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Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment Report

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Abstract

In the summer of 2017, VCU's Office of Service-Learning conducted an evaluation of the impact of service-learning on community partner organizations. This assessment aimed to collect actionable feedback from partners and to inform improvements to service-learning courses at VCU that successfully address partners' concerns. An external researcher conducted phone interviews with a representative sample of 22 community partners. Partners were asked how a specific service-learning course impacted their organization in three areas: organizational capacity, economically, and socially. Partners were also asked about faculty interactions and the likelihood of recommending the service-learning course to other organizations like their own. This report presents the findings of this community partner impact assessment, outlines an assessment model for a three-year continuous improvement cycle, and offers key recommendations and next steps that emerged from this assessment.

SERVICE-LEARNING COMMUNITY PARTNER IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

Prepared by Jennifer Jettner, Lynn E. Pelco, and Katie Elliott, November 2017

VCU

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In 2017, VCU's Office of Service-Learning conducted an evaluation of the impact of service-learning on community partner organizations. This assessment aimed to collect actionable feedback from partners and to inform improvements to service-learning courses at VCU that successfully address partners' concerns. To that end, the evaluation was conducted over the summer (May – August) by an external researcher. The Office of Service-Learning developed a representative list of 27 service-learning courses for the 2016-2017 year; a unique partner was identified for each course. Twenty-two out of 27 partners participated in phone interviews. Partners were asked how a specific service-learning course impacted their organization in three areas: organizational capacity, economically, and socially. Partners were also asked about faculty interactions and likelihood of recommending the service-learning course to other organizations like their own.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Partners Were Highly Satisfied.** In general, partners were highly satisfied with faculty interactions (scored 9 out of 10 on average) and 82% would recommend service-learning to other organizations.

- **Impact.** On average, partners reported that service-learning had the greatest impact in enhancing their organizational capacity to fulfill their mission, followed by providing them with social benefits and economic benefits. The primary way students positively impacted partner organizations was by providing "extra hands,"[*] as one partner put it, which increased the quantity, quality, or variety of services. The primary cost for partners, on the other hand, was the investment of staff time to guide and manage students.

- **Relationships Are Key.** Service-learning is complicated. Building strong and trusting relationships between community and faculty partners was key to navigating multiple agendas and needs, particularly in under-resourced environments and within organizations with broad social missions. To strengthen these relationships, it was critical that faculty members invest their time in order to authentically engage and continuously assess mutual benefit. In essence, partners reported that they were willing to "work through the kinks" if they felt they were part of a team with the service-learning course instructor.

- **Student Preparation.** Partners suggested that students be better prepared prior to and during their service-learning course in the following categories: (1) cultural humility, (2) professional

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[*] Note: Direct quotations from partner responses will be incorporated throughout this report. Though the speakers will not be identified, all such passages are indicated by quotation marks.

development and behavior, (3) leadership development, and (4) guided career exploration. Notably, when discussing student preparation, partners expressed equal concern about preparing students to become assets to the organization and helping students develop leadership skills so they could "figure out" what they wanted to gain from the volunteer experience in terms of career aspirations.

- *Are We Co-Educators?* Partners had a strong desire to hear student voices throughout the service-learning experience. They expressed a desire for more transparency and communication regarding how students selected their partner site and more feedback about students' experiences with partners. In sum, partners recommended greater integration between the "teaching" and "service" aspects of the course, so that they could help to improve the service-learning experience for all involved.

- *Let's Go Big.* Partners indicated that it was difficult for a single, 15-week service-learning course to have a large impact on their organization. Some partners were interested in developing strategic partnerships, either within or across schools, in order to link a broader project across several courses and semesters.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Initiatives to support relationship-building.* Develop strategies that support relationship-building for faculty and partners to help partners build and maintain strong relationships. These strategies should address the partnership developmental "cycle" (e.g., new or returning) and the course calendar (e.g., before, mid, and after semester), so faculty and partners can access the supports in a flexible way to meet their current needs and priorities.

2. *Enhance student preparation.* Create and implement strategies that enhance student preparation and orientation within the following key areas: cultural humility, professional development, leadership development, and career planning. The strategies would help students "hit the ground running" and get the most out of their service-learning experience. Consider developing online content so faculty can easily incorporate the material into their lessons and collaborating with relevant VCU units, such as Career Services, to enhance student preparation. Make partners aware of standard orientation content so they can adjust their expectations and agency-specific orientations when relevant.

3. *Strategic partnerships.* Explore mechanisms that would facilitate the development of strategic partnerships across multiple semesters, courses, and academic disciplines. These strategic partnerships could empower faculty and partners to extend the impact of their partnership beyond a service-learning course (e.g., multiple service-learning courses that "plug into" a larger project). Would these needs be best met with service-learning, or might we assist partners in identifying potential internships or research projects that align with the partner's mission, student learning, and local impact?

NEXT STEPS

These recommendations are grand ideas. Thus, next steps primarily focuses on exploring the feasibility of implementing the above. Some immediate actionable items are:

Relationship-Building Initiative & Student Preparation

1. Identify key milestones and potential challenges partnerships face throughout their "life cycle" and the semester calendar based on the literature, expert knowledge, and this report.
2. Identify the Service-Learning Office's existing resources and use this content to develop initiatives and/or materials that can be easily incorporated in the classroom.
3. Identify resources, inside and outside of VCU, that can fill in noted gaps and develop materials that can be incorporated by service-learning faculty and/or partners. (Potential resources for student preparation materials might include VCU Career Services and other VCU units.)
4. Re-evaluate current processes to assess ways that partnership development is addressed (e.g., application process, newsletters and email reminders, events, etc.). In what ways can partnership development information be disseminated effectively?

Strategic Partnerships

1. Explore models (from VCU and/or other universities) of service-learning partnerships that have successfully expanded a course across a department, spanned across disciplines, and/or extended beyond a semester. Consider ways partnerships might expand beyond service-learning as well, such as identifying units that can incorporate internships or faculty interested in Community Engaged Research (CEnR) projects relevant for greater local impact.
2. Identify models that would be feasible for the Office of Service-Learning to implement based on current resources.

BACKGROUND

Service-learning is an intentional teaching strategy that engages students in organized service and guided reflection activities. At Virginia Commonwealth University, official service-learning designation is awarded to academic classes that involve every enrolled student in a minimum of 20 hours of service per semester as well as in planned reflection activities. The VCU Service-Learning Office oversees the university's service-learning class designation process; provides service-learning professional development to faculty, students, and community partners; and conducts evaluation of service-learning class offerings from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

The service activities in service-learning classes meet community-identified needs and, in combination with reflection and other classroom learning activities, enhance the academic curriculum of participating students. A large and growing body of research literature supports service-learning as a high-impact educational practice that deepens students' academic learning and personal development

while increasing students' graduation rates (see Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Lockeman & Pelco, 2013).

Reciprocity and mutual benefit are two core principles that undergird high-quality service-learning. Service-learning projects must be developed and implemented in ways that balance the needs of both students and community members. Research findings emphasize the importance of involving community partners in both the design and implementation of service-learning classes and of measuring the classes' impact on outcomes that matter to communities.

A 2016 study by Jennifer James and Kimberly Logan at the University of Georgia found that community partners categorized outcomes of service-learning into three broad categories: outcomes related to their organization's capacity to fulfill its mission, outcomes related to their organization's economic standing, and outcomes related to social variables that impact their organization. Importantly, outcomes for service-learning community-partners can range on a continuum in each of these categories from very deleterious to very beneficial.

The goal of this study, sponsored by the VCU Service-Learning Office, was to assess the impact of VCU service-learning classes on community partners. Feedback was gathered from community organizations that partnered with a VCU service-learning class during the 2016-2017 academic year. The study's findings will be used to improve the reciprocity and mutual benefit of VCU service-learning partnerships.

A repeating three-year continuous improvement assessment cycle begins with this study. The assessment study was conducted and an improvement plan will be developed from the study's findings during Year One (2016-2017). During Years Two (2017-2018) and Three (2018-2019), the improvement plan will be piloted, assessed, and scaled up to full implementation. In Year Four (2019-2020), the three-year cycle will begin again with a new community impact assessment study. The study will measure outcomes associated with the first cycle's improvement plan and also evaluate the quality of reciprocity and mutual benefit from the perspective of VCU's service-learning community partners.

METHODS

SAMPLING

During April and May 2017, the director of the VCU Service-Learning Office created a list of all 131 distinct service-learning courses offered during the Summer 2016, Fall 2016, and Spring 2017 semesters. The director then used a categorical sampling process to narrow this list so that it represented the variety of service-learning courses offered at VCU across academic disciplines, class enrollment size, and graduate/undergraduate level courses. Overall, 27 courses were included on the representative course list. The following academic disciplines were included as categories (including the number of courses in each category):

- Arts (n=3), Core/General Education (n=3)
- Health Sciences (n=4), Humanities (n=2)
- Sciences (n=3)
- Social Sciences (n=12).

Four graduate and 23 undergraduate courses were included on the list. The courses ranged from the 100-level to the 600-level and enrolled between five and 87 students with an average class size of 25 students per course. See Table 1 on the following page.

Using this representative list of 27 service-learning courses, the director then emailed each faculty instructor to verify the community organizations the instructor partnered with for their 2016-2017 service-learning course. The director also collected the name and contact information for the community organization staff member who served as the main point of contact for the service-learning course. When two or more community organizations served as partners for the same course, only one was selected. Finally, though some community organizations partnered with more than one service-learning course, each participating community partner organization was interviewed about only one service-learning course.

In June 2017, the Service-Learning Office hired a skilled community-engaged researcher to conduct phone interviews (described below) with the named staff member at each of the 27 community partner organizations and analyze the collected data. Of the 27 community partner organizations invited to participate in the assessment, 22 completed phone interviews for a response rate of 82%.

Table 1. Representative List Characteristics (n=27)

	n	%			n	%
Faculty characteristics				**Course characteristics**		
Gender				Semester Taught		
Female	21	78%		Fall or Spring	16	59%
Male	6	22%		Fall & Spring	11	41%
New or Returning				# Students *(per course)*	25	
New	4	15%		Course Discipline		
Returning	23	85%		Arts	3	11%
Course characteristics				Core/ General Ed	3	11%
Student Level				Health Sciences	4	15%
Undergraduate	23	85%		Humanities	2	7%
Graduate	4	15%		Sciences	3	11%
Service Type				Social Sciences	12	44%
Direct	22	82%		Multiple Partners for course		
Indirect	3	11%		Yes	14	52%
Direct & Indirect	2	7%		No	13	48%

INSTRUMENT

The Service-Learning Office developed the CPI: Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment. The CPI instrument is a brief, semi-structured interview that is based on a a review of the scholarly and professional literature related to university-community partnerships for service-learning. Partners were asked to respond to the interview questions based on their experience with a *specific* service-learning course, not service-learning in general.

The CPI comprised 12 questions, which covered the following topics: (1) history of service-learning partnership, (2) partner satisfaction with faculty

interactions, (3) perceived impact of the service-learning course for partner organization, (4) partner suggestions for better preparing students, and (5) likelihood of partners recommending service-learning to other organizations. Partners were asked a series of closed- and open-ended questions related to each topic. These are described in detail below. See Appendix A for the full instrument.

History. Because a sustained service-learning partnership may indicate a satisfactory relationship between the faculty member and the community partner, it was important to determine whether answers differed between community partners in first-time versus longer-term partnerships. Thus, partners were asked whether the 2016-2017 year was the first time the organization had partnered with that specific service-learning course and faculty member. Partners who responded "Yes" were considered "first-timers," while those who responded "No" were not.

Faculty Interactions. Strong relationships are critical to service-learning partnerships (Morton & Bergbauer, 2015), the strength of which would conceivably affect the impact of service-learning for partners. In order to capture this process aspect, partners rated how satisfied they were with both the quantity and quality of faculty interactions on a scale from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). Partners were then invited to share why they chose that score and to provide examples.

Impact. Following James and Logan's (2016) work, this evaluation asked partners about the ways the specific service-learning course impacted their organization in three domains: (1) organizational capacity to fulfill its mission, (2) economic impact, and (3) social impact. After being provided with examples of each domain, partners rated the impact on a scale from -5 to +5. Negative values indicated a decrease or cost to the organization, whereas positive values indicated a net increase or benefit that the organization received. Zero indicated neither (i.e., a situation in which the costs and benefits were perceived to balance out). Partners were invited to share the reasons for their score and to provide examples of both benefits and costs. It was critical that partners were asked to consider how partnering with a service-learning class both negatively and positively impacted their organization and to estimate whether the relationship produced a net benefit or a net cost. Based on the principles of mutual benefit and reciprocity, service-learning *ought* to provide benefits to students, faculty, and community partners. However, building such partnerships takes time and can be challenging.

Student Suggestions. Partners were asked what suggestions they had for better preparing VCU students to volunteer with their organization. This question was asked in the hopes of developing broad general categories that would apply to all students, regardless of situation-specific contexts of the various service-learning partnerships.

Likelihood of Recommending. Lastly, partners were asked to rate the likelihood of recommending the service-learning course to another organization like their own, using a scale from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely). This question was adapted from the Net Promoter Score, which is a "proxy for or gauging the customer's overall satisfaction with a company's product or service and the customer's loyalty to the brand" (Medallia.com). This question has been used widely in the business industry and is intended to enable companies—or in this case the Service-Learning Office—to quickly assess how they are doing and whether steps need to be taken for improvement.

To calculate the Net Promoter Score, partners' scores were categorized as follows: Detractors (score ≤6), Passives (7-8), and Promoters (≥9). Detractors are unhappy with their experience and may damage the reputation of VCU service-learning through negative word of mouth. Passives are somewhat satisfied with their experience and are unlikely to harm the reputation of VCU service-learning; however, they are also unlikely to promote it. Promoters are highly satisfied with their experience and are likely to promote VCU service-learning partnerships through positive word of mouth. The final Net Promoter Score was calculated by subtracting the percent of Detractors from the percent of Promoters (% Promoters - % Detractors = Net Promoter Score).

RECRUITMENT & DATA COLLECTION

In order to encourage frank discussions from community partners, the Service-Learning Office contracted an external researcher to conduct the evaluation. Recruitment and data collection began in mid-May 2017 and ended at the end of June 2017. Partners were sent an initial email invitation that described the purpose of the evaluation (see Appendix B). Partners were asked to participate in a phone interview, estimated to take 30 minutes to complete, and informed that their responses would be de-identified and aggregated to maintain confidentiality. The interview questions were also included as an attachment for their review. No more than two follow-up emails or phone calls were conducted with non-responders. Of the 27 partners contacted, 22 partners agreed to participate resulting in an 82% response rate.

Phone interviews occurred during a date and time that was mutually agreed upon by the partner and external researcher. The external researcher followed a phone script when interviewing partners (see Appendix C). Interviews took 23 minutes on average, with interviews ranging from 14 minutes to an hour. Phone calls were recorded if permission was granted. In all cases, the external researcher took notes during the call. The researcher typed up partners' responses from notes and memory within 24 hours of the interview, often directly after the call, for those who preferred not to be recorded (n=4) and when technical difficulties arose (n=3). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 24. Qualitative data were transcribed, de-identified, and analyzed for themes.

RESULTS

SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

This section and the table that follows (Table 2) describe several characteristics of the partnering service-learning courses and the faculty who taught them. These include such things as the course size, academic discipline and demographic information about the faculty members. These characteristics provide important context for understanding the results of the community partner assessment and whether such results are generalizable to a wide range of diverse service-learning partnerships.

Faculty Characteristics: Of the 22 community partners interviewed, most reported that their faculty member partners were female (77%). Nearly all (91%) were returning instructors, meaning that they had taught a service-learning course prior to the 2016-2017 academic year.

Course Characteristics: Most of the participating service-learning courses were undergraduate-level (91%) and primarily involved direct service (82%). The average class size was 24 students. Half of the courses were in the social sciences. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of courses in this sample were offered in either the fall semester or the spring semester, while 51% of courses were offered in both fall and spring semesters. Half of the courses partnered with multiple community organizations, meaning that the partner interviewed for this report was only one of several partners working with a specific service-learning course (See Table 2). Finally, no appreciable differences emerged between the characteristics of all of the partners who were recruited (see Table 1) and those who participated in the interviews (see Table 2).

Table 2. Sample Characteristics (n=22)

	n	%			n	%
Faculty characteristics				**Course characteristics**		
Gender				Semester Taught		
Female	17	77%		Fall or Spring	13	59%
Male	5	23%		Fall & Spring	9	41%
New or Returning				# Students *(per course)*	24	
New	2	9%		Course Discipline		
Returning	20	91%		Arts	3	14%
Course characteristics				Core/ General Ed	2	9%
Student Level				Health Sciences	3	14%
Undergraduate	20	91%		Humanities	1	5%
Graduate	2	9%		Sciences	2	9%
Service Type				Social Sciences	11	50%
Direct	18	82%		Multiple Partners for course		
Indirect	3	14%		Yes	11	50%
Direct & Indirect	1	5%		No	11	50%

HISTORY AS A SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNER

Partners were asked, *"Was this the first time you had been a service-learning partner for [specific course] with [faculty member] during the 2016-2017 academic year?"* Most partners (73%) reported that they had partnered with the specified service-learning course prior to the 2016-2017 academic year (see Figure 1). In addition, while 23% (n=5) of partners indicated it was their first time as a service-learning partner, a few reported prior engagement with VCU and/or service-learning. For example, one partner indicated that their organization had been involved with VCU students in other capacities (e.g., Createathon), and three partners indicated that they had been involved with service-learning, sometimes with the same faculty members, but not associated with that course.

In short, there are multiple aspects to history, and for the most part, even first-time partners were at least somewhat familiar with VCU students, service-learning, and/or collaborating with faculty. This level of familiarity perhaps explains why no substantial differences in responses were found between first-time and returning partners. Thus, partner responses for the remaining evaluation topics are combined, and first time vs returning status was eliminated as a comparison category in reporting responses.

Figure 1. First Time as Service-Learning Partner
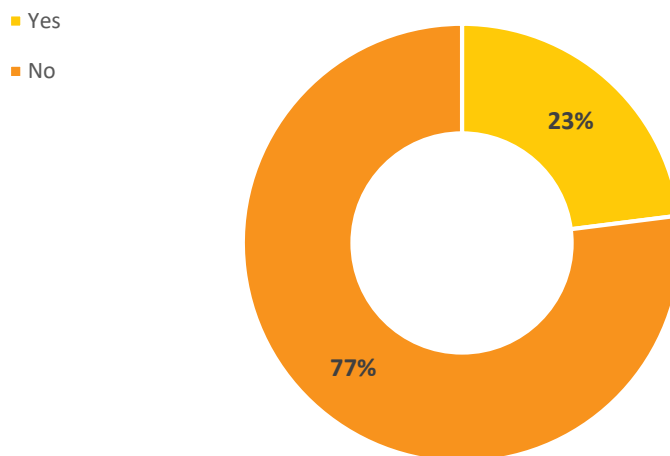
SATISFACTION WITH FACULTY INTERACTION

Partners were asked, *"On a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 being 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 being 'extremely satisfied', how would you rate your satisfaction with both the quantity and quality of your interactions with the faculty member for this class?"* Partners were then asked to explain why they chose that score. On average, partners reported a score of 9.09 (± 1.15) that ranged from 7 to 10, indicating that partners were generally highly satisfied with both the *quantity* and *quality* of their faculty

interactions. Qualitative responses from community partners in this section fell into the following four themes.

Strong Relationships are Foundational. First and foremost, partners that were pleased with faculty interactions identified a strong relationship as critical to the success of their service-learning partnership. Success in this instance did not mean that the service-learning course ran smoothly or that every goal was accomplished. In fact, this was often not the case, as partners recognized the challenges to involving students in their everyday work, including such things as managing multiple logistical details (such as coordinating schedules, tracking student hours, and completing background checks in a timely manner) in addition to orienting and guiding students in their service-learning activity. As one partner aptly stated, "Service-learning is complicated. When I say it's complicated, that's simply descriptive – not evaluative. It's just complicated because we have a big mission. And integrating students who a lot of times don't have any community engagement experience…It just adds complexity." Instead, what partners meant by "success" was that the partners felt supported by faculty; thus, when challenges arose, partners were willing to "work out the kinks," as one said, because of their sense that they and the faculty were "in it together."

Key Ingredients for Building Strong Relationships. When discussing the quantity of faculty interactions, most satisfied partners reported that their interactions with faculty were consistent, timely, and regular. Partners and faculty often met face-to-face prior to the semester or at the beginning of the semester, then interacted via email after the semester started. However, partners spent more time emphasizing the *quality* of interactions they perceived as supportive of their service-learning partnership rather than on the *quantity* of interactions. In general, partners identified organizational, communication, and relational skills as qualities their faculty partners possessed (see Table 3). Overall, faculty exhibited professional behavior, such as contacting partners early (before the beginning of the semester) to plan for the course and being responsive and clear in their communications. Further, partners emphasized certain relational qualities that made it easy to work with faculty. Partners described them as approachable, conscientious in ensuring that the course met partners' needs by *asking* partners what they needed (often more than once) and flexible in adjusting lesson plans, scheduling meetings, and so on. For some respondents, including some school and prison partners, such flexibility was critical, as their schedules could change daily and sometimes drastically.

Table 3. Key Faculty Qualities

Organizational Skills	Communication Skills	Relational Skills
Advance planners	Responsive and easy to reach	Approachable
Follows through on tasks in timely manner	Clear	Oriented towards partner needs
		Flexible

Developmental & Iterative Cycle. Building a strong relationship for a successful service-learning partnership was described by partners as a developmental and iterative cycle, one that required a significant time investment. In some cases, partners reported that faculty attended staff meetings, board meetings, and volunteer events, in addition to face-to-face planning sessions directly related to the course. However, the amount of time invested also varied according to the developmental cycle of the service-learning partnership. Partners often indicated that they interacted more frequently and usually face-to-face with faculty in the beginning of their service-learning partnership, compared with less frequent communication and fewer face-to-face interactions in subsequent years.

However, the strength of the relationship between faculty and partners followed an iterative process, regardless of their developmental stage. Each year "they got better" at problem-solving and trouble-shooting so that the course ran more smoothly than during prior years. Further, partners learned the "idiosyncrasies" of their faculty partners over the years and were better able to use their strengths and skill sets to offset any faculty weaknesses. For example, one partner said, "we've worked together for years. It's funny the sorts of things I know s/he's either not going to remember or not pay attention to…but, it's not anything that's hindering our progress." In short, the faculty members who took the time to really understand their partner's organizational context were better collaborators for developing a service-learning project that would meet the multiple needs of students, faculty, and partners. Further, this time investment "paid off" in building both trust and empathy from partners.

Unsatisfactory Interactions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the partners who were not very satisfied with faculty interactions cited infrequent communications, an inability to get in touch with faculty, and a perceived disconnect or lack of interest from the faculty to invest the time needed to truly understand the organization's context and needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IMPACT

In this section of the CPI interview, partners were asked, *"On a scale from -5 to +5, how would you rate this service-learning class in DECREASING or INCREASING your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission?"* Partners were informed that this kind of impact included things like the type or variety of services they could offer, the number of clients they were able to serve, or a change in their organization's understanding of its assets and needs. Partners were then asked to describe specific examples to illustrate how the service-learning course either increased or decreased their organizational capacity.

On average, partners reported a score of 3.64 (± 1.18) that ranged from 1 to 5, indicating that partners generally perceived a moderate increase in their organizational capacity to fulfill its mission. None of the partners reported a decrease in their organization's capacity due to the service-learning course. This, however, did not mean that there were no costs or decreases in capacity; in fact, before deciding that their service-learning partnership had a net benefit for their organization, many partners discussed the ways the service-learning class both increased *and* decreased their capacity.

Increased Organizational Capacity. As expected, partners reported that service-learning students directly increased their organizational capacity to fulfill their mission largely by expanding or enhancing the services the organization provided and by developing deliverables that met organizational needs. Less tangibly, partners also spoke of the valuable insight and "energy" they gained from their interactions with students, as well as the students' interactions with stakeholder groups such as their Boards.

Services & Programs. For most partners, service-learning students increased their organizational capacity by extending the quantity, quality, and variety of services offered.

1. *Quantity.* Service-learning students increased the *quantity* of people the community partner organization could serve. Students were "extra hands" that helped partners directly assist more clients and/or indirectly increase the organization's reach by accomplishing a myriad of tasks and projects necessary for their mission.

2. *Quality.* The presence of "extra hands" also enhanced the *quality* of services provided. Service-learning students were able to give clients more time and greater in-depth interactions (e.g., one-on-one or small groups) than what organizations could offer without them. Further, these one-on-one interactions meant that services could be tailored to the needs of individual clients (e.g., using art to enhance youth learning and expression).

3. *Variety.* Service-learning students sometimes brought advanced skills that enabled some organizations to offer unique or highly technical programming (e.g., educating and empowering parents on child development research, music education, dental hygiene, etc.). These partners reported that service-learning students were invaluable to their organizations, since it would be challenging to find such skilled volunteers within the general community.

Deliverables. For some partners, service-learning students were engaged in developing products for the organization, including marketing materials (e.g., logo design) or specialized curricula. Partners indicated that these resources were useful tools for them.

Re-Energize the Base. In some cases, partners reported that, in addition to directly serving clients, service-learning students also interacted with their board, coalition members, and other stakeholder groups. These partners found that student presentations helped stakeholder groups view their organization in a "fresh light" and appeared to "re-spark and re-energize" them.

Millennial Connection & Understanding. In a few cases, partners indicated that the service-learning students were also helpful by sharing their perspectives about the organization (e.g., what they do, how well that message is received, etc.), information that has been useful for organizations interested in expanding their demographic reach to young adults.

Decreased Organizational Capacity. Some partners discussed ways that service-learning decreased their organizations' capacity. These partners indicated that the primary reason for decreased capacity was the amount of staff time necessary for supervising and guiding service-learning students. However, a few partners also reported that the service-learning course had no to minimal positive impact on their organizational capacity because the project deliverables were either not useful or not completed. The following section will further discuss this challenge of balancing the academic learning needs with the practical use of the service activity and/or project deliverables.

Academic Learning vs Practical Use. Some partners indicated that the service-learning project seemed to serve students' academic learning needs more than the organizations' needs. Across the partner responses, three key reasons emerged for why project deliverables did not meet partners' expectations:

1. *Lack of clarity around service and learning goals and objectives.* Some partners said that, in retrospect, they should have communicated more with faculty to clarify expectations and needs. In some instances, partners seemed to realize only after the fact that they had assumed shared knowledge and understanding, but that goals and objectives needed to be clarified when developing the project with faculty. (In one such example, students shared their findings with the community partner in a PowerPoint presentation, when the partner would have preferred to receive them in a Word document; only belatedly did the partner realize they had not explicitly communicated that preference.)

2. *Poor fit between student skills and service project goals.* On the whole, partners were cognizant that students were learning and that partners could not expect professional-level products, particularly for projects that required advanced training. Partners noted that it was challenging to assess "fit" because they could not always tell how well students were synthesizing the information the organization provided.

3. *Lack of faculty engagement.* In a few cases, partners indicated that, despite many conversations, faculty and students did not appear to understand their organizations' needs and context. In these cases, students could not deliver on the service project goals and objectives. To some degree, partners believed this disconnect stemmed from a lack of faculty engagement, meaning that the faculty members did not take the time or initiative to get to know the partners well enough in order to guide students to effectively complete their service projects.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Partners were asked, *"On a scale from -5 to +5, how would you rate this service-learning class in being an economic COST or providing an economic BENEFIT to your organization?"* Partners were informed that this kind of impact included things like identifying new funding opportunities, completing projects your organization would typically have to pay for, and identifying or hiring new staff members. Partners were then asked to share specific examples to illustrate how the service-learning course either cost or benefited their organization economically.

On average, partners reported a score of 2.27 (± 2.05) that ranged from 0 to 5, indicating that partners generally perceived a modest economic benefit to their organization. None of the partners reported that the service-learning course resulted in an overall economic cost, though this did not mean that there were no costs. As with the organizational capacity, partners often spoke about how working with the service-learning course both provided economic benefits and incurred economic costs before deciding it had a net economic benefit.

Economic Benefits. Partners identified several ways the service-learning courses benefited their organizations economically. The primary economic benefit derived from the value of the services students provided, followed by an increase in the partner organization's ability to obtain funds or in-kind donations and by the identification of potential staff.

Value of Service & Programs. Overwhelmingly, partners reported economic benefits from the value of the services service-learning students provided. As described in the previous section on organizational capacity, students helped partners reach more clients, enhance the quality of their services, and deliver unique programming – all of which would have required staff that many partners could ill afford without the service-learning partnership.

Fundraising & Grants. Some partners reported that their organization was able to secure additional funds (e.g., grants, donors) because of the service-learning partnership. This was typically because faculty members took the initiative to identify grant opportunities or because faculty and partners intentionally fundraised together. One partner also noted that the collaborative nature of the service-learning partnership was attractive to funders. Finally, partners indicated that the faculty members' connections also helped them reach a broader community network and fundraising base.

In-Kind Donations & Supplies. In some cases, partners reported that VCU faculty and departments provided them with supplies needed to deliver programs. The cost of supplies ranged from highly expensive (e.g., medical equipment, musical instruments) to seemingly minimal (e.g., food, art supplies, paper). However, even the provision of 'seemingly minimal' supplies like paper were deemed critical by some partners.

Identifying or Hiring Staff. Some partners also reported using the partnership as an opportunity to identify potential staff, both for internships and jobs after graduation. One partner stated that they closely watched their service-learning students for the "cream that rises to the top" to identify potential staff, saying that "the reason we hire some of these folks is because they're the ones you know you can rely on." Notably, three partners shared that they had once been service-learning students themselves.

Economic Costs. A few partners incurred direct costs due to the service-learning project, which was a challenge for their organizations. However, though the majority of partners experienced no direct costs, many discussed the indirect cost of staff time spent on managing students. Weighing the economic costs and benefits was a "tricky calculus," as one partner put it, dependent on whether students' service and/or deliverables was worth the investment of staff time.

Program Supplies & Logistics. The direct costs incurred by organizations were mainly due to food, supplies, and background checks. Most of these partners considered food costs as minimal; however, paying for supplies and background checks were not.

Staff Time. By far the greatest indirect cost to partners was staff time. Staff time was largely spent on:

- Communicating and developing the service-learning project with faculty,
- Scheduling and coordinating logistics,
- Orienting and training students,
- Staffing student projects in order to provide supervision and guidance,
- Tracking student hours, and
- Providing student assessments and evaluations.

Tricky Investments. In general, partners saw staff time as a cost when students were not engaged or interested in the activity and/or when the project deliverables did not meet the organization's needs. When weighing the economic cost and benefits, one partner mused that, "somehow it factors into our volunteer base and our staff time, right? So, does it make sense for us to have so much staff time coaching [students] through these tasks? And what are, I guess, the economic values of the tasks they complete? I don't know. That's a tricky puzzle to put together." Answering this puzzle was challenging for some partners, as service-learning students were involved in several tasks. It appeared that simple volunteer tasks, usually ones already staffed, had a benefit while tasks tied to curriculum and learning, usually not already staffed, had less economic benefit.

SOCIAL IMPACT

Partners were asked, *"On a scale from -5 to +5, how would you rate this service-learning class in being a social COST or providing a significant social BENEFIT to your organization?"* Partners were informed that this kind of impact included things like identifying new connections or networks, an increase in the number of volunteers after the class ended, and a tangible benefit for the community (however they defined that for themselves). Partners were then asked to offer specific examples to illustrate how the service-learning course either contributed a social cost or benefit to their organization.

On average, partners reported a score of 3.41 (± 1.65) that ranged from 0 to 5, indicating that partners generally perceived a moderate social benefit. None of the partners perceived there to be an overall social cost due to the service-learning course. However, this did not mean that there were no costs; partners again spoke of how the course both provided social benefits and incurred social costs before deciding it had a net benefit.

Social Benefits. Many partners identified increased social connections as the primary direct social benefit of working with a service-learning course, followed by increasing the pool of volunteers to

draw from for future events. Most partners, however, spent more time describing (in)tangible community benefits.

Social Connections. Many partners reported that they have raised their organizational profile among students. Some partners were surprised how many students had never heard about them at the beginning of the course. In some cases, partners were also able to connect with additional VCU faculty and community resources because faculty intentionally connected them to their own social networks. For example, one service-learning partner now has a partnership with the University of Richmond's law program.

Pool of Volunteers. In some cases, partners reported that service-learning students would serve for more hours than the course required. For example, they would volunteer on days they were not scheduled, and some came back once the semester ended as volunteers or as interns. Some partners also reported that they had an increased pool of volunteers to draw from for large events (e.g., holidays) after the course ended.

(In)Tangible Community Benefits. Despite being asked about tangible community benefits, partners mostly described difficult to measure intangible benefits their community members received simply by students being engaged and interacting with them. Partners frequently reported how service-learning students had a unique and positive impact on the various populations the organization served. The list below provides a few examples of how students impacted community members.

- *Positive youth role models.* Service-learning students, as partners put it, were "relatable" positive role models for K-12 youth. Youth could "see themselves" in the service-learning students – especially as future college students, which organizations perceived to be invaluable.

- *Increased wellbeing of seniors.* Service-learning students were "fresh faces" for seniors. Partners reported that seniors were more engaged and excited when students interacted with them; some were more likely to attend program events simply because students invited them than if staff did.

- *Increased sense of hope and connection for marginalized groups.* In some cases, service-learning students worked with highly marginalized and traumatized communities, such as incarcerated individuals. Partners reported that students had a profound impact simply by taking the time to engage with these community members. Partners even indicated that there was less recidivism and conflict behavior among program participants because of the service-learning course.

Students who extended their time beyond the course commitment, either after the course ended or serving more than the required hours, had an even greater intangible impact. One partner summarized this sentiment, saying,

> **"**there's no way to measure the impact of these students coming back. You know? Psychologically, for a population that feels marginalized, despairs, and ignored. So, these students coming back, volunteering their time between work and otherwise, is making our population feel like they're not ignored. Feel like someone thinks they're important. How do you measure that? **"**

Social Costs. Overall, it was challenging for partners to think of examples of "social costs. Two examples identified by some partners, however, were negative volunteer experiences and unreliable mentors.

Negative Volunteer Experience. A few partners reported having service-learning students who were not interested or engaged and these disengaged students negatively impacted the volunteer experience for others. In all of these cases, service-learning students were involved in activities where other community volunteers were present. One partner shared that they relied heavily on volunteers, particularly "repeat volunteers," to fulfill their mission, making it crucial that the volunteer experience was enjoyable.

Unreliable Mentors. A few partners noted that there is a potential negative cost when service-learning students do not fulfill or complete their commitment, especially when placed as mentors for K-12 youth. In many cases, service-learning students did not return because they decided the experience was not for them (e.g., changed career track) or had class scheduling conflicts. While partners recognized that service-learning was a way for students to "find their path", it was a potential risk to K-12 youth who often get attached and can feel abandoned if a students does not return.

PARTNER SUGGESTIONS: PREPARING STUDENTS

Partners were asked, *"What suggestions do you have for how VCU can better prepare its students to succeed as volunteers with your organization?"* Partners' responses revealed that student trainings and orientations varied significantly in content, level of training, and in terms of who delivered the training (sometimes faculty, sometimes partners, and sometimes both). Though much of this individualization appeared context-dependent and necessary, the majority of partners agreed that the following content would be useful to prepare students to volunteer with their organizations.

Cultural Humility. Some partners reported that students came to them "very green" and without having experienced different populations, especially ones in an urban environment. While

partners expected students to be inexperienced, they also stated that it would be useful for students to better understand the population with whom they work and to have discussions about how to respectfully and authentically engage across differences.

Professional Development Skills. Partners reported that students could use assistance with, and perhaps reminders about, general professional skills, such as appropriate attire, being on time, following through on tasks, etc. Partners stressed that students should know that these behaviors are expected in the "real world" and that many of the partners use the service-learning opportunity to identify potential staff. In other words, students should treat the experience as an informal job interview and view themselves as professional colleagues.

Leadership Skills. Some partners reported that students appeared hesitant to take initiative and feared failure. Partners recognized that students were inexperienced and attempted to provide a safe space for them. However, partners suggested that trainings or discussions on topics like 'what leadership looks like' or 'reframing failure as an opportunity to learn' might help students feel confident enough to voice their opinions and suggest new things for organizations to try.

Career Development & Planning. Partners recognized that service-learnings was a way for students to identify potential career paths. Some partners stated that it would be helpful for faculty to assist students in identifying what they wanted to get out of their service-learning experience and learning to relate aspects of their service experience to the students' career trajectories. One partner aptly stated that "sometimes they'll sign up and they're in service-learning to get the experience, but they don't necessarily know what they want to do with it."

LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDING SERVICE-LEARNING

Partners were asked, *"On a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 being 'not at all' and 10 being 'extremely likely', how likely is it that you would recommend this service-learning class to another organization like your own?"* As described previously in the methodology section, this question was adapted from the Net Promoter Score, a technique for gauging overall satisfaction; the net promoter score is found by categorizing responses according to their scores (Detractors [score ≤6], Passives [7-8], and Promoters [≥9]), then by subtracting the percent of Detractors from the percent of Promoters (% Promoters - % Detractors = Net Promoter Score).

Responses to this questions revealed that 18% percent of partners were *Passive*, meaning that these partners were moderately satisfied but were not likely to recommend the service-learning course

to another organization like their own. Eighty-two percent of partners were *Promoters*, meaning that these partners were highly satisfied and highly likely to recommend the service-learning course to another organization like their own. (See Figure 2.) There were no *Detractors*, meaning that no partners were dissatisfied with their experience and likely to spread negative word of mouth to others. Overall, the Net Promoter score was 82% (% Promoters - % Detractors), indicating that the vast majority of partners in this random stratified sample would be highly likely to recommend the service-learning course to another organization like their own.

Figure 1. Net Promoter Categories

- Promoter
- Passive
- Detractor

18%

82%
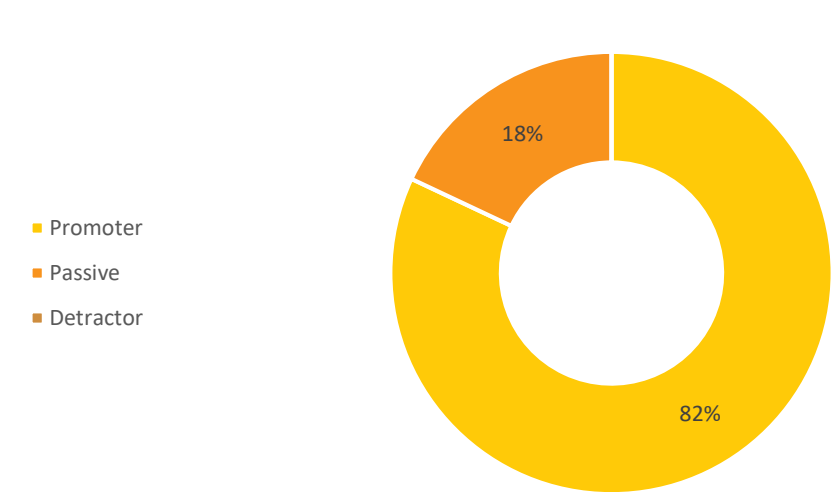
Caveats & Critical Questions. Interestingly, partners added some "caveats" when answering this question. Though most partners would recommend the service-learning course, many argued that it was (1) critical for the interested organization to assess whether it had the capacity to assist and supervise students, and (2) necessary that interested organizations realize that, while service-learning partnerships had "large rewards," they were also "hard work". Partners stressed that organizations had to approach the partnership with *intentionality* and to assess fit. Partners suggested key critical questions that interested organizations should ask themselves prior to embarking on a service-learning partnership (see Table 4).

Table 4. Critical Questions to Consider

Assess Capacity	Assess Fit
1. Do we have the staff to help students help us? 2. Can we afford the risk of providing staff time on a project that may not be valuable to us?	1. How *exactly* would the partnership and service project meet the needs of students, faculty, and the partner?

In spite of challenges, partners gave high scores (i.e., said it was likely they would recommend) because they believed in service-learning as a way of breaking stereotypes, building authentic and respectful human relationships across differences and promoting informed civic engagement. One partner summarized this sentiment best, saying, "I think that it's really important for urban universities to expose urban students to what the surrounding communities look like, what different communities look like. I think it's really important for undergraduate aged adults to open their eyes and authentically engage with humans—to understand their issues and needs and the complexity of them. I just think it's important. I think it's an important mess to work through. I think it's worth it in the end."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several overarching concerns, challenges, and suggestions spanned the various topics partners were asked about. Partners also offered suggestions for improving the service-learning experience in general. Thus, recommendations are organized in the following broad categories:

(1) developing the service-learning partnership;

(2) key issues or items to consider before, during, and after the service-learning course;

(3) quality control and sustainability issues; and

(4) increasing local impact by moving beyond a service-learning course.

DEVELOPING THE SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Determining Faculty-Partner Fit. According to partners, it was critically important that before faculty and organizations embarked on a "service-learning adventure," they honestly and intentionally assessed whether they "fit". By "fit," partners meant that the faculty and partners needed to lay both of their agendas on the table and see if working together made sense. Assessing "fit," partners said, took time on both sides and was an iterative and evolving process. Partners recommended that service-learning partnerships keep their goals and objectives simple and feasible, especially when starting a new partnership or course. Partners also emphasized that organizations assess their own organizational capacity to supervise students based on service project activities.

Recommendation #1: Identify and/or develop tools and/or strategies that would help faculty and partners to assess their fit. Given that this appears to be an iterative process, consider how assessing fit can be incorporated throughout a service-learning partnership's life cycle (e.g., included in the service-learning course application process, faculty/partner reflection materials, ongoing workshops, etc.).

BEFORE, DURING, & AFTER THE SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE

Student Preparation. As discussed above, partners shared that students could be better prepared in areas such as cultural humility, professional development, leadership skills, and career

development. In addition, partners were not always aware of how students were prepared by faculty or if they were trained at all.

> *Recommendation #2: Consider how training on cultural humility, professional development, leadership skills, and/or career development could be delivered to service-learning students in a way that is feasible for all parties involved. Some suggestions include developing online resources that faculty can easily access and incorporate into the classroom. Partnering with VCU Career Services on trainings may also be beneficial. It is also recommended that partners be made aware of student preparation content so they can adjust their own orientations and expectations accordingly.*

Student-Partner Matchmaking. Some partners reported that some students were not engaged or interested in the service activities presented to them in the community. Partners were also unsure how much choice students had in selecting their partner site for the service-learning course. Overall, partners overwhelmingly agreed that when students were engaged, the process was smoother (e.g., less no-shows or increased initiative) and partners received more benefit from students' presence.

> *Recommendation #3: Encourage faculty and partners to have this discussion prior to the semester. If there are multiple community partners for a class, suggest faculty and partners develop a tool, such as a brief survey, that faculty and partners can use to place students in the most relevant organization.*

Shared (Mid) Evaluations & Process Feedback. Multiple partners expressed a desire to hear from students about their experience. In some cases, partners evaluated students on their performance but were not present when faculty provided feedback to students. Some partners felt there was a disconnect between "service" and "learning" aspects of the experience when faculty and partner roles were siloed in this way. Further, some partners indicated a need for a formal check-in mid semester to evaluate how the service-learning project was going and have time to course correct if needed.

> *Recommendation #4: Encourage faculty and partners to set aside time in the semester to evaluate the project to date. Formal evaluation tools or critical questions would be useful to develop to guide the conversation. In addition, encourage faculty and partners to discuss what a shared evaluation process would look like, if they decided they wanted to explore this option.*

Faculty & Partner Reflections. In many cases, partners came up with potential solutions to context-specific challenges they had experienced. However, they had not discussed their ideas for improvement with their faculty partner – not because they were uncomfortable approaching faculty, but because they only thought of it during the interview. This suggests the importance of faculty and partners taking the time to critically reflect on their experience.

> *Recommendation #5: Encourage faculty and partners to set aside a reflection time to assess individually "how they did" and then discuss. It would be helpful to develop a tool, perhaps this evaluation's questions (i.e. the CPI Instrument), to guide the faculty and partner reflections once the service-learning course has ended.*

Transition Planning. A few partners discussed the importance of transition planning when faculty were leaving or retiring. In a few cases, new faculty members were "brought on" to take over the service-learning course. Partners stated that that faculty that left did an excellent job "on-boarding" new faculty: they introduced them to the partner, community members, and participated in some volunteer activities together with the partner.

Recommendation #6: Given that personnel changes occur in both the academic and partner communities, it would be useful to encourage faculty and partners to consider how they want to transition should this topic be relevant.

QUALITY CONTROL & SUSTAINABILITY

Mentoring Faculty. Some organizations partnered with several service-learning faculty and departments, and these partners observed differences in quality across faculty. In some cases, partners were not even aware who the service-learning faculty was; students simply showed up asking to do their service-learning hours with them.

Recommendation #7: Partners recommended that experienced faculty provide mentoring to inexperienced faculty. In addition, the Service- Learning Office may want to consider how they liaise in these instances.

Addressing Economic Costs. Some organizations provided supplies for the service-learning project, a few of whom indicated that these costs were not sustainable for them.

Recommendation #8: Encourage faculty and partners to develop an action plan to address sustainability concerns.

BEYOND THE SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE

Strategic Partnerships. Partners indicated that it was difficult for a single service-learning course to have a large impact on the organization, given the limited timeline of the experience. Partners wondered if it would be possible to link a larger project across several classes and semesters. Some partners thought funders and donors would be interested in this model for greater local impact and that it could gain national prominence.

Recommendation #10: Consider a facilitation process or mechanism for developing strategic partnerships (e.g., extend the reach of the partnership beyond faculty/department to an entire school or across schools).

Extend Student Reach. Partners would like assistance in promoting their volunteer opportunities to the entire student body. Some partners also envisioned this process as a way to "put feelers" out for hiring students.

> *Recommendation #11: Consider partnering with Student Affairs and Career Services to see how they could assist in creating linkages and promotion of volunteer, internships, and employment opportunities between partners and students.*

SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

These recommendations are big ideas and long-term goals. Thus, next steps primarily focus on exploring the feasibility of implementing the above recommendations. Some immediate actionable items are listed below:

Initiatives to support relationship-building & student preparation

1. Identify key milestones and potential challenges partnerships face throughout their "life cycle" and the semester calendar based on the literature, expert knowledge, and this report.

2. Launch strategies that support faculty and community partners in developing effective and mutually beneficial relationships that enhance student learning and meet community-identified needs. Engage a wide variety of service-learning course partnership dyads in these strategies.

3. Identify the existing resources for service-learning student preparation and use this content to develop materials that can be easily incorporated in the classroom.

4. Identify units, inside and outside of VCU, that can collaborate on the development of student preparation materials that can easily be incorporated in the classroom. VCU Career Services could be a potential partner for student preparation materials.

5. Re-evaluate current processes to assess whether and how some partnership development concerns might be identified and addressed (e.g., application process, newsletters and email reminders, events, etc.). In what ways can this information be disseminated effectively?

Strategic Partnerships

1. Explore models from other universities that have successfully extended service-learning partnerships from a course to across a department, across disciplines, and/or beyond a semester. Consider "expansion" beyond service-learning as well, such as identifying units that can incorporate internships or faculty interested in community-engaged research projects relevant for greater local impact.

2. Identify models that would be feasible for the Office of Service-Learning to implement based on current resources.

3. Offer events to facilitate open discussion and reflection between faculty members and their community partners. These might include fun, informal annual events to bring partners together to discuss what is working and what might be improved in their service projects and partnerships.

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APPENDIX A. INSTRUMENT

CPI: Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment Instrument*

Purpose

The purpose of this brief phone interview is to assess the impact of VCU's Service-Learning for its community partners in the following areas:

1. Organizational Capacity to Fulfill its Mission,
2. Economic Benefits, and
3. Social Benefits.

The goal of this assessment is to collect actionable feedback from service-learning partners and implement improvements to the provision of service-learning courses at VCU that successfully address community partner concerns.

Confidentiality

No one will know your specific responses. The information you share will be combined with responses from other community partners. All identifying information from your responses will be removed before the overall report is shared with Service-Learning Office staff.

Service-Learning Course[†]

The questions in this interview are about your organization's experiences working with the students of *[Course Title & No.]* and faculty member *[Faculty Name]* that occurred during *[Semester]*.

Background & Process

1. Was this the first time you have been a service-learning partner for the class mentioned above?

    ☒ Yes   ☐ No

The next couple of questions deal with your interactions with faculty member, *[Faculty Name]*, for the class mentioned previously.

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*Pelco, L. E. & Elliott, K. L. (2017) CPI: Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment Instrument. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

2. On a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 being 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 being 'extremely satisfied', how would you rate your satisfaction with both the quantity and quality of your interactions with the faculty member, *[faculty name],* for this class?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Can you elaborate a bit on why you chose that that score?

Category 1: Organization's Capacity to Fulfill Its Mission[*]

The first category of potential impact that the service-learning class may have had is on your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission.

This impact includes things like:

- The type or variety of services offered,
- The number of clients you can serve, or
- A change in your organization's understanding of its assets and needs.

1. On a scale from -5 to +5, how would you rate this service-learning class in DECREASING or INCREASING your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission?

-5 means that the service-learning class significantly DECREASED your organization's capacity to capacity to fulfill its mission.

+5 means that the service-learning class significantly INCREASED your organization's capacity to capacity to fulfill its mission.

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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*Pelco, L. E. & Elliott, K. L. (2017) CPI: Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment Instrument. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

2. Please describe a specific example if you can. Were there any other ways in which this service-learning class increased or decreased your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission?
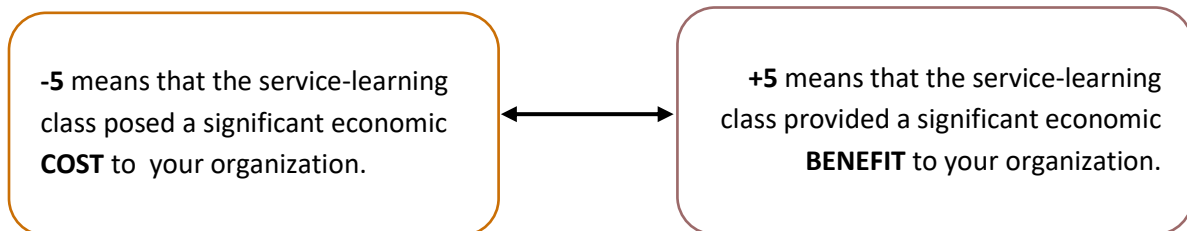
Category 2: Economic Benefits

The second category of potential impact that the service-learning class may have had on your organization is an economic impact.

This impact includes things like:

- Identifying new funding opportunities,[*]
- Completing projects your organization would typically have to purchase, and
- Identifying or hiring new staff members.

3. On a scale from -5 to +5, how would you rate this service-learning class in being an economic COST or providing an economic BENEFIT to your organization?

-5 means that the service-learning class posed a significant economic **COST** to your organization.

+5 means that the service-learning class provided a significant economic **BENEFIT** to your organization.

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please describe a specific example if you can. Were there any other ways in which this service-learning class contributed an economic cost or benefit to your organization?
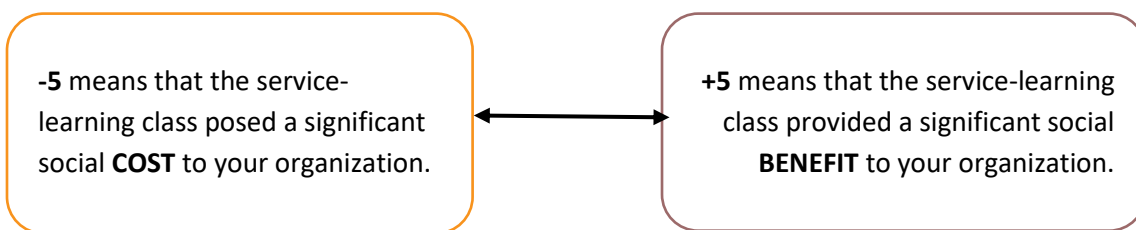
Category 3: Social Benefits

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*Pelco, L. E. & Elliott, K. L. (2017) CPI: Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment Instrument. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

The third and final category of potential impact that the service-learning class may have had on your organization is a social impact.

This impact includes things like:

- Identifying new connections or networks,
- An increase in the number of volunteers after the class ended, and
- A tangible benefit for the community.

5. On a scale from -5 to +5, how would you rate this service-learning class in being a social COST or providing a significant social BENEFIT to your organization?[*]

-5 means that the service-learning class posed a significant social **COST** to your organization.	←——→	**+5** means that the service-learning class provided a significant social **BENEFIT** to your organization.

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Please describe a specific example if you can. Were there any other ways in which this service-learning class contributed a social cost or benefit to your organization?

Final Questions

1. What suggestions do you have for how VCU can better prepare its students to succeed as volunteers with your organization?

2. We would also like to know how likely it is that you would recommend to another organization like yours that it should partner with this service-learning class.

   On a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 being 'not at all' and 10 being 'extremely likely', how likely is it that you would recommend this service-learning class to another organization like your own?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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[*]Pelco, L. E. & Elliott, K. L. (2017) CPI: Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment Instrument. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Finally, is there anything else you would like to tell me today?

THANK YOU & NEXT STEPS

Thank you for your time and honesty.

We hope to have this evaluation done by the end of summer 2017.

We will email you the final report once complete.[*]

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*Pelco, L. E. & Elliott, K. L. (2017) CPI: Service-Learning Community Partner Impact Assessment Instrument. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

Subject heading: VCU Service-Learning: Community Partner Impact Assessment

Dear Name,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Jennifer Jettner and I have been contracted by VCU's Service-Learning Office to evaluate the impact of the service-learning program for its community partners.

I am contacting you because your organization, *[Partner Org.],* was involved as a community partner for the service-learning class, *[Course Title]*, during the past 2016-2017 academic year. Faculty member, *[Faculty Name]*, identified you as the best contact for this class.

Would be willing to participate in a **brief phone interview** (15 to 30 minutes)?

Details

Everything is confidential. No one (other than me), will know your specific responses. This includes faculty you worked with. The purpose of this evaluation is to **improve** the program for community partners. We value your honesty.

At the beginning of the phone call, I will ask you if I can record the interview. You can say no, and I will take notes.

Details about the evaluation and interview questions are attached for your review.

Next Steps

If you are interested, please email me 2-3 dates & times that are convenient for you and a good # to call you. I'll follow-up to confirm a date & time.

I will be available to begin interviews starting tomorrow, Friday, May 19th.

Please let me know if you have any questions. You can also contact Dr. Lynn Pelco, Associate Vice Provost of Community Engagement, at lepelco@vcu.edu | 804-827-8215.

Thank you,

Jen

APPENDIX C. TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SCRIPT

VCU Service-Learning: Community Partner Impact Assessment

Introduction

"Hello. Thank you for taking time to talk with me today about your organization's experiences collaborating with a VCU service-learning class. I will be talking with about 20 different community partners over the next few weeks to gather their experiences as well, and the Service-Learning Office will be using the results to inform improvements to our service-learning course offerings.

"Just as a reminder, we will be talking today specifically about your organization's experiences working with the students and faculty member of *[Course Name and Number and Faculty Member Name]* that occurred during *[Semester, Year]*. Your responses will be combined with the responses from the other community partners I contact and all identifying information from your responses will be removed before I share them with the Service-Learning Office staff.

"Do you have any questions at this point?" [Answer questions.]

"Is it okay if I record this call? It's fine if not. I will just take notes instead."

"Okay, let's get started."

History & Processes

"Was this the first time you have been a service-learning partner for *[course title]* with *[faculty name]* during *[semester]?*

"On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 being 'extremely satisfied', how would you rate your satisfaction with both the quantity and quality of your interactions with the faculty member, *[faculty name],* for this class?"

"Can you elaborate a bit on why you chose that score?"

"Now I am going to ask questions within three main categories of impact. We recognize that within each category, the service-learning students who volunteered for your organization may have had a positive impact, a negative impact, or neutral impact. As we go through the three categories of impact, please consider this positive-to-negative range of possibilities."

CATEGORY 1: Organization's Capacity to Fulfill its Mission.

"The first category of potential impact that the service-learning class may have had is on your "Organization's Capacity to Fulfill its Mission". This impact includes things like the type or variety of services offered, the number of clients you can serve, or a change in your organization's understanding of its assets and needs."

1. "On a scale from -5 to +5 (with -5 meaning that the service-learning students significantly DECREASED your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission to +5 meaning that the service-learning students significantly INCREASED your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission) how would your rate this service-learning class?"

2. "Please describe a specific example if you can. Any other ways in which this service-learning class (increased/decreased) your organization's capacity to fulfill its mission?"

CATEGORY 2: Economic Benefits

"The second category of potential impact that the service-learning class may have had on your organization is an economic impact. This impact includes things such as identifying new funding opportunities, completing projects your organization would typically have to purchase, and identifying or hiring new staff members."

3. "On a scale from -5 to +5 (with -5 meaning that the service-learning class posed a significant economic COST to your organization to +5 meaning that the service-learning class provided a significant economic BENEFIT to your organization), how would your rate this service-learning class?"

4. "Please describe a specific example if you can. Any other ways in which this service-learning class contributed an economic cost or benefit to your organization?"

CATEGORY 3: Social Benefits

"The third and final category of potential impact that the service-learning class may have had on your organization is an social impact. This impact includes things such as identifying new connections or networks, an increase in the number of volunteers after the class ended, and a tangible benefit for the community."

5. "On a scale from -5 to +5 (with -5 meaning that the service-learning class posed a significant social COST to your organization to +5 meaning that the service-learning class provided a significant social BENEFIT to your organization) how would your rate this service-learning class?"

6. "Please describe a specific example if you can. Any other ways in which this service-learning class contributed a social cost or benefit to your organization?"

FINAL QUESTIONS:

"Okay, final questions."

1. "What suggestions do you have for how VCU can better prepare its students to succeed as volunteers with your organization?"

2. "We would like to know how likely it is that you would recommend to another organization like yours that it should partner with this service-learning class. So, on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 being 'extremely likely' and 0 being 'not at all likely', how likely is it you would recommend this service-learning class to another organization like your own?"

3. "Finally, is there anything else you would like to tell me today?"

THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS:

"Thank you so much for your time. I hope to have this finished by the end of summer, and I, or Lynn, will email you the final report once complete. Any other questions? [Answer if any.] Great. Have a wonderful day!"