canada, PR practitioners with fewer than five years of experience spend a big part of their week writing for new media (website content blogging/other social media and conversational email).

Recent research also strongly suggests employers expect interns and recent graduates to have a concurrent level of new media skills (e.g., Wise, 2005; Kim & Johnson, 2009). Many companies hire today's students to create and/or manage a social networking presence that might include posting to sites such as Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and Facebook—most times, without an editor overseeing what they write, perhaps because of the need for immediacy in social media. Recent hires might also take photos, edit video footage, create and update company blogs/websites and conduct online research.

Also complicating curriculum development is the reality that most students already have some command of new media information generally taught in media classes. Today's students have used the Web and various applications most of their lives and often are trained in using various software packages. Professors must take stock of student skills early in the semester, highlight competencies they are lacking, and address those gaps via instruction and practice.

The Constructivist Approach

Building on John Dewey's early principles of education (2007), constructivists believe students learn best

when they actively “own” the process (Vygotsky, 1978) and work collaboratively with peers and instructors on tasks that seem real and authentic (e.g., Pailin *et al.*, 1999; Driscoll, 2000; Kolb & Fry, 1975). Historically, learning was thought to be a memorization process where students restated information on assignments and exams. Constructivism, however, helps learners to transform, share, and re-create information (Kolb & Fry, 1975). Serini (2003) asserted that engaging students in the learning process helps move them beyond mastery of simple skills.

The constructivist approach becomes increasingly important as students progress in a four-year university. For instance, upper division courses should “move to less-directive teaching methods that prepare students for greater degrees of self-direction” (p. 1). Student decision-making, collaborative learning, and independent projects are important in the learning process (Grow, 1990, cited in Serini, 2003).

Constructivism and New Media

The constructivist approach meshes well with many defining features of journalism and PR education in which students demonstrate their understanding of core skills through production skills by completing tasks that might include creating campaigns, writing exercises, simulated press conferences, and internship placements within nonprofit and for-profit entities. Although journalism and PR educators often do not use the terms, collaborative learning, ownership, and authenticity, they apply these concepts in their classes in many instances (Pailin *et al.*, 1999). For example, the notion of authenticity builds upon the presumption that classroom activities should be as similar to real-world situations as possible.

What a constructivist educator might term an “authentic” assignment, a journalism instructor might call a “real-world” exercise (Kelly & Murrie, 1995; Pailin *et al.*, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978). Many journalism instructors use the authenticity feature of constructivist methodology daily. For instance, students who create a campaign in an advanced PR programming class or university-based PR agency work with real people in a hands-on setting. PR classes also may incorporate authenticity by developing crisis management strategies for firms and nonprofit organizations. The constructivist classroom also might encourage students to spend time doing job shadowing or taking part in internships to practice and reinforce what they have already learned in class (Pailin *et al.*, 1999).

Furthermore, journalism educators often use social media as a publishing medium to mirror new industry work practices and to share student work with an audience other than classmates and faculty (Scholl, 2011). Social media outlets, such as blogging, Twitter, and Facebook, also afford students the opportunity for hands-on training in creating a social media presence for themselves. Thereby, students’ knowledge about creating and managing social media also can transfer to non-profit and for-profit organizations they collaborate with on course projects.

Collaborative learning asserts that students do not learn in a vacuum; instead, they learn with and from the people around them (e.g., Pailin *et al.*, 1999; Driscoll, 2000; Kolb & Fry, 1975). Students can be challenged constructively, even in an introductory course, by working together on projects such as the development of a restaurant guide for their community. The ownership tenet means that students take some responsibility for their education by making choices and decisions (Pailin *et al.*, 1999). In an advanced PR class, for example, instructors might ask students what they recall from basic writing courses and what skills they are lacking. If several students inquire about niche writing, an instructor can suggest, but not impose, an overall plan for students to focus or spend time in this interest area.

Demonstrating the efficacy of the constructivist method, Pailin *et al.* (1999), used this approach with doctoral-level students in a mass communication pedagogy class. Students extended their level of knowledge through selecting content, teaching the course, choosing assignments, reflecting on the class, and working collaboratively. Findings suggested that while some students were not ready to accept this level of responsibility for their education, the benefits of constructivism outweighed its disadvantages.

Results also suggested that constructivism should be incorporated into all levels of higher education in mass communication. The authors concluded the method can be practiced in large classes or lower-level courses as students actively seek knowledge through choosing course content, work in real-world situations, participate in group projects or reports, and provide input during assessment activities.

Research Questions

Building on the literature, this essay explores the following research questions:

RQ1: What are best practices for incorporat-

ing service learning and constructivism into PR and journalism courses in a digital age?

RQ2: What are the phases for facilitating this model?

RQ3: How might this model be applied to the classroom setting?

Proposed Service-Based, Collaborative Model

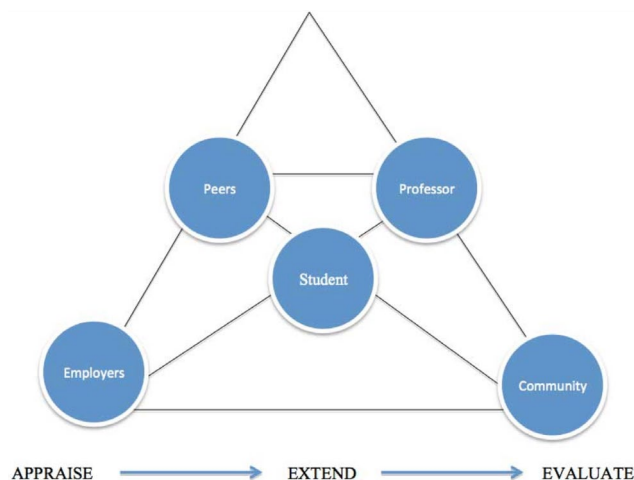


Figure 1. Service-learning milieu model: Best possible learning outcome.

Our service-learning model (Figure 1) suggests cultivating a four-way symbiotic flow of information among students, employers, community and faculty that leads to a higher level of learning for all stakeholders. According to this model, classes and external activities are collaborative in nature, rather than top-down. The professor serves as one “guide on the side” among other guides in symbiotic learning exchanges, while students interact similarly with all stakeholders to hone their PR and journalism knowledge and skills, leading to a service-learning gestalt (i.e., the learning milieu creates more knowledge and skills than the sum of its parts).

One of the primary benefits of this learning milieu is that there are more “evaluators” to critique student work—particularly when it comes to students’ writing and other social media skills. The larger audience of the Web and individual employer critiques, for example, afford students an extended audience willing and able to provide feedback about errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, organization and the proper use of a style guide. When potential employers point out the importance of particular skills, students take it to heart. Students quickly realize their work is, in essence, building their personal brand, so the stakes are higher, and their motivation to learn and produce

quality work improves.

Our suggested service-learning milieu model may be executed in three phases: “appraise,” “extend,” and “evaluate.” These phases may occur simultaneously and repeatedly. This model illustrates the milieu afforded by service-based learning with a constructivist approach that intrinsically allows osmosis (the process of the gradual or unconscious assimilation of ideas, knowledge, etc.) to occur among all stakeholders (Table 1).

Phase 1: Appraise

Many scholars have asserted that classroom teaching must connect meaningfully with students’ prior knowledge (e.g., Pailin et al., 1999; Driscoll, 2000; Knabe, 2004). Therefore, the first stage of any constructivist-based model is an assessment. As such, our proposed service-learning model underscores the importance of talking to students about their skill levels to determine their perceived strengths and weaknesses. It is important for students to discover the skills they already have and build upon them to set course goals. Such assessments can involve an informal talk with students, a brief written description, and use of a survey.

Phase 2: Extend

In the second stage, teachers help students clarify and connect their expertise and prior knowledge to real-world experiences. This step helps them to see their skills as valuable for real-world situations. In this phase, professors encourage students to build on what they already know and put their practical skills to use.

Table 1

Three Phases for a Service-Learning Milieu Model

Phase	Description
Appraise	Professors help students identify their area(s) of expertise by assessing their various PR and journalism skills.
Extend	Students hone their skills while working with their peers and with agencies in the community.
Evaluate	Professors incorporate participatory activities, such as peer teaching, collaboration, and group projects, in a service-learning model. Students assess and offer suggestions to improve their finished products via peer review evaluations, feedback from clients and/or internship supervisors, and professors.

To enhance and document the learning process, students should systematically reflect on their learning process by writing in a journal or blog about their experiences and by asking for feedback from others in the milieu in which they are working.

Collaboration with peers, the community, and educators also is important. Classmates and colleagues, who have advanced skills, including those outside the course and/or from other majors, may present cutting-edge information about which they are knowledgeable. Similarly, interns and recent graduates can play a vital role in peer teaching. For example, interns may serve as guest speakers to discuss new media applications, such as creating and managing a business Facebook page, or blogging about a company's products and services.



Figure 2. Example student service project for the community.



Figure 3. Logos created for local churches

Contact with the community also is important. Professors benefit from talking with employers about student progress. Students benefit from listening to community speakers and collaborating with local non-profit groups, such as churches or agencies. In the example below, (Figure 2), students helped non-profit organizations develop a better online presence,

including logo development. They videotaped community events and created a public service announcement with peers, employers, and instructors. They uploaded their final product to YouTube and linked it to websites. Students are accustomed to “following” their friends on Twitter and Facebook, so assuming they have the requisite writing skills, transitioning to “following” or keeping in touch with audiences for a nonprofit organization, is fairly easy. Other multimedia project ideas include creating digital logos, advertisements, and contests for clients (Figure 3).

To make sure students develop professional-level writing skills across multiple platforms, professors must encourage students to create traditional news releases, converged news releases (via email with embedded website links, etc.), feature stories, social media news releases, and tweets for real clients that get published. Professors should emphasize the importance of using Associated Press style, fact checking, having multiple sources, applying the inverted pyramid, or feature story structures, etc. Covering community events also will help students develop a relationship with local residents and cultivate an online community following.

Upper-level students groups may also “adopt” clients and cultivate full-blown public relations campaigns, allowing these more advanced students to exercise their analytical skills as they derive facts from data and reach conclusions. They can publish these work samples online or as part of a career portfolio, which helps them market themselves by providing evidence of their skills.

Employers, students, recent graduates and fellow faculty members can impart knowledge synergistically. For example, visiting internship sites where students work each semester allows a professor to hear firsthand what employers think of student performance. Early feedback allows professors to coach students before the end of the semester to improve students' skills both inside and outside the classroom. Professors may also ask employers if assigned course projects fit the organization's needs and share ideas on recent innovations. This activity also builds a local network of employers who are willing to evaluate group PR projects, appear as guest speakers, and/or review students' career portfolios at the end of each semester—and these contacts can hire graduates.

Professors should also speak with recent graduates about the skills they received in college—and the skills they wish they had received. This tactic makes

it possible to facilitate immediate course corrections and to review areas where university journalism and PR programs may need curriculum modifications. In fields where skill needs are shifting and expanding rapidly, the gestalt created by having such information is useful in planning course and curriculum content for future semesters. In short, the synergistic nature of these kind of activities can build the brand for university programs and their graduates.

Phase 3: Evaluate

In the evaluation phase, professors encourage students and clients to actively participate in the evaluation of peers and final products. Peer evaluations allow students to discuss their contributions to the overall project, as well as their teammates' contributions. Students must offer feedback on their peers' strengths and weaknesses, which provides an incentive for students to produce their best work. Evaluations should be anonymous to encourage truthfulness, and students might send them via email to the instructor to ensure confidentiality.

Group projects also offer an opportunity for client and employer feedback. As stated earlier, professor interaction with employers and student intern supervisors helps faculty keep up with current job requirements and employer expectations. For instance, clients may evaluate and offer feedback about a group's strengths and weaknesses using a rubric to score student work. Having outside evaluators demonstrates to students such projects are more than an academic requirement. Ultimately, when faculty members develop this type of relationship with agencies, students are better prepared for the workforce, and employers have a better pool of qualified interns and job applicants. It is a win-win situation.

Case Study: Non-Profit PR Campaign

Baylor University's Department of Journalism, PR & New Media has 15 full-time and 10 adjunct faculty members and 345 majors. To give PR students "real" experience while helping a philanthropic entity, students in an upper-level PR course created a campaign for a nonprofit organization/agency. Creating the PR campaign provided a chance for students to demonstrate the skills needed in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating a single PR project.

Students collected information on their assigned organization via in-depth interviews, a World Wide Web search of traditional media and social media, and reviewing newsletters and brochures on the organiza-

tion. Using a SWOT analysis, students identified a problem or an opportunity the organization designated as important. Students also listed and analyzed the organization's overall current PR efforts, key publics, mission statement, specific communication activities, and publicity material already in place.

Using this information, students created a media kit consisting of creative pieces such as a brochure, flier, news release, Facebook page, Twitter account, and a public service announcement. Using the best practices outlined in the previous section, the project was carried out in three phases:

Phase 1. Appraise

The project began with a student skills inventory by having students complete an evaluation form that asked them to rank their skill levels in the following areas: writing, editing, design and layout, photography/videography, social media, and branding. The basic assessment also included informal class interviews during which the professor asked questions such as:

- (a) Do you feel comfortable working with community members?
- (b) Do you value service-learning opportunities?
- (c) In which areas of PR and journalism do you feel most comfortable: writing, social media, layout and design, interviewing, gathering information on previous campaigns, or assessing the client's current PR efforts?

Utilizing a constructivist approach, the professor used this information as a benchmark for assigning students to teams. Students were encouraged to tackle the team's assignment based on their particular strengths and weaknesses. While one person in the group might be made responsible for a specific task, students were told they were all responsible for the final product.

Phase 2: Extend

During this three-month project, students met with their client, viewed examples of other campaigns, documented the process with blog entries, listened to guest speakers, and turned in portions of their project each week to receive feedback from their instructor.

Students wanted to know how coursework applied to real-world settings, so outside speakers are imperative for the constructivist model. Speakers included peers, former students, and professionals. For instance, the director of new media at a local TV station discussed strategies for incorporating new media into PR campaigns. Illustrating the importance of

social media, he pointed out that Facebook has more than 800 million followers, Twitter has more than 10 billion tweets, and people upload more than 8,600 full-length movies a week.

A graduate student offered insight about writing a background report, stating she did not really understand why she had to collect case studies for the report until after she entered graduate school. She described an “aha moment” during which research-based projects finally made sense to her, saying, “I remember being in your shoes and not really understanding the importance of background research. But I now realize that it is very important to look at previous studies in order to develop your project.”



Figure 4. Tweets about speakers and project progress.

Students received guest speaker presentations favorably. They asked many questions and engaged in lengthy conversations on how to best approach to research projects. Students also discussed their progress in blog posts, tweets, and PowerPoint presentations (Figure 4).

Tweets were short reflections on their accomplishments or links to blog posts. Blogs entries discussed the division of labor and how the project was progressing, as well as roadblocks. One person discussed the journey she experienced while trying to figure out her strengths. An excerpt from her blog read:

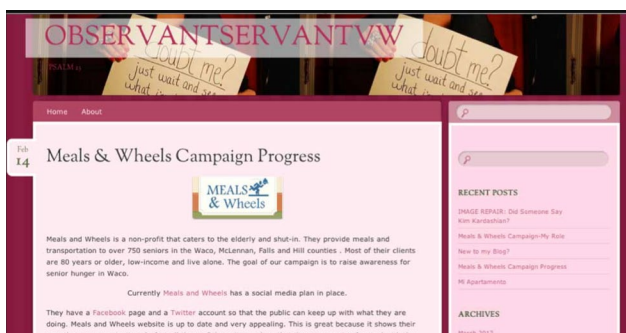


Figure 5. Blog post about service-learning project.

I have taken on the role as a videographer and working with design. I have come to really enjoy design, and I believe the print and online materials we produce for this campaign should be appealing to the eye. Also, I think it would be great to update the video they have on their website. This could be something we show in Chapel, so students will know that this agency exists and that it needs volunteers. I also am excited about working on the online campaign website (Figure 5).

Another student blogged about writing a feature story:

Taking advantage of April being National Volunteer Month, our group decided to promote the Meals & Wheels' volunteer appreciation event on April 23. To raise awareness about the event, I'll be writing the feature story about student volunteers and sending pitch letters to local publications. I believe the event can get coverage in both print and social media outlets. I'm looking forward to interviewing volunteers and crafting a unique feature story to contribute to this campaign!

Student feedback on this requirement was favorable. Blog entries helped students organize plans, share ideas, and collect photos screenshots and text for their final PR campaigns.

Phase 3: Evaluation

At the end of the semester, students delivered an oral presentation of the project in front of classmates, the instructor, and their clients (Table 2). Evaluations focused on the effectiveness of public speaking and presentation skills and on how well students completed the project. Clients rated student presentations on a scale from 0 to 10 in the following areas: history and description of project, campaign theme or focus, local media/promotional possibilities, campaign organization and implementation, evaluation and recommendations, appearance/neatness, grammar, adherence to Associated Press style, and creativity.

In general, client feedback was quite favorable. For instance, most employers found students proficient in the basic skills used to create media campaigns. On the written presentation, 44% of groups received a 90 (on a scale of 100) or higher (n=9). On the oral presentation, 50% of groups received a 90 or higher. Overall, 57% of groups received a 90 or higher from the evaluator. Seven of nine evaluators (78%) said the group's campaign report was helpful to their

Table 2
Components of Campaign Checklist

An executive summary explaining the campaign	_____
A table of contents	_____
Mission statement	_____
A backgrounder about the company/organization	_____
A fact sheet about the organization/organization	_____
Background/situation analysis (SWOT)	_____
Current efforts	_____
Samples of current PR	_____
Audience/s appropriately designated	_____
Problem/Opportunity	_____
Goals/Objectives	_____
Action Plan: Strategies/Tactics	_____
Timeline of group's efforts	_____
Budget to implement plan	_____
Supplemental materials	_____
PSA about agency/event	_____
A news release about an agency/event	_____
Three to five social media pieces (i.e., Twitter directory, Facebook ad, Twitter party)	_____

organization.

Most clients indicated they planned to implement project ideas. For instance, one client wrote, "I really like their ideas about attracting younger volunteers." The same client also wrote that she would like to hire a member of the group for a summer internship in order to incorporate some of the group's suggestions into their overall PR campaign. Other client comments included:

"They really helped us get our name out there, and we're already seeing it pay off."

"They gave us a lot of great ideas, and we're already making progress with our Twitter and Facebook accounts."

"They did a great job. Took it very seriously, and we owe them a lot!"

"We're hoping to use their press release [and] implement their social media strategies."

Peer evaluation

The peer evaluation for this team project allowed students to assign a score that best described their teammates' contributions to the group in the following areas: attendance at group meetings, completion of group assignments, team-playing attributes, outcome of final product. Evaluations suggested that about 90% of students did their share of the workload. Comments reflecting strengths included:

- "Passionate about non-profits."
- "Very easy to work with."
- "Very knowledgeable about Friends for Life."
- "She had great design taste."
- "The owner loved her designs."
- "Turned in everything on time and showed up to all meetings."
- "Takes charge, works quickly, and is in constant communication."

Weaknesses included students missing meetings and not following through on assignments. Comments reflecting students' weaknesses included:

- "Comes off as harsh and demanding; made others stress more because of that."
- "Was not always available; sometimes, her assignments were later, rather than sooner, due to conflicts."
- "Sometimes, not as outspoken as needed in a group setting."
- "Missed some group meetings."
- "Sometimes rushed through things."

Self Evaluation

Students also evaluated their contributions to the group project. They included both their strengths and weaknesses and suggested a grade based on a 100-point scale. Most students were extremely candid in their responses. For instance, one person responded that her strengths were completing quality work on time and contributing good ideas to the project. She summarized her weaknesses as:

My group was very aggressive in assuming responsibilities, so I often felt like I wasn't contributing a lot to our overall project. I was also quiet during meetings with the client because I felt dominated by my peers at times.

The student gave herself 95 out of 100 points. Other students cited good communication skills, leadership ability, and creativity as strengths. Weaknesses included taking control of the group, time management, and schedule flexibility. Their evalua-

tions of themselves usually matched comments made by the other evaluators.

Final Grades

Students received both group and individual grades for the team project. Group-wise, the instructor looked at project completeness, creativity, and whether the team followed directions. Using this information, along with client and student feedback, the professor assigned final grades. Individual student grades were based on peer evaluations, students' active participation in team sessions, and regular blog entries showing progress in the team project.

Even after the projects were turned in, students were encouraged to continue reflecting on the project, their group's dynamics, what they learned from the project—and how they could apply what they learned in the class to the “real world.”

Course Evaluation

As with any other teaching/learning method, there are some drawbacks to the constructivist service-learning approach. Perhaps the most significant downside of group projects is that sometimes, not everyone in the group does his or her share of the work. Students often discuss the difficulty of conflicting schedules, but some of that problem can be remedied by working online and sharing documents. Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to assess individual skills within the nexus of a group project. Students often divide the workload, and each person works on a small portion of the project, perhaps learning less than they would learned had they accomplished the tasks individually.

Professors may be able to remedy these problems by incorporating peer evaluation into group projects. Peer evaluations give students a chance to discuss their contributions to the overall project, as well as their teammates' contributions. Professors also should encourage students to alert them to shortfalls early in the course of the project, which allows the professor to ameliorate the problem or make group reassignments.

Another downside is the extra time it takes to plan, orchestrate, and implement these teaching strategies. For example, scheduling individual meetings with clients and students is time-consuming. But in the end, benefits outweigh the costs. Employer insights strengthen courses, assist in keeping curricula current, and help students improve their skills.

Student feedback about the course is encouraging. Students reported that the project helped them understand the importance of setting priorities and managing their time. Students also indicated this collaborative teaching method demonstrates the instructor's dedication to the profession and the importance attached to being a life-long learner. A recent graduate's comment below illustrates the degree to which he found these skills useful in the workforce.

Through this class, I gained a new perspective on the internal and external operations of PR. By analyzing the online efforts produced by other organizations, our class learned the significance of social media as an effective influence on modern audiences. The professor also taught us to write more effectively online, and she encouraged us to regularly blog about the industry. She also helped us develop our online portfolios, along with raising our professional visibility within the Web. Without this course, I would never have discovered my interest in PR or social media.

Conclusions

Based on feedback from students and clients, it is clear service learning pays dividends to all stakeholders and is well worth the extra time. Blog entries illustrated the growth students experienced over the semester. It was interesting to witness the thought processes used to figure out how to best approach the overall team project. Incorporating the use of social networks into service-learning models provides an excellent opportunity to help students learn the most effective ways to use these tools.

After completing such exercises, both faculty and students will be able to show a record of collaborating with community entities in a helpful manner—the whole purpose of service learning. For example, when students demonstrate efficiency in using social media for nonprofit organizations, they expand their skills while doing something they enjoy—using social media. In the process, students become service-oriented and hence, more tuned in to the importance of volunteerism. At the same time, they become more employable by doing good works that improve their community and, thereby, the world around them.

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