

Department of Biology

Implementing Service Learning to Increase Student Satisfaction and Success

Fall 2011

Students who participate in high-quality community-based service-learning are likely to benefit in a number of ways (Chung, 1997; Coe-Regan et al, in press; Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Tannenbaum, S. C., 2007; and YMCA of the USA, 2004):

- Increased sense of self-efficacy as students learn that they can impact real social challenges, problems, and needs.
- Higher academic achievement and interest in furthering their education.
- Enhanced problem-solving skills, ability to work in teams, and planning abilities.
- Enhanced civic engagement attitudes, skills and behaviors. Many leaders in public service today speak about how they were nurtured, inspired, and shaped in early experiences in community service or volunteering.

This fall, several biology courses have implemented service learning as part of the course requirements. These courses include BIO 119, BIO 121, and BIO 122. These courses will be examined for any evidence of service learning contributing to student satisfaction and student success. Metrics will include retention rates and successful completion of the course as compared to other sections of these courses without a service learning requirement and a satisfaction survey which will include inquiry as to the likelihood of students to continue to make contributions to the community.

END OF TERM UPDATE:

Six sections of general biology were selected to introduce service learning components. They include: one section of BIO 122, two sections of BIO 121, and three sections of BIO 119. Approximately 215 students participated. At the completion of their service, students were asked to complete a survey that inquired about their experiences and willingness to continue to perform service for their community. Data from this survey is currently being analyzed. In the BIO 122 section, students were also asked to keep and complete a journal that recorded their experiences. Once final grades are issued, the department will analyze retention rates and course success to determine if service learning had any significant effects on these two metrics.