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## VCU Service-Learning Impact Measure (SLIM) Report, 2020-2021

Katie Elliott

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Jackie Stephens

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

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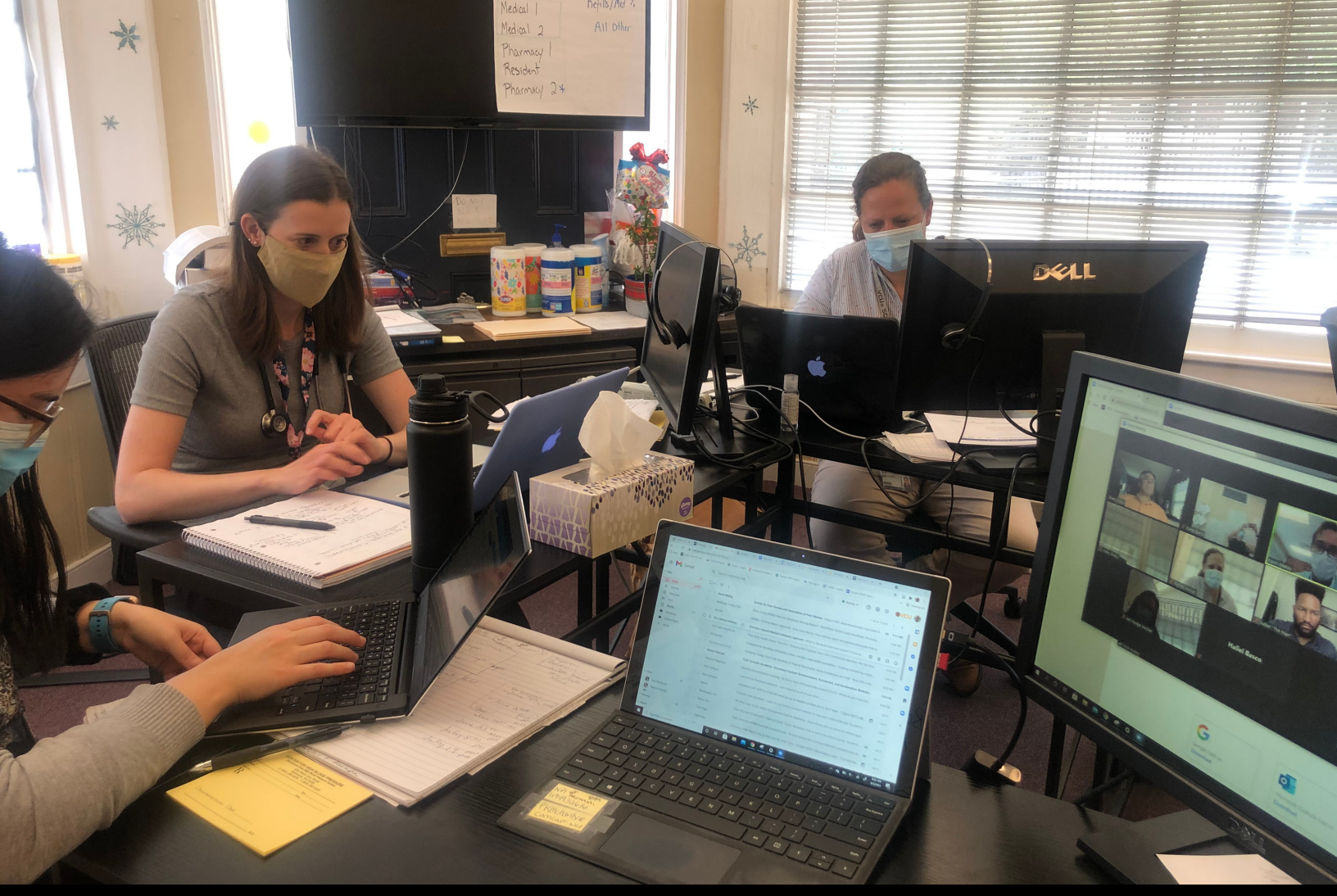
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# VCU SERVICE-LEARNING IMPACT MEASURE REPORT

2020 - 2021

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**PREPARED BY:**

Jackie Stephens and Katie Elliott

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

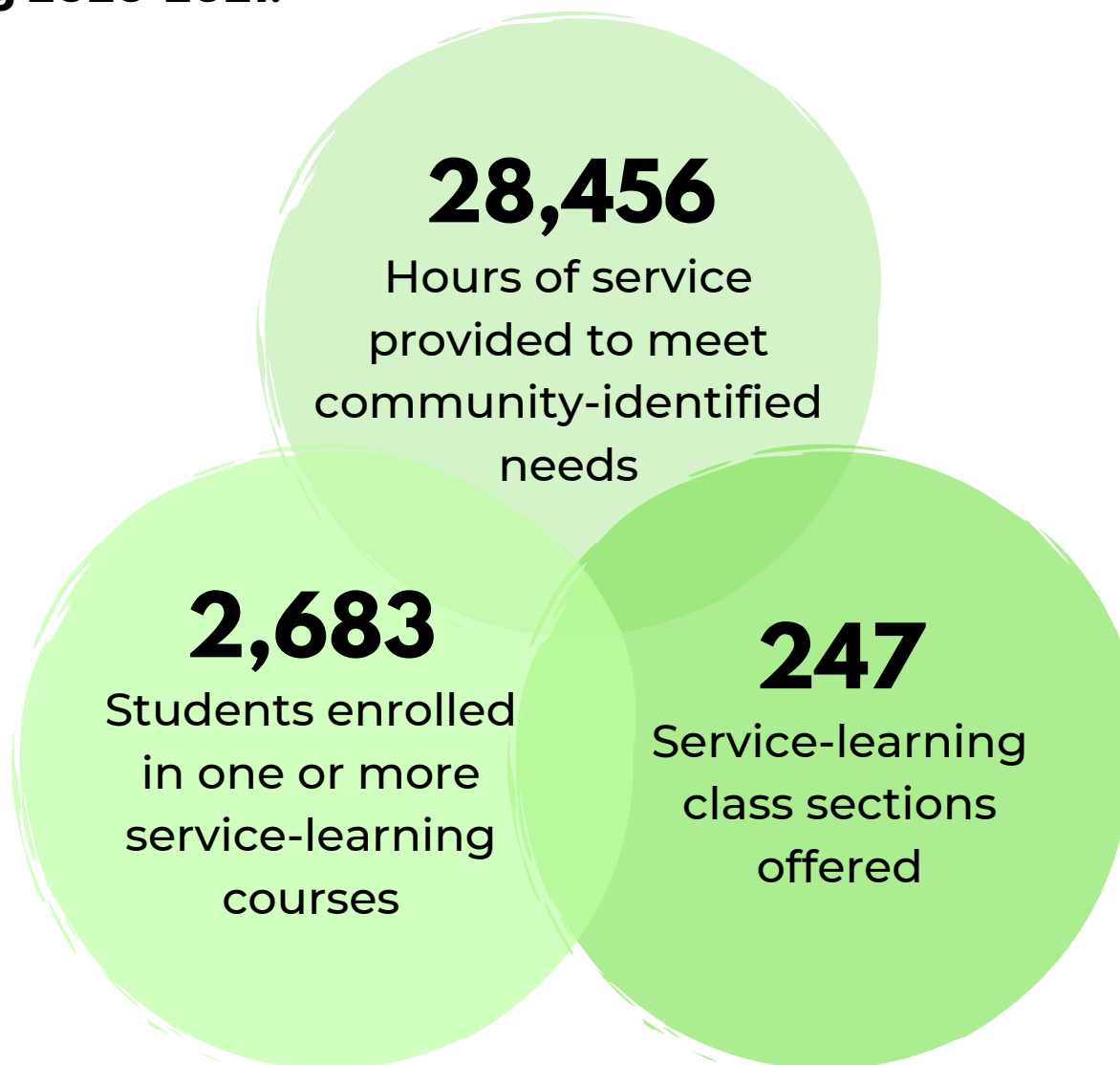
Service-learning classes at VCU are real-world, high-impact educational experiences. Each student enrolled in a service-learning class completes a minimum of 20 hours of service to address community-identified needs, applies what they are learning in the classroom to address complex societal problems, and reflects on their community-based experiences. Classes that meet these and other quality standards are approved by the VCU Service-Learning Office and then appear in the VCU Course Schedule as service-learning designated for a period of 3 academic years.

The VCU Service-Learning Office distributes the Service-Learning Impact Measure (SLIM) at the end of each semester to all students enrolled in service-learning courses (graduate students = 25% and undergraduate students = 75%). The SLIM is emailed as an online survey and results are used to improve the quality of service-learning courses and outcomes for students, faculty, and partners.

For 2020-21, **2857 surveys** were emailed to **graduate and undergraduate students** who enrolled in service-learning classes during each semester. Students enrolled in more than one service-learning class during the year received a survey for each class. **1022 surveys** were completed for a response rate of 36%. The following report provides a summary of data highlighting student-perceived impacts in four main focus areas: **Academic Learning, Civic Learning, Career Readiness, and Inclusion.**

Detailed descriptive statistics can be found in Appendices.

## During 2020-2021:



Approximately 430 students completed more than one service-learning course.

# SERVICE-LEARNING AT VCU

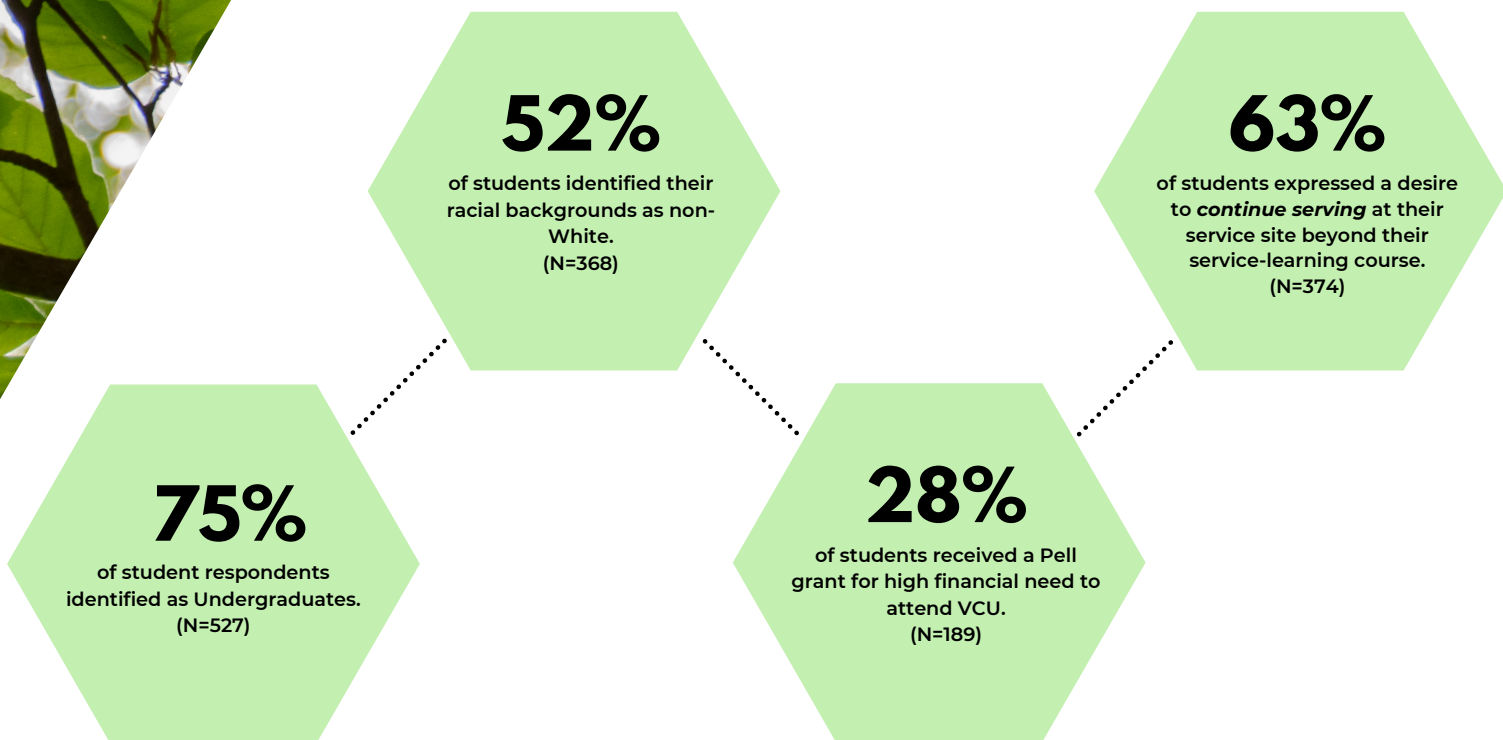
Service-Learning at VCU strives to deepen understanding of civic responsibility and enhance capacity to act as locally responsive and globally aware citizens.





# DEMOGRAPHICS

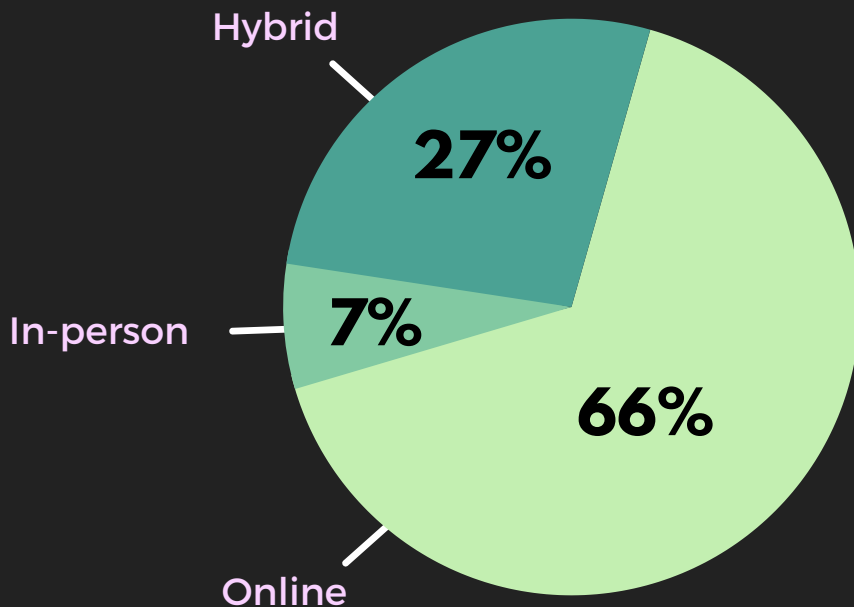
## and Course Modalities



### 2020-21 COURSE MODALITIES:

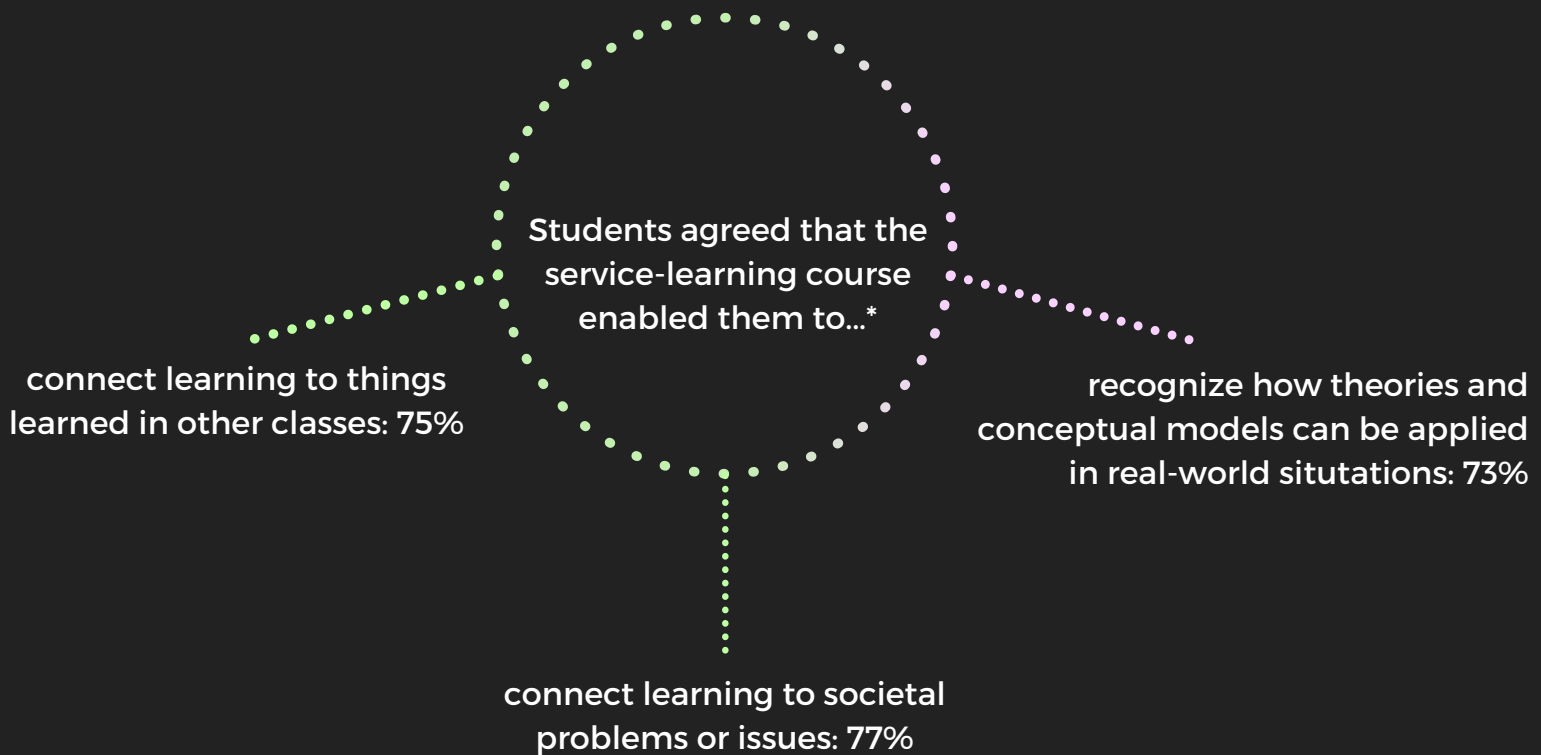
122 total Service-Learning courses were held...

Course delivery methods were altered to align with public health considerations during the COVID-19 pandemic.



# ACADEMIC LEARNING

The SLIM contains questions that ask students to rate the degree to which they believe participating in their service-learning class deepened their academic learning. The results of those questions are shown below.



**72% of students believed the service-learning component of their course was beneficial to their learning\***



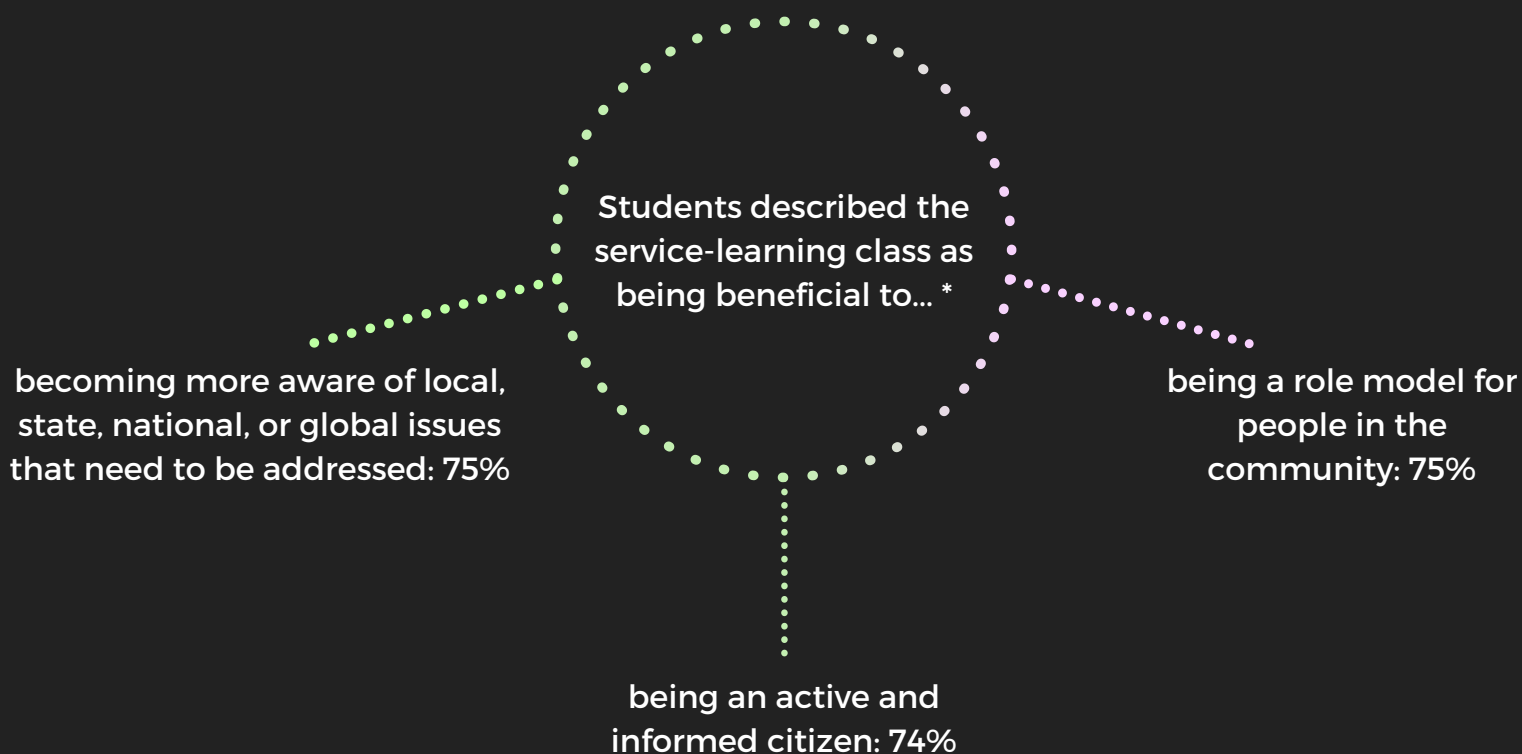
*"Community health is a whole different ball game [than the hospital] ... you must be creative in helping the residents break down the barriers in receiving care."*

*Student in NURS 416*

\*On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), the following percentage of students gave ratings of 5 or greater.

# CIVIC LEARNING

The SLIM contains questions that ask students to rate the degree to which they believe participating in their service-learning class deepened their civic learning. The results of those questions are shown below.



**78% of students believed their service-learning course increased their commitment to using the knowledge and skills they gained in college to help address issues in society.\***



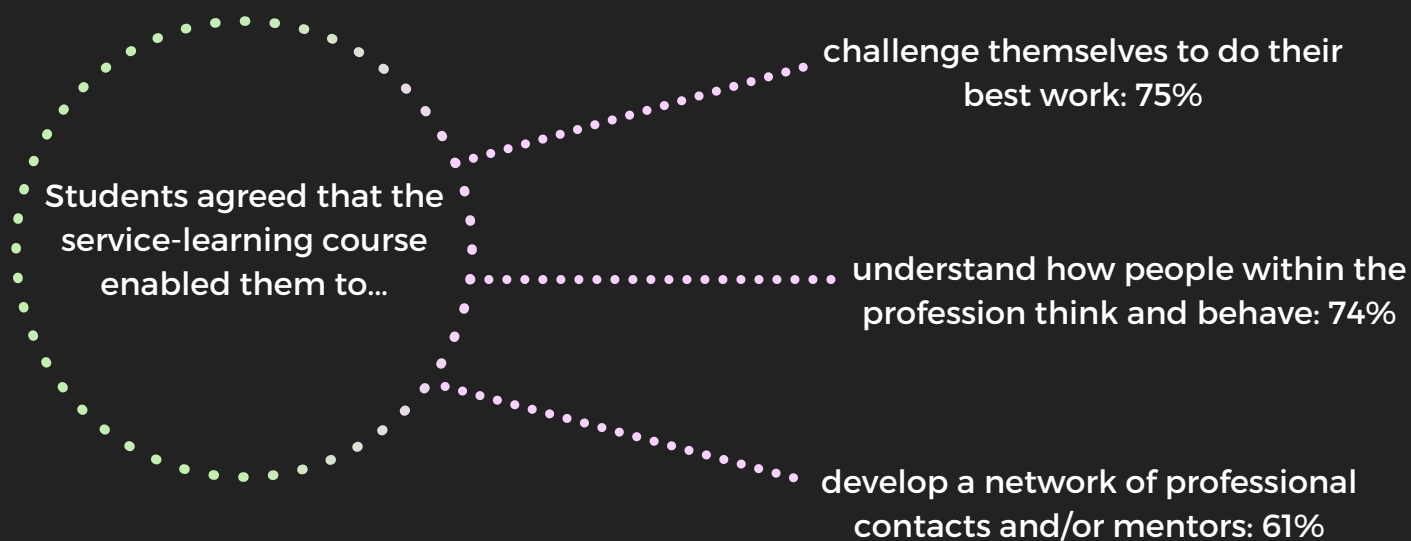
*"I've learned and recognized the biases I need to work on. I've also learned to be more disciplined and responsible in realizing the accountability of my actions."*

*Student in UNIV 250*

\*On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), the following percentage of students gave ratings of 5 or greater.

# CAREER READINESS

The SLIM contains questions that ask students to rate the degree to which they believe participating in their service-learning class increased their professional competency. The results of those questions are shown below.



**70% of students believed their service-learning course has been beneficial to them in clarifying career or professional goals.\***



*"I really enjoyed working with a direct client; it felt more like real-world work, and I feel much more confident in my abilities to complete my capstone and professional work in my future career."*

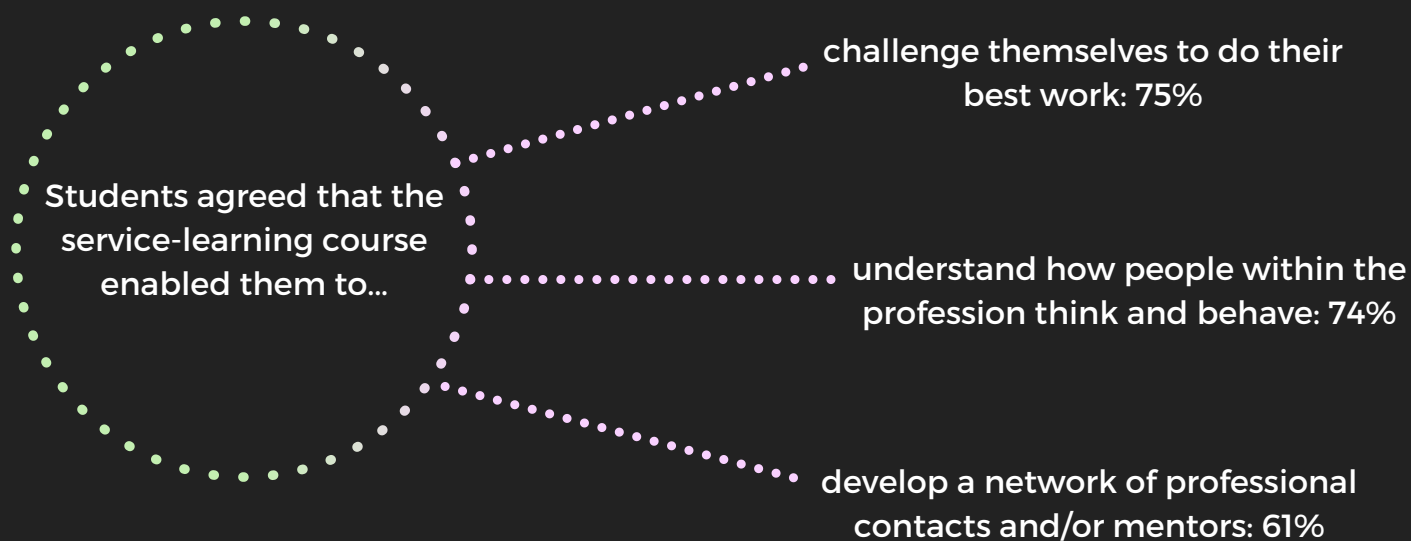
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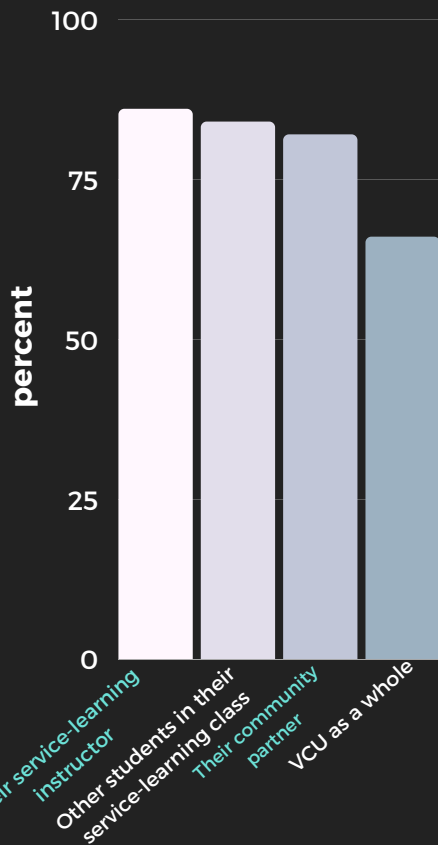
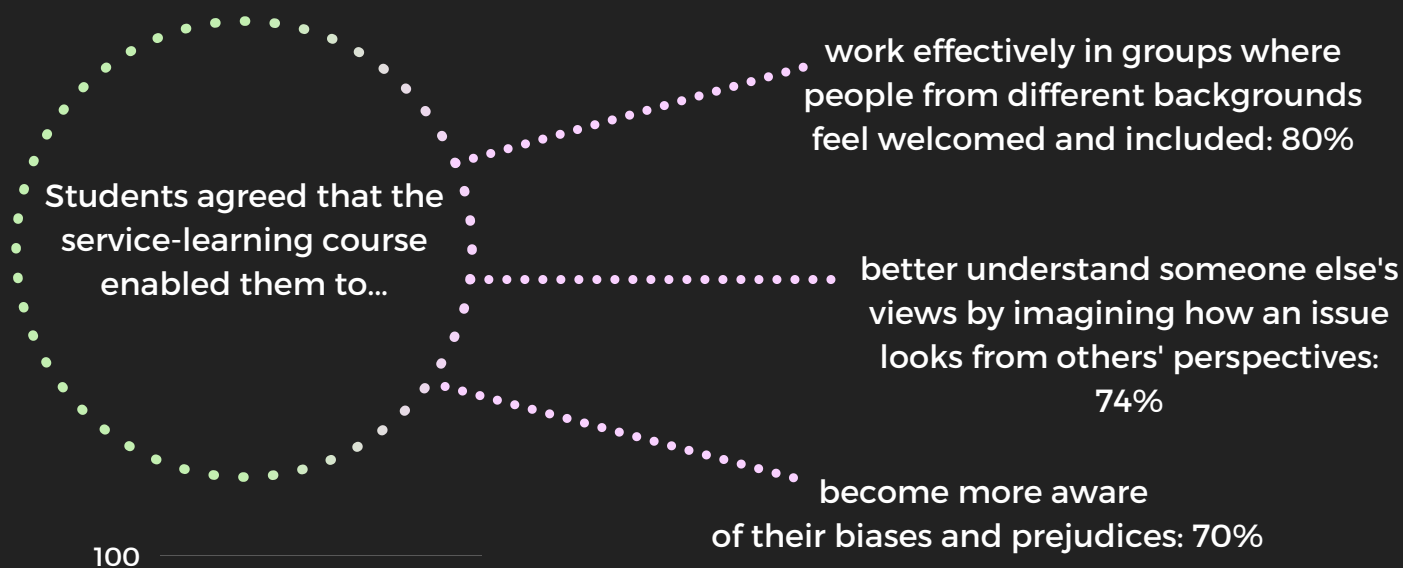
*Student in UNIV 250*

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# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The SLIM contains questions that ask students to rate the degree to which they believe participating in their service-learning class deepened their sense of diversity and inclusion.

The results of those questions are shown below.



**Students rated how welcomed and included they felt in 2020-21 by...**



*"I feel like I obtained a better sense of collaboration with my students and colleagues. I realized, at the end of this class, that we were successful in our actions because we worked together."*  
Student in UNIV 250

\*On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), the following percentage of students gave ratings of 5 or greater.

## *Students' Perspectives*

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

"This experience showed me a side of nursing that I had never really considered before. Nurses are more than just medical aid for their patients. They are also there to provide peace and comfort through therapeutic communication. A lot of the patients we worked with were so appreciative just to have someone to talk to about their life, problems, concerns, hopes, dreams, etc."

*Student in NURS 416*

"This was the most rewarding experience that I have received from VCU. [My group of peer interpreters and translators] encouraged me to grow and develop my skills, while pushing me to work harder and gain important research skills and build my professional network."

*Student in SETI 493*

"Working with Christine Hoffman and Sparc's Live Art is not only the highlight of my week, but it is also one of the most defining experiences I have had in my time at VCU."

*Student in MUED 483*

"I have gained confidence in my ability to be a critical thinker and informed and credible researcher and unbiased reporter of my work. I am more motivated to pursue a career in research after interacting with patient and brilliant professionals. I am also more comfortable working in a group setting and taking on leadership roles."

*Student in BIOL 391*



# SERVICE-LEARNING DURING COVID-19

## Issues with Technology and Logistics

"I cannot see any of the students so it is hard to tell if they are getting anything out of what we are doing/planning on doing. Technological issues have also added to the stress and I leave feeling unprepared for real teaching."

*Student in TEDU 390*

## Loss of learning opportunities due to pandemic-related changes

"During this pandemic, the expectations of this course within my program seemed higher than what was achievable...there was much more miscommunication because of the distance learning model."

*Student in OCCT 781*

"I feel that the pandemic hindered me and my mentees' ability to fully embrace the purpose of the interaction, but it was still a meaningful interaction."

*Student in PSYC 492*



# NEXT STEPS

VCU service-learning classes offer unique experiential education opportunities. Through service-learning, students apply classroom knowledge to community-identified needs while reflecting on their community-based experiences. The 2020-21 *Service-Learning Impact Measure* findings indicate that students see their participation in service-learning as deepening their academic learning, civic learning, and career readiness. These findings and previous SLIM results demonstrate that service-learning continues to be a high-impact educational practice. However, there are areas for continued improvement.

In 2021-22 the Service-Learning Office will focus on two main goals:

## **Improving response rates.**

Several strategies already ensure acceptable SLIM response rates, including a centralized reminder system and random prize drawings for respondents. However, while the 2020-21 response rate of 36% is respectable, raising the response rate is an ongoing goal that will improve the validity of the survey results. Next steps include collaborating with Service-Learning Faculty Fellows to develop strategies for engaging instructors in increasing SLIM completion rates in their own classrooms.

## **Increasing career readiness emphasis.**

The second goal is to further leverage service-learning as a way of deepening students' career readiness, which aligns with VCU's emphasis on the 'learner to earner' pipeline. SLIM results consistently show that service-learning students perceive career readiness opportunities, particularly ones related to building cultural diversity and inclusion skills. However, students were less likely to perceive how they could utilize their community-based learning experiences to create professional networks and find mentors. This indicates that more could be done to enhance learning outcomes related to career readiness. Next steps include collaborating with campus stakeholder offices (e.g., REAL, Career Center) to co-create resources that help faculty deepen the learning connections for their students between community-based learning experiences and professional competency development.

# Appendix A

**2020-21 SLIM Items and Responses: The degree to which students perceived their service-learning class to be beneficial to them in the following areas:**

Question	n	Mean	StDev
How beneficial to your learning were the reflection activities/assignments of this class?	730	5.07	1.86
How beneficial to your learning was the community service component of this class?	730	5.29	1.94
How beneficial to your learning were your interactions with the instructor of the class?	730	5.41	1.87
How beneficial to your learning were your interactions with other students in the class?	730	5.30	1.82

**Key: 7-point scale where 1 = not beneficial to 7 = highly beneficial**

**2020-21 SLIM Items and Responses: The degree to which students perceived their service-learning class to be welcoming in the following areas:**

Question	n	Mean	SD
How welcomed/included did the instructor of the class make you feel?	709	6.07	1.48
How welcomed/included did the other students in the class make you feel?	709	5.92	1.45
How welcomed/included did the community partner/community site make you feel?	709	5.83	1.54
How welcomed/included did VCU make you feel this semester?	709	5.12	1.79

**Key: 7-point scale in which 1 = Not At All Welcomed to 7 = Very Welcomed**

# Appendix B

**2020-21 SLIM Items and Responses: The degree to which students perceived their service-learning class to be helpful to them in the following areas:**

	n	Mean	StDev
Connect my learning to societal problems or issues.	714	5.50	1.80
Connect my learning in this course to things I have learned in other classes.	714	5.43	1.78
Be more aware of local, state, national, or global issues that need to be addressed.	713	5.47	1.84
Be an active and informed citizen.	714	5.45	1.82
Be more committed to using the knowledge and skills I have gained in college to help address issues in society.	713	5.57	1.76
Be a role model for people in the community.	713	5.48	1.75
Work effectively in a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included.	713	5.73	1.72
Clarify my career or professional goals.	713	5.22	1.87
Be more aware of some of my own biases and prejudices.	713	5.24	1.88
Better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective.	713	5.43	1.83

**Key: 7-point scale in which 1 = Not At All Helpful to 7 = Very Much Helpful**

# Appendix C

**2020-21 SLIM Items and Responses: The degree to which students agreed or disagreed that their service-learning class positively impacted their learning and development in a variety of areas.**

	n	Mean	StDev
The service-learning courses enabled me to develop a network of professional contacts and/or mentors.	711	3.58	1.22
The service-learning course enabled me to understand how people within the profession think and behave.	711	3.91	1.10
The service-learning course enabled me to recognize how theories and conceptual models can be applied in real-world situations.	711	3.89	1.15
The service-learning course challenged me to do my best work.	711	3.96	1.14

**Key: 5-point scale in which 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree**