

The Community Grant Writing Project: A Flexible Service-Learning Model for Writing-Intensive Courses

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Abstract

This article describes the Community Grant Writing Project (CGWP), a flexible service-learning framework designed for use in writing-intensive courses. The CGWP incorporates best-practice recommendations from the service-learning literature and addresses recent challenges identified for successful service-learning partnerships. In the CGWP, students combine direct service hours with a local nonprofit organization with assistance in writing grants to support specific initiatives at the organization. In the process of writing grants, students apply academic research and writing skills in a real-world context. In a first-year seminar, the CGWP has demonstrated its value for meeting student learning objectives and community partner needs. The article concludes with suggestions based on student and community partner feedback for implementing the project in writing-intensive courses.

Introduction

Over the past quarter century, service-learning has become increasingly common in higher education (e.g., *Campus Compact*, 2008, 2011; *Finley*, 2011; *National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement*, 2012). Indeed, examples of service-learning can be found across the disciplines (*Zlotkowski*, 1997), with nearly half of graduating seniors now participating in some credit-bearing form of service-learning (*Finley*, 2011). Moreover, two recent meta-analyses documented the benefit of service-learning for student outcomes across both academic and attitudinal measures (*Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki*, 2011; *Conway, Amel, & Gerwien*, 2009), with additional studies identifying specific design features of the most effective service-learning courses (e.g., *Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, & Fisher*, 2010). Thus, strong motivation exists to develop flexible models of service-learning that are informed by the growing base of research on best practices in service-learning courses.

Composition or writing-intensive courses, which are among the most heavily enrolled courses on college campuses (*National Center for Education Statistics*, 2004), provide a broad platform for

integrating service-learning into the curriculum (*Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997*). In some writing-intensive courses, service-learning is incorporated by asking students to write research papers on topics related to their service or to use writing as a means to reflect on their service experience (e.g., *Dorman & Dorman, 1997; Herzberg, 1994; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993*). For example, Herzberg (1994) reported a project in which students in a composition class volunteered in an adult literacy tutoring program and incorporated this experience into research papers on the structural barriers to literacy acquisition. However, an alternate—or complementary—model of incorporating service-learning into writing-intensive classes is to make the act of writing itself a component of the service performed for the organization (*Bacon, 1997; Dorman & Dorman, 1997*). For example, Dorman and Dorman (1997) described a progressive shift in the service-learning writing in one course in which students ultimately fulfilled a request by an organization and constructed a historical account of a local chapter of Volunteers of America. Other creative service-learning writing models have engaged students in writing newsletters, fact sheets, or press kits for partner organizations (e.g., see *Bacon, 1997*).

Those composition courses that make writing an integral part of the service itself have the benefit of engaging students in “real-world” writing and producing written work of direct use to the community organization. Indeed, a central tenet of service-learning and community partnerships is the importance of a bidirectional exchange between the university and the community organization (*Avila, Knoerr, Orlando, & Castillo, 2010; Barnes et al., 2009*). However, there is often a tension in service-learning between meeting the needs of the students and those of the community partner (for a discussion see *Trim, 2009*). That is, effective service-learning involves meeting not only the curricular needs of the students, but also the service goals of the organization (*Avila et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2009; Schwartz, 2010*). This can be achieved by engaging community partners in a collaborative process to identify meaningful projects for their organization that serve as the basis of students’ service.

In recent years, the literature on service-learning has also recognized the difference between “doing service-learning” and “doing service-learning well” (e.g., *Levesque-Bristol et al., 2010*). That is, not all service-learning courses are created equal, and systematic research has begun to identify specific design features of effective service-learning models. For example, *Levesque-Bristol et al. (2010)* reported that service-learning courses were generally associated with positive student outcomes, but this occurred only when the

course increased the positivity of the learning climate. The study further identified features of service-learning courses that contributed to a positive learning climate, including providing opportunities for students to reflect on their experience through writing, talk about their service-learning experiences in class, and spend volunteer hours directly involved with the people receiving the services. Similarly, Bringle, Hatcher, and Muthiah (2010) found enrollment in a service-learning course during the first year of college to be associated with greater retention into the second year, but this relationship was mediated by indicators of classroom quality including active learning methods, student satisfaction with the course, and perceived skills developed through the course. These findings suggest that students best realize the benefits of service-learning courses that incorporate specific design features, including hands-on service, targeted skill development, and opportunities for meaningful reflection.

This article describes the Community Grant Writing Project (CGWP), a flexible framework for incorporating service-learning into writing-intensive courses. The framework applies recent best practices for service-learning and includes an assessment by both students and community partners. In the CGWP, students combine direct service hours with a local nonprofit organization with assistance in writing grants to support specific initiatives at the organization. In the process of writing grants, students apply skills in academic research and writing in a real-world context, and organizations receive both hands-on service hours from students and a written product of direct use to the organization. Based on the previous literature on best-practice recommendations in service-learning, the CGWP project model includes (a) identification of a grant-writing goal relevant to the community organization, (b) structured interaction time between students and the community organization, (c) in-class and written reflection on the service experience, and (d) direct service hours spent with the people receiving services from the organization. The project has been used in a first-year seminar, and has received positive assessments from both students and community partners. The article concludes with a set of suggestions based on student and community partner feedback for implementing the project in writing-intensive courses at a range of course levels.

Project Description

Course Context

The Community Grant Writing Project (CGWP) was developed for a freshman seminar course at Willamette University. Willamette University is a selective, private liberal arts college located in Salem, Oregon. The College of Liberal Arts enrolls approximately 1,900 students, 23% of whom are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and 98% of whom are 22 years of age or younger. At Willamette, all first-year students enroll in a semester-long first-year topical seminar. These discussion-based, writing-intensive seminars, each numbering 12 to 14 students, are taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty representing all departments on campus. Instructors have considerable latitude in selecting their course topics and assignment schedules. For example, recent seminar topics included nonviolent resistance movements, hip-hop culture, and sociopolitical investigations of “ugliness.” Although these seminars vary in topic and specific assignments, they all support three overarching student-learning objectives: reading critically, participating productively in course discussion, and writing clearly. The university provides rubrics for each of these three student-learning objectives to all faculty preparing to teach a freshman seminar.

The grant-writing project was used in the freshman seminar Poverty and Public Policy. The course addressed poverty through multiple lenses, using readings from sociology, neuroscience, education, and public policy. Class readings included empirical research articles, as well as excerpts from several books. In the first part of the course, students read excerpts from Jonathon Kozol’s *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1991). Class discussions focused on the ways public schools vary dramatically across districts, even though public education is commonly considered a primary source of equal opportunity in the United States. Other discussion topics included the sources and roles of funding for public schools as well as the multifaceted challenges faced by schools serving lower-income students, including reduced funding available per pupil, higher teacher turnover, and higher building repair and maintenance expenses. In the second part, students read about the development and evaluation of two programs designed to reduce educational inequality: Head Start (addressing preschool educational opportunities) and Teach for America (addressing K-12 educational opportunities). In the course unit on Head Start, students read excerpts from Edward Zigler and Susan Muenchow’s (1994) firsthand account of the creation of Head Start, *Head Start: The Inside Story of America’s Most*

Successful Educational Experiment, as well as evaluation studies of Head Start performed in its early years and more recently (Puma et al., 2010; Williams & Evans, 1969). In the unit on Teach for America, students read excerpts from Wendy Kopp's (2003) memoir of the development of Teach for America, *One Day All Children . . . : The Unlikely Triumph of Teach for America, and What I Learned Along the Way*, as well as readings related to evaluation of the program and the controversy surrounding it (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). In this part of the course, class discussions focused on the design features of these programs (e.g., the specific issues addressed by each program) and the controversies over program implementation and evaluation.

First-year students were assigned to specific seminars by the dean's office. Course assignments were made to accommodate students' preferences but also to ensure that across the university, individual seminar enrollment reflected characteristics of the incoming class (e.g., gender, high school GPA, SAT/ACT scores). Specifically, incoming students indicated six "seminars of interest" from short descriptions of all available courses posted online. The balance of student preferences was such that all students could be assigned to one of their six seminars of interest.

Soliciting Community Partners

The summer prior to the course launch, the instructor met with Willamette University's director of community outreach programs to discuss the feasibility of a service-learning project that would engage students in grant-writing with local organizations addressing poverty. The initial plan involved identifying two separate community partners such that the class could be divided into two teams of seven students with each team working extensively with one community partner. Based on this meeting, the director assigned a summer intern from a local master's degree program to facilitate the implementation of the project. The director also continued to provide oversight and guidance for development of the project. The instructor worked together with the summer intern throughout all planning phases of the project until the course commenced in the fall. Subsequently, the instructor managed all aspects of the community partnership.

During summer, the Community Outreach Program developed a request for proposals (RFP) and sent it to existing community partners in the office's database. Interested partners completed the RFP, providing a description of their organization's needs and

how first-year students could contribute to a grant-writing project serving those needs. The intern assigned to the project then met by telephone or in person with interested community partners to identify organizations whose goals and interests were best suited to the class. The two community partners selected were Habitat for Humanity of Mid-Willamette Valley (HH) and the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC).

Habitat for Humanity (HH). HH of the mid-Willamette Valley is a nonprofit organization devoted to helping families in need obtain simple, affordable housing. HH combines volunteer labor with tax-deductible donations from individuals and organizations to support home building. HH of the Mid-Willamette Valley was established in 1991 and to date has built more than 75 homes for families in need in the community.

HH sought to partner with the class to receive grant-writing assistance from students to support a new initiative, H2^o (H standing for “Habitat” and 2^o indicating a small positive change in the present that can have increasing impact in future years). The H2^o program was designed to benefit youth ages 16–24 who are currently enrolled in a high school or G.E.D. program by providing them with work experience and trade skills through participation in mentored work at a Habitat build site. Participants in the program were expected to complete 42 weeks of internship at the build site, working on site approximately one to two times per week. HH wanted students in the freshman seminar to assist with researching the need for a trade-based alternative education program in the community, writing a draft of the H2^o program description, and developing an incentive schedule of tools for program participants that was within the program budget. In addition, first-year students completed direct service hours on HH build sites, working alongside the families who would ultimately live in the homes, and in the HH main office and ReStore, a resale store offering building supplies and materials for sale to the general community.

Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC). FHDC is a nonprofit organization aiming to improve the quality of life of farmworker families in the Mid-Willamette Valley of Oregon. FHDC was established in 1990, with the primary goal of providing affordable housing for farmworker families. In addition, FHDC housing sites provide social services in health and education. The education programs target children of farmworker families to support successful integration with local public schools.

FHDC sought to partner with the class to receive grant-writing assistance to support three educational programs offered to children living in FHDC sites: an after-school educational program, a summer enrichment program, and a family literacy program. FHDC wanted students to assist with drafting seven small grant applications (about two to five pages each) to private organizations. This required students to research the need for each program in the community, write program descriptions, and tailor applications to the specific funding priorities of different agencies. In addition, students completed direct service hours in the FHDC after-school program and family literacy program.

Description of Project Implementation and Process

The grant-writing project involved a combination of direct service hours at the organization and off-site hours devoted to providing research and narratives for prospective grant proposals. During the first half of the semester, students volunteered a minimum of 12 hours at their respective sites. This provided firsthand experience with the program's mission, as well as with the specific initiatives to be targeted in their grant-writing project. During the second half of the semester, students completed the research and writing projects that would contribute to the grant applications specified by the community partners.

To foster communication between the students and community partners throughout the grant-writing process, representatives from the community organization visited class on three occasions. During their first visit, in the initial weeks of class, the community partners made brief presentations about their organizations and the initiatives that would be the focus of the grant-writing project. On the basis of these presentations, students ranked their preferred site (if any) for the grant-writing partnership. Student preferences could be honored in all cases, with seven students assigned to work with each community organization. Following the initial class visit, students volunteered on at least four occasions in 3-hour time blocks with their respective organizations.

During the second visit from community partners occurring midway through the semester, community partners met individually with their small groups and brought a written "assignment description" for the students. Students were encouraged to treat these second meetings as client meetings, with the goals of determining the needs of the organization as clearly as possible and

presenting themselves professionally. In turn, community partners were encouraged to develop assignments to generate materials that would actually be useful during grant submissions, but that were within the scope of first-year students' skill set. Prior to distribution, the instructor reviewed the assignments' descriptions for scope and content. Over the next several weeks, students in each team worked collaboratively on their grant-writing assignment. Students were given the responsibility of dividing the workload and were encouraged to arrange informal peer-edits.

The third and final visit from the community partners, held near the final weeks of the semester, was an opportunity for the students to present preliminary drafts of their work to the community partners, ask any clarification questions prior to the final draft, and solicit preliminary feedback. Following this meeting, the students organized peer-edits and worked collaboratively to finalize their grant-writing projects. The instructor was also available to answer general questions from students but intentionally did not view or formally proof the student grant narratives prior to final submission.

In addition to the visits from community partners, the course included additional writing supports. Midway through the semester, the instructor and a librarian provided the students with an informational session that introduced students to the library databases and methods for searching for peer-reviewed literature. One guest lecture was also offered from a professional grant writer who communicated the importance of following instructions in grant applications and basics on grant-writing skills. In addition, students wrote a traditional term paper, due midsemester, based on class readings. Producing this paper included a formal drafting process and instructor feedback.

Students' final submitted materials included a single group binder (in hard copy) with an overview of their partner organization and the final copy of the grant-writing materials produced for their organization. Students were also responsible for submitting their final grant-writing project to their respective community partners in the format requested by the partners (e-mail in both cases). In addition, each student wrote an individual response paper (1,000–1,250 words) on the service-learning project. In their response papers, students were asked to reflect on either (a) how the service-learning project informed their understanding of an issue relating to poverty and public policy or (b) how the service-learning project informed their future academic or career goals. At

several points during the class, students also had an opportunity to share details of their hands-on service experience.

Student and Community Partner Feedback

Student Feedback

Two assessments were administered to students. The first was Willamette University's standard student assessment of instruction, which included a main form with 17 items covering various aspects of the course, including questions on the methods of instruction and usefulness of faculty feedback and a separate form specific to first-year courses including six questions related to first-year student learning objectives. Students rated each question on a scale of 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 5 (*Strongly Disagree*), with 3 indicating *Neutral*. Data from key items of the university-level assessment are reported below. However, the student feedback reported focuses primarily on the second, supplementary evaluation that was specific to the service-learning course. This second anonymous evaluation queried the students about specific aspects of the service-learning project and was administered only to students in Poverty and Public Policy.

Twelve of the 14 students (86%) completed the supplemental evaluation. The questions indexed three aspects of the project: (a) value of the service-learning project for different learning outcomes, (b) importance of different aspects of the assignment process for the grant-writing project, and (c) expected long-range value of the project for future college classes or postgraduation activities. A final summary question asked students to rate the value of service-learning as a component of the class. Students rated each question on a scale of 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*), with 3 indicating *Neutral* (note the coding is opposite that of the university-level student assessment of instruction). In addition, students had the opportunity to write comments on the evaluation concerning which aspects of the project were most valuable, and what changes they would suggest to improve the service-learning component of the class.

Quantitative Data. On the standard university-wide student assessment of instruction, students rated the class very favorably by all available metrics. Averaged across all 17 items on the assessment, students rated the course 1.2 out of 5.0 (the mean for all first-year seminars is 1.7). As well, on four additional questions specifically targeting the degree to which the seminar helped develop

students' abilities on key learning objectives for first-year seminars (including writing skills, discussion skills, careful reading, and critical thinking), students rated the class very favorably (mean for the four targeted items = 1.2; mean of the four items for all first-year seminars offered that semester = 2.0). Given the service-learning project's focus on writing, that specific item was also examined individually with students rating it 1.4 out of 5.0, higher than the mean for all first-year seminars (1.9). In contrast to these questions concerning specific learning objectives, student responses were similar to those of students in other first-year courses on a question concerning how helpful it was to have the first-year seminar instructor as academic adviser (mean for this course: 1.6 out of 5.0; mean for all first-year seminars: 1.7 out of 5.0).

Responses on the supplemental evaluation administered only to students in Poverty and Public Policy indicated the specific value of the service-learning activities for students. Table 1 summarizes the student responses to each question on the supplemental evaluation specific to the service-learning component. On this evaluation, students rated the service-learning project as a valuable component of the class ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.39$; 100% of ratings ≥ 4) and recommended that service-learning be retained in this course ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.67$; 92% of ratings ≥ 4).

Student responses on the supplemental evaluation also indicated the usefulness of the service activities in supporting specific learning goals, as described below, related to enhancing understanding of class material and seeing the connections between course content and the real world. However, student responses indicated that the project provided more support for some learning goals than for others. The highest ratings were for perceived value of the activities for students' seeing connections between academic content and the "real world" ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.65$; 92% of ratings ≥ 4) and increasing students' understanding of the course material ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.94$; 83% of ratings ≥ 4). Students gave favorable but overall more neutral evaluations of the grant-writing project's improvement to their writing and argumentation skills (writing skills: $M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.97$; 58% of ratings ≥ 4 ; argumentation skills: $M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.17$; 50% of ratings ≥ 4).

Students also highly endorsed the long-range value of the service-learning project. Students expected the grant-writing project to provide skills that would be useful in their future college classes ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.78$; 92% of ratings ≥ 4) and also after graduation ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.67$; 92% of ratings ≥ 4). Students also strongly endorsed the statement that writing a grant proposal as a final

project was more valuable than writing a conventional term paper ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.65$; 92% of ratings ≥ 4).

Student responses to questions about the project process highlight several key elements to a successful service-learning project, including direct service hours at the organization, classroom visits from the community partners, and working as part of a collaborative team. Students agreed unanimously that classroom visits from the community partners were very helpful to the grant-writing process ($M = 5.0$, $SD = 0.0$; 100% of ratings ≥ 4). Students were also unanimous in endorsing the value of direct service hours at the organization to the grant-writing project ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.39$; 100% of ratings ≥ 4), as well as the value of working as part of a collaborative student team on the project ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.39$; 100% of ratings ≥ 4). The visit from a professional grant writer was also highly valued by students ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.65$; 92% of ratings ≥ 4).

Table 1. Text of Anonymous Supplemental Evaluation Form Provided to Students, with Mean and Standard Deviation of Student Responses.

Questions related to specific course objectives	Mean (SD)
The service-learning activities increased my understanding of course material.	4.17 (0.94)
The service-learning activities improved my writing skills.	3.75 (0.97)
The service-learning activities improved my argumentation skills.	3.50 (1.17)
The service-learning activities helped me see connections between academic content and the 'real world.'	4.67 (0.65)
I would recommend retaining service-learning in this class.	4.58 (0.67)
Questions concerning process	Mean (SD)
Direct service hours volunteering with the organization were helpful to the grant-writing process.	4.83 (0.39)
The grant writing workshop by professional grant writer was helpful to the grant-writing process.	4.33 (0.65)
Classroom visits from the community organization representative were helpful to the grant-writing process.	5.00 (0.00)
Working as part of the collaborative team was helpful to the grant-writing process.	4.83 (0.39)
Questions related to long-range course value	Mean (SD)
The grant-writing project provided skills I expect will be useful in my future college classes.	4.33 (0.78)
The grant-writing project provided skills I expect will be useful after graduation.	4.42 (0.67)
Writing a grant proposal as a final project was more valuable than writing a conventional term paper.	4.83 (0.39)
Final summative question	Mean (SD)
In summary, service-learning was a valuable component of the class.	4.83 (0.39)

Note. Responses were given on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Qualitative data. Students' comments on the supplemental evaluation provided additional data concerning which elements of the service-learning project were most valuable, as well as serving to identify areas for improvement. The comments largely mirrored the quantitative data with respect to project value. Most students commented on the value of the project for helping them personalize the course material and relate it to the real world. For example, one student wrote:

The service-learning component of this class was incredibly valuable because it gave me the opportunity to make connections between our readings and the needs of our community. Having the opportunity to not only volunteer at Colonia but also to be part of the grant writing process added a level of depth to the course that went beyond what can be gained through reading and discussion alone.

Another student wrote: "The service-learning component of the class really helped me to make connections with the course material. Without this aspect of the course the gravity of the course material would have mostly been lost on me."

Several students also commented that through the project they achieved a higher level of professionalism by working with community partners. They also came to appreciate the importance of the hands-on service for the grant-writing component. One student wrote: "Not only did the grant give me skills to write a grant in the future, but also taught me a level of professionalism by working with Kelly and Tony [the community partners at HH]." Another student wrote:

The hands-on experience made the grant writing much more personal and allowed me to better connect to the importance and needs of the organization. If I had not personally been involved with working at the organization, the writing would not have been as meaningful and I would not have understood the dynamics of the organization as clearly.

With respect to areas for improvement, two comments emerged qualitatively. First, several students suggested that more hours of direct service would have been beneficial, as well as more in-class time to debrief on the hands-on service activities. For example,

one student acknowledged the brief recaps in class about service but added, “I would have liked to have more time committed to sharing the service experiences of both groups with the entire class throughout the time spent at the organization.” Second, some students noted that miscommunications with the organizations occurred (e.g., around expected volunteer times). For students, these events stood out as the area for improvement to ensure that service hours go smoothly.

Community Partner Feedback

Early in the project community partners were queried with a formal survey focusing on process and concerns as well their motivations for participation. Partners were also contacted for a one-year follow-up to determine the impact of the partnership on their organizations and the status of student projects.

In the initial survey, community partners rated a list of five possible motivations on a scale of 1 (*no influence on my decision*) to 4 (*strong influence on my decision*). Both partners indicated their participation was primarily influenced by the hope of forming connections in the community, mentoring college students, and receiving direct grant-writing assistance from students. Community partners had lower ratings for the expectations of student assistance with research or in motivating the agency itself to work on grants. In addition, one organization wrote in that they hoped working with the students would give their organization a fresh perspective on their work and projects.

At the 1-year follow-up, both partners were queried informally about the outcome of the project for their organizations. Both partners expressed interest in continuing a similar partnership in future years. Both partners also reported using the students’ contributions in the professional work of the organization. At FHDC, the student narratives had been translated directly into grants that were funded for a total of \$83,300. At HH, the student research and narrative, as well as the schedule of incentives, were included as parts of a series of funded grants now totaling over \$140,000.

Discussion

The Community Grant Writing Project provides a flexible program model for incorporating service-learning into writing-intensive courses. The project was designed based on best-practice recommendations emerging in the literature and included specific components to facilitate project impact for both students and com-

munity partners. The results of student and community partner surveys confirmed the value of the program and also provided guidance on critical components of the program from both student and community partner perspectives.

Program Impact

Previous reports indicated that service-learning participation was associated with benefits for students in both skills and attitudes (Celio *et al.*, 2011; Conway *et al.*, 2009). Indeed, one primary aim of service-learning can be establishing relevance of course content and skills, which plays a key role in increasing student motivation (Kember, Ho, & Hong, 2008). Student evaluations indicated that the CGWP can provide these benefits. Students had very high ratings of the value of the service-learning project for connecting course content and the real world as well as for the long-range value of the project. The design of the CGWP specifically included many characteristics outlined by Zepke and Leach (2010) to enhance student engagement including establishing collaborative and active learning environments, creating a challenging and enriching education experience, and enabling students to become active citizens.

Although the CGWP was designed in part to support writing skills, student responses were less clear about the perceived benefit of service-learning for writing outcomes specifically. On the one hand, students indicated on the generic university-wide course assessment that the course greatly improved their ability to write clearly. However, responses were more neutral on the course-specific supplemental evaluation, which asked whether the service-learning activities specifically improved their writing skills. This discrepancy might be explained by the nature of the questions on the supplemental evaluation, which focused perhaps more on the service-learning activities broadly rather than the grant-writing portion in particular. However, it is also possible that other aspects of the course, including the paper written midterm, provided the benefit for student writing skills. Regardless of the explanation, the student responses on the supplemental evaluation suggest that to support an explicit connection to writing development, service-learning projects that incorporate grant-writing may require more explicit in-class instruction that connects writing instruction to the grant-writing process. Indeed, this is a great challenge and perhaps suggests the need during service-learning writing and related activities to focus more on class content to help students see the connection between the two.

Past research has noted the importance of identifying service-learning projects that benefit the community organization as well as the students in the classroom (*Barnes et al., 2009*). Although some have questioned whether students can reasonably engage in grant writing as part of a service-learning course (*Bacon, 1997*), the CGWP involves community partners not only in identifying relevant grantwriting projects of direct use to the organization but in specifying which aspects of the grants students will address. This differed for each community partner. FHDC had students write full, short grant narratives, but HH asked students to write only sections of a grant that could be flexibly reused across different grant applications. Thus, grant writing projects involve determining the appropriate scope of student contributions, which requires a high level of communication between the community and university partners. One measure of project success can be found in the actual funding of grants. In this regard, community partner feedback at the 1-year follow-up indicated that several grants had been funded that utilized student research and writing, providing tangible evidence of the project's value for community organizations. The organizations' interest in continuing the relationship also reflects the value of the project for the community partners.

Finally, from a faculty perspective, the CGWP enriched the first-year seminar by incorporating a hands-on, real-world element. In contrast to previous sections of the course without the service-learning component, students seemed more engaged with course discussions. As well, the grant-writing project allowed a focus during writing instruction on the real-world impact of even small things like following directions (e.g., exceeding a page limit on a grant can mean your work is never reviewed by the funding agency). Students were no longer writing for a professor but for an external organization where the quality of their final product had real-world consequences.

Program Sustainability

At Willamette, the CGWP will continue to be used in the first-year seminar Poverty and Public Policy. The current evaluation data support use of the project from the perspective of students, teaching faculty, and community partners. In future years, mixed method evaluation data will be collected from each cohort of student participants and community partners. Student evaluation data will continue to focus on students' perceived benefit of different aspects of the service-learning experience as well as formative data to refine program design. For example, in future years more time

will be devoted to in-class discussion of the service activities at each site. As well, additional efforts will be made to ensure that students' first visits to the community organization are well organized in advance. We will continue to collect evaluation data from community partners to ascertain which aspects of the partnership they find most valuable, and how to shape students' writing projects to maximize value for them. The success of student grant proposals will also continue to be tracked.

Beyond Poverty & Public Policy, Willamette University's Community Outreach Program has also begun to share the CGWP model with other faculty interested in incorporating service-learning into their courses. As the CGWP connects to existing infrastructure in the Community Outreach Program, it is largely self-sustaining. The primary time investment occurs during the first year of use in identifying community partners and establishing clear grant-writing project goals. In fact, once implemented the CGWP requires little to no special funding, aside from—depending upon the placement site—assistance with student transportation to and from the service site. This makes the program a flexible model with the potential for broad application.

Recommendations for CGWP Implementation

Whereas the CGWP was used in a first-year seminar at Willamette, the project model is flexible enough to be adapted for writing-intensive courses across the curriculum. Indeed, the design and preliminary evaluation of the CGWP suggest important elements of the process for implementing the project.

First, the request for proposals stage was important in identifying partners who were willing to engage with the classroom and finding goals that were appropriate to the scope of specific learning objectives and students' skill level. This level of engagement could happen through collaboration with community service offices. Universities with community service offices recognize their importance in fostering communication between instructors and community partners (e.g., see *Barnes et al., 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000*). Clearly, implementing a project of this scope would be more challenging without the support of a community service office or some other outreach organization, as it would require that an instructor have existing contacts in the community or the ability to meet with and screen potential partners.

Second, even in a writing-intensive course, the direct service hours at the target organization appear to be an integral part of

the service-learning experience. Student feedback indicated that they wanted more hours with the organizations to increase their understanding of the organization and inform their grant-writing efforts, which is consistent with the literature (*Levesque-Bristol et al., 2010*). Student comments suggested that this contact was important because it enabled them to see connections between abstract concepts and real people. In the words of one student:

I think the most valuable part of the service-learning was just the fact that it made the class discussion seem much more real, no longer were we talking about the nameless faceless poor people in our country, we were talking about the people we had met and talked with and spent time with. It made the whole class experience much more relevant.

Finally, student feedback underscored the importance of scheduling visits by community partners during class time to facilitate dialogue. Past work has noted the challenge of communication between students and community partners (e.g., *Schwartz, 2010*). In the CGWP, students noted that it was helpful to build visits from the community partners into the structure of the class. These visits also provided regular contact between the instructor and community partners. For example, the literature describes cases in which the instructor sat in on initial meetings between students and community organizations to help manage expectations and set realistic timelines and goals (e.g., see *Schwartz, 2010*). This level of organization and planning helps facilitate project goals that are within the scope of students' course expectations while also being valuable to community partners.

Conclusion

The CGWP provides a flexible model for community partnerships that engage students in real-world writing for a purpose. The program helps students connect their learning to the community while simultaneously helping community partners generate grant submissions to support their programs. Student and community partner data indicated the value of the overall program as well as the importance of specific project features including direct hands-on service hours for students, structured in-class visits from the community partners, and upfront work with a university's community outreach program to identify partner organizations. Because of its flexibility, CGWP can function as a portable framework for

use in other classes, providing a means of connecting service-learning that uses literature-based best practices to a wide range of writing-intensive classes.

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