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VCU Service-Learning Impact Measure (SLIM) Report, 2018-2019

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VCU Service-Learning Impact Measure (SLIM) Report, 2018-2019

Abstract

The VCU Service-Learning Office distributes the Service-Learning Impact Measure (SLIM) at the end of every semester to evaluate the impact of service-learning classes on student learning. Results are used to guide program improvements that enhance the quality of service-learning courses and outcomes for students, faculty, and partners.

Keywords

service-learning, community engagement, program assessment, civic engagement

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Community-Based Learning | Higher Education | Service Learning



VCU SERVICE-LEARNING IMPACT MEASURE REPORT

2018 - 2019

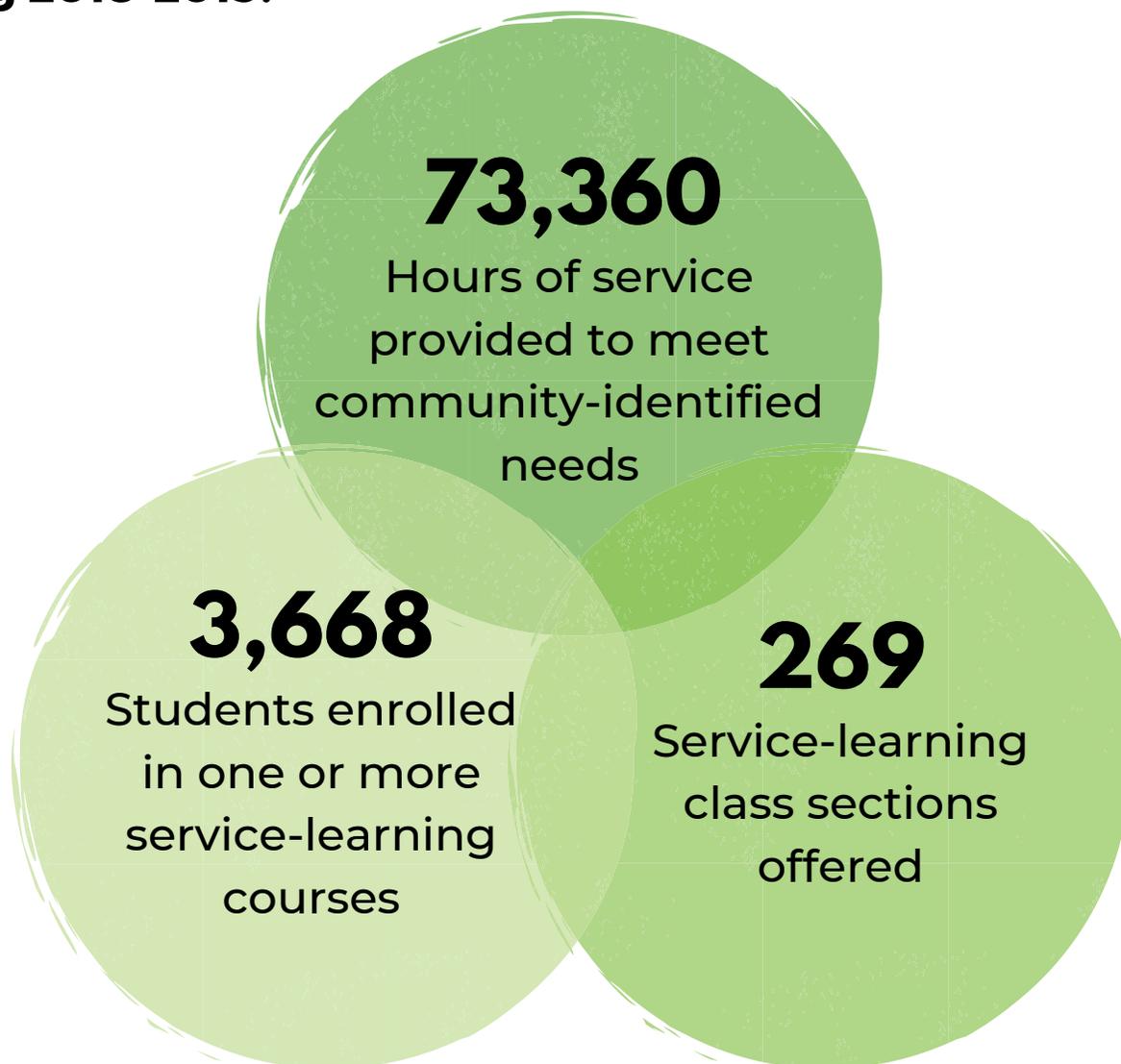
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2018-19 VCU Service-Learning Impact Measure Report. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA. Retrieved from <https://servicelearning.vcu.edu/what-is-service-learning/annualreports/>

During 2018-2019:



Approximately 500 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.

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.

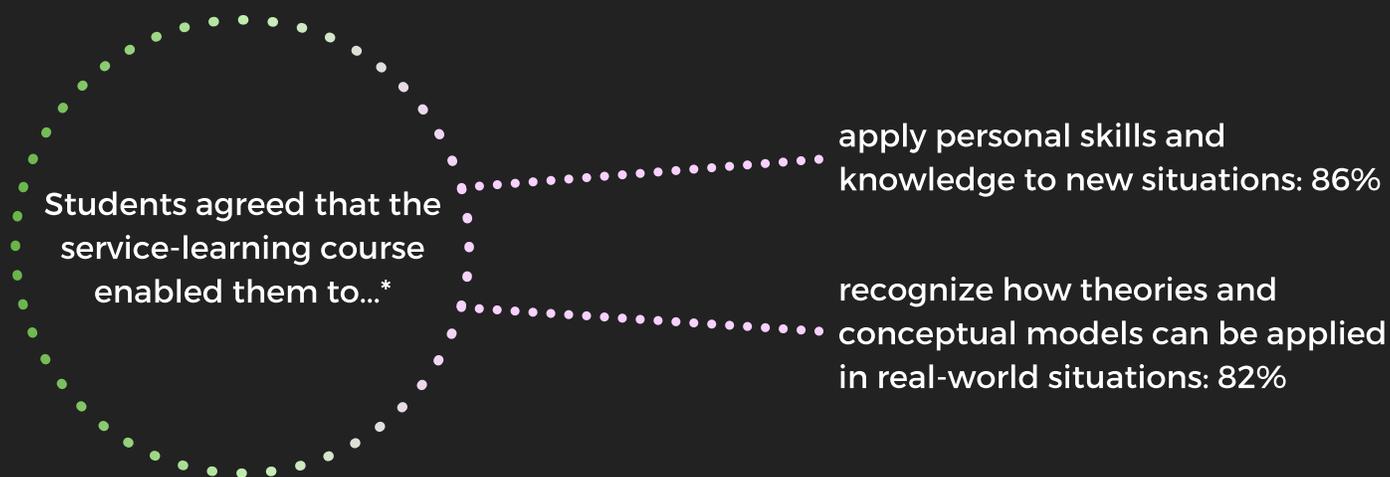
The VCU Service-Learning Office distributes the Service-Learning Impact Measure (SLIM) at the end of each semester to all students enrolled in service-learning courses (graduate students = 26% and undergraduate students = 74%). The SLIM is emailed as an online survey and results are used to improve the quality of service-learning courses and outcomes for students, faculty, and partners.

For 2018-19, **3,416 surveys** were emailed to **2,967 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. **868 surveys** were completed for a response rate of 25%. The following report provides a summary of data highlighting student-perceived impacts in three main focus areas: **Academic Learning, Civic Learning, and Career Readiness (Professional Competency)**.

Detailed descriptive statistics can be found in Appendices.

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.

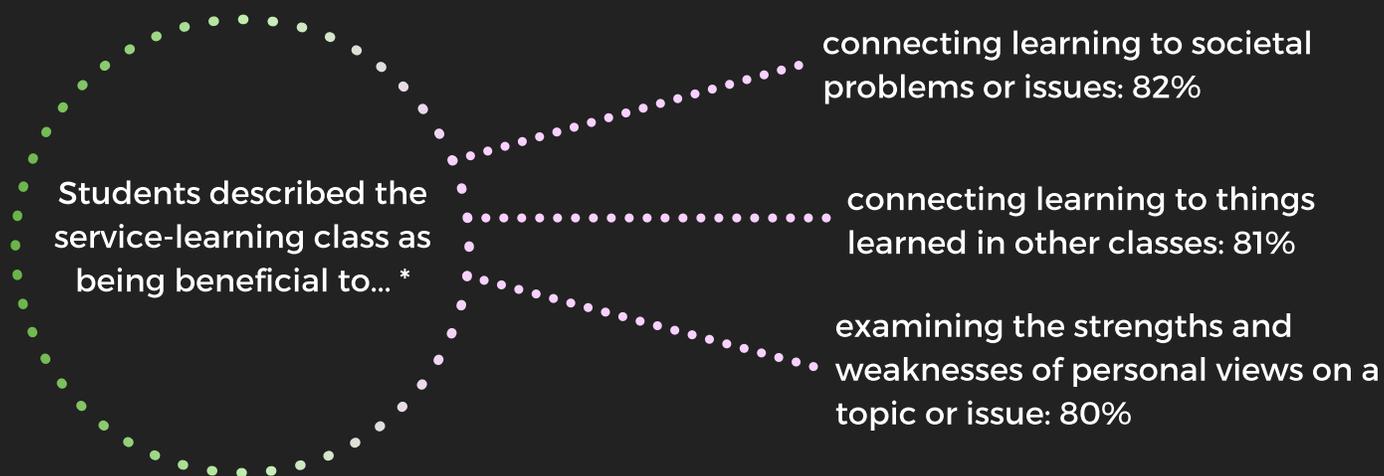


80% of students believed their service-learning course challenged them to do their best work.*



"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."

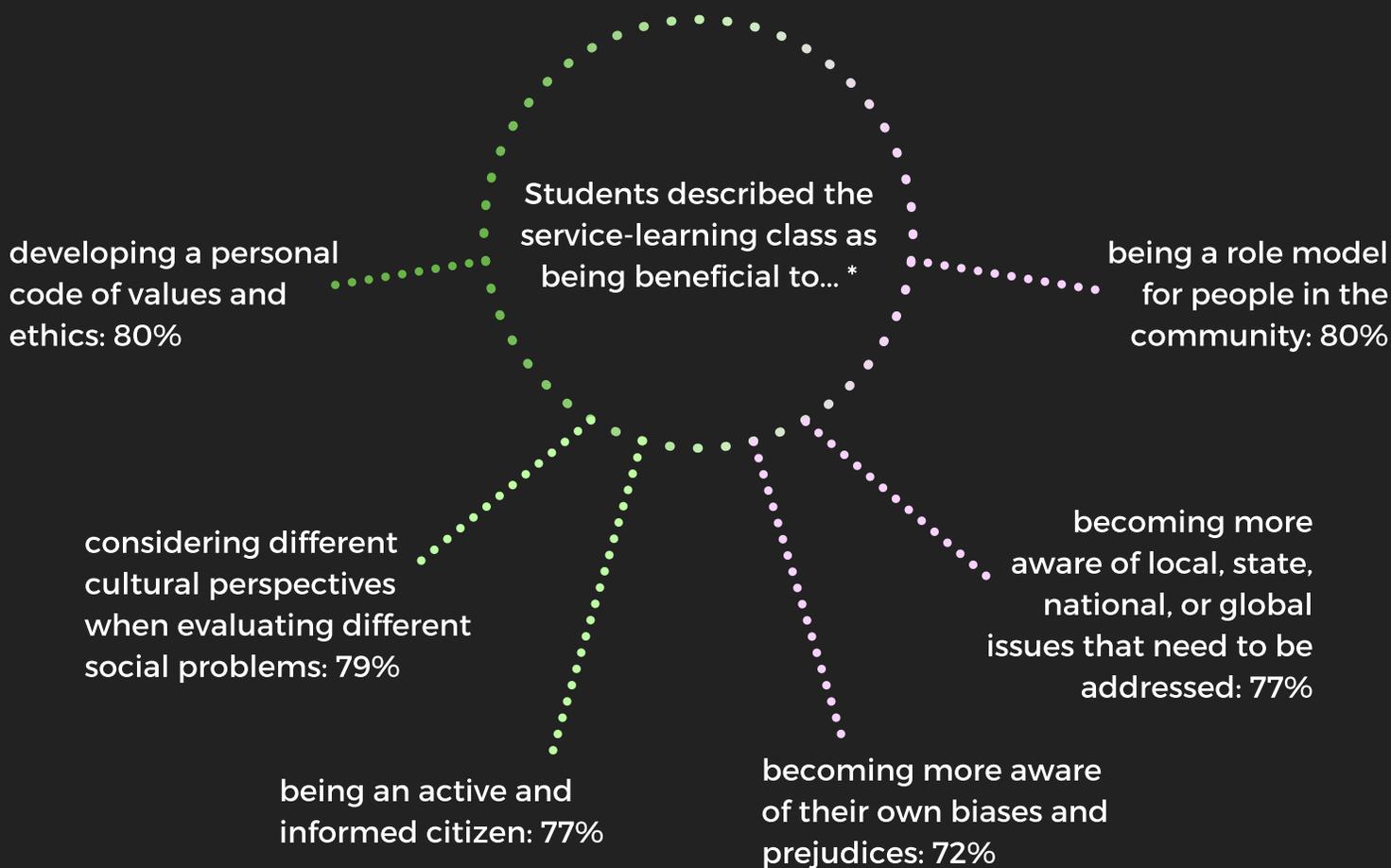
Student in NURS 416



*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.



81% 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.*



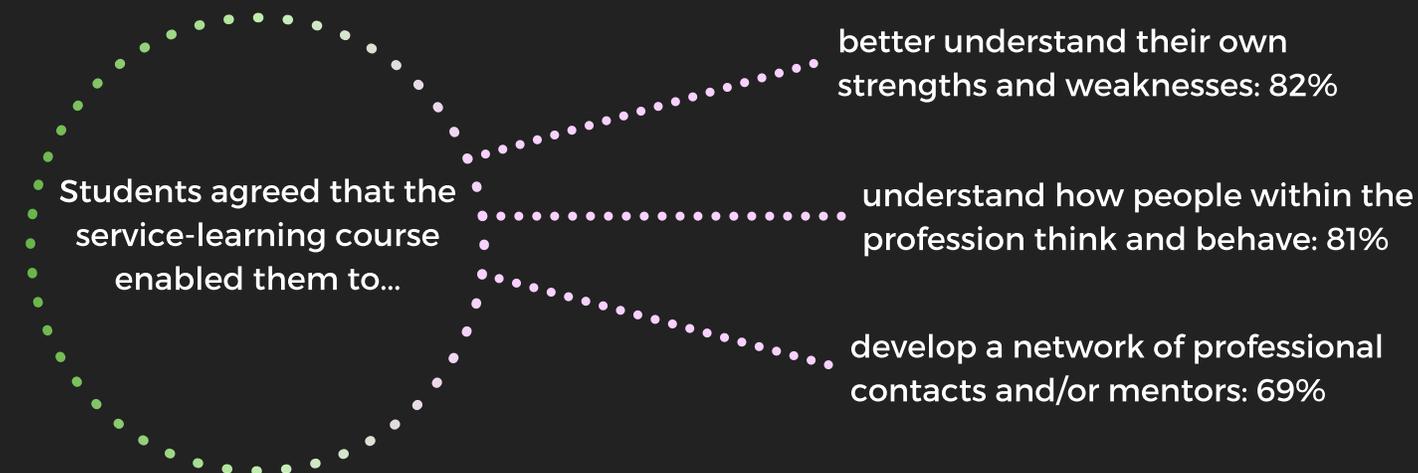
"I felt really connected to the local issues in Richmond. Although I'm aware of the issues we have on a societal level and, in theory, at the local level, being able to see them first hand was so important. ."

Student in GSWS 491

*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.

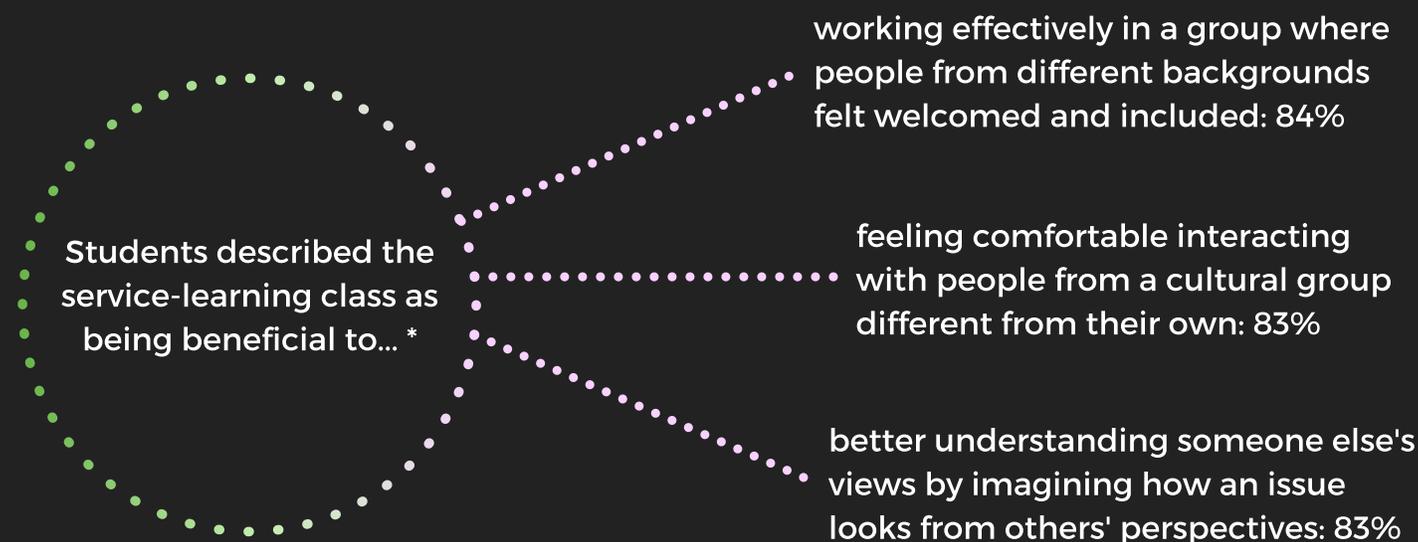


72% of students believed their service-learning course has been beneficial to them in clarifying career or professional goals.*



"I got out so many more leadership skills than I have ever had in any other class."

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.

82%

of students Agreed (35%) / Strongly Agreed (47%) that they experienced positive growth in their level of *empathy* (e.g., ability to walk in another's shoes and understand their perspective) as a result of their service-learning course(s).

77%

77% of students Agreed (34%) / Strongly Agreed (43%) that they experienced positive growth in their level of *morality* (e.g., understanding of right and wrong) as a result of their service-learning course(s).

79%

of students Agreed (36%) / Strongly Agreed (43%) that they gained the *appropriate skills and experiences for their desired career* as a result of their service-learning course(s).

80%

of students expressed a desire to *continue serving* at their service site beyond their service-learning course.

Students' Perspectives

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

“My service as a TA for UNIV 112 allowed me to see a side of myself that I never expected. I found that I didn't just love the mentoring aspect, but I enjoyed teaching. I learned so much about my own passions and what I truly want to do, and I learned about my students. I am so grateful for this experience.”

Student in UNIV 250

“I have learned more about myself, societal structures and oppression, love, resilience, patience, spirituality, faith, and the power of the human spirit than I ever thought possible.”

Student in RELS 491

“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

“I learned more from hands-on work in this setting than any other class I have taken before, & I also picked up a variety of skills both from in-class group discussions and working with a mentor. I have been able to network with others through this experience as well as be open-minded about what I am looking for in a future career.”

Student in BIOL 498

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 2018-19 *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 and previous SLIM results demonstrate that service-learning continues to be a high-impact educational practice. However, there are areas for continued improvement.

In 2019-20, 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 2018-19 response rate of 25% 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

2018-19 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?	861	5.09	1.83
How beneficial to your learning was the community service component of this class?	861	5.53	1.77
How beneficial to your learning were your interactions with the instructor of the class?	861	5.53	1.75
How beneficial to your learning were your interactions with other students in the class?	861	5.44	1.71

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

2018-19 SLIM Items and Responses: The degree to which students perceived their service-learning class to be welcoming in the following areas:

Question	n	Mean	StDev
How welcomed/included did the instructor of the class make you feel?	859	6.14	1.41
How welcomed/included did the other students in the class make you feel?	857	6.05	1.29
How welcomed/included did the community partner/community site make you feel?	858	6.06	1.37

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

Appendix B

2018-19 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
Connect my learning to societal problems or issues.	861	5.66	1.52
Connect my learning to things I have learned in other classes.	861	5.64	1.59
Examine the strengths and weaknesses of my own views on a topic or issue.	861	5.63	1.57
Be more aware of local, state, national, or global issues that need to be addressed.	861	5.57	1.62
Be more aware of some of my own biases and prejudices.	861	5.35	1.76
Work effectively in a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included.	861	5.83	1.50
Clarify my career or professional goals.	861	5.29	1.74
Be an active and informed citizen.	861	5.49	1.64
Consider different cultural perspectives when evaluating different social problems.	861	5.60	1.64
Be more committed to using the knowledge and skills I have gained in college to help address issues in society.	861	5.67	1.59
Be a role model for people in the community.	861	5.63	1.63
Feel comfortable interacting with people from a cultural group that is different from my own.	861	5.77	1.59
Develop a personal code of values and ethics.	861	5.55	1.68
Better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective.	861	5.76	1.52
Rate the degree to which this service-learning course challenged you to do your best work.	861	5.62	1.57

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

Appendix C

2018-19 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.

Question	n	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)
The service-learning course enabled me to apply my skills and knowledge to new situations.	861	402 (47%)	334 (39%)	71 (8%)	33 (4%)	21 (2%)
The service-learning course enabled me to recognize how theories and conceptual models can be applied in real-world situations.	861	379 (44%)	326 (38%)	85 (10%)	50 (6%)	21 (2%)
The service-learning courses enabled me to develop a network of professional contacts and/or mentors.	861	289 (34%)	298 (35%)	158 (18%)	70 (8%)	46 (5%)
The service-learning course enabled me to understand how people within the profession think and behave.	861	363 (42%)	335 (39%)	89 (10%)	45 (5%)	29 (3%)
The service-learning course enabled me to better understand my own strengths and weaknesses.	861	398 (46%)	310 (36%)	96 (11%)	29 (3%)	28 (3%)
I experienced positive growth in my level of empathy (e.g., ability to walk in another's shoes and understand their perspective) as a result of my service-learning course.	861	407 (47%)	313 (36%)	88 (10%)	33 (4%)	20 (2%)
I experienced positive growth in my level of morality (e.g., understanding right and wrong) as a result of my service-learning course.	861	374 (43%)	296 (34%)	129 (15%)	37 (4%)	25 (3%)

Key: 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree