

Service Learning and LEAP: Increasing Respect for Diversity through Campus-Community Collaboration in Advanced Spanish Courses

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Abstract

This paper provides a case study that looks at the learning outcomes associated with the addition of a service-learning component to an advanced Spanish grammar course at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, a University of Wisconsin System comprehensive campus. This article will first illustrate the ways in which service learning serves various educational objectives valued at both the departmental and university level. It will then demonstrate how service learning, as a recognized high-impact practice helps students achieve several specified outcomes of the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative related to diversity and global perspectives. Finally, through a qualitative analysis of feedback and reflection activities from 70 service-learning participants regarding their campus-community collaborations in a recent semester, this study will highlight how service learning is an ideal pedagogical method for teaching language students about diversity, focusing specifically on learning outcomes in the realms of linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity.

Introduction

An Overview of the LEAP Initiative

In response to the shifting demands of an increasingly globalized world, there has been a systematic push to reform higher education in an effort to “respond to the changing demands of the twenty-first century. ... Today, and in the years to come, college graduates need higher levels of learning and knowledge as well as strong intellectual and practical skills to navigate this more demanding environment successfully and responsibly” <http://www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm>. These goals are embodied by the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), a “national advocacy, campus action, and research initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first century liberal education—for individuals and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality” (https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/Introduction_to_LEAP.pdf, p. 1).

Launched in 2005 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), LEAP focuses on systemic change to higher education and is organized around a set of four broad Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) that emphasize the importance of a liberal education for all students and reject a divided approach to higher education whereby some students receive a liberal education, while others received narrowly focused training in one or more fields. The program was originally launched in three states—California, Oregon,

and Wisconsin—in an effort to review general education programs in higher education, and expand and implement practices that led to greater student success, particularly for underrepresented populations. My campus is located in one of these pioneer states and has been involved in the LEAP initiative since its inception. LEAP has since been expanded to include Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Utah, and Virginia, with adoption by additional states expected. Collaborative teams comprised of constituents from public and private institutions work with AAC&U to identify and implement pedagogical changes across the curriculum that lead to greater student success.

Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) and High-Impact Practices

LEAP “engages the public with core questions about what really matters in college; connects employers and educational leaders as they make the case for the importance of liberal education in the global economy and in our diverse democracy; and helps all students achieve the essential learning outcomes.” The ELOs are broadly defined and are meant to be incorporated throughout the curriculum. In LEAP there are four primary ELOs:

- Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
- Intellectual and practical skills

- Personal and social responsibility
- Integrative and applied learning (www.aacu.org/leap/)

Further, through an in-depth study of a variety of educational practices that have been shown to significantly impact student success, Kuh (2008) has identified a series of high-impact practices that can be employed by colleges and universities as they integrate the LEAP initiative into their curricula. While many of these practices in and of themselves are not new, the novelty of LEAP is found in “the collective effort to document the impact of these practices and the effort to see them as part of a larger ‘sea change’ in undergraduate education” (McNair & Albertine, 2012). HIPs include the following:

- Seminars and experiences
- Common intellectual experiences
- Learning communities
- Writing-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Diversity/global learning
- Service learning or community-based learning
- Internships
- Capstone courses and projects (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm>)

As we can see, one of the primary high-impact practices of LEAP is service learning, which has a long history as a pedagogical tool that provides instructors and students with a way to cross the boundary between the campus and surrounding community. In doing so, students are given an invaluable opportunity to reinforce knowledge gained in the classroom by serving the community and interacting with people from diverse backgrounds. This affords them with a beneficial learning experience while meeting several of the essential learning outcomes expressly defined in the LEAP initiative, as well as meeting several additional departmental and institutional goals.

Project Overview and Objectives

My campus is part of the first state system to partner with AAC&U as a LEAP state and as such, has served as a model to other campuses as they participate in this initiative. Since its inception, collaboration and shared experience have been vital to the advancement of the LEAP initiative on campuses across the nation. In fact, according

to Albertine (2011), “the initiative provides opportunities for faculty to join other campus, system, and community leaders in shared work—top down and bottom up, together, with a view from the inside of systems and campuses, and from the outside in” (p. 5).

Working from this point of departure, this paper provides a case study that looks at the use of service-learning projects in my own advanced Spanish grammar and composition courses and evaluates student reflections on those campus-community experiences. Specifically:

1. I will identify several ways in which service learning meets various educational objectives valued by my institution, showing how it is an ideal way to teach diversity perspectives in the college classroom while achieving several specified outcomes of the LEAP initiative that are related to diversity and global perspectives.
2. Using student feedback, I will illustrate student reflections and learning related to three specific areas of diversity: linguistic diversity, cultural diversity, and racial diversity.

The Importance of Teaching Diversity Perspectives

LEAP places an emphasis on the examination of human cultures, as well as understanding and appreciating the diversity of the human experience. This is illustrated through the ELOs that stress intercultural knowledge and competence (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cmf>). The notion of active involvement with diverse communities, in my estimation, is best achieved through the use of service learning, one of the identified high-impact practices recommended by LEAP. As a practitioner of service learning throughout my 15-year career in higher education, I have found it to be invaluable for not only exposing students to diverse cultures, but much more importantly, providing them with the vehicle to create meaningful interactions with the peoples of those cultures. It also allows them to engage in thoughtful reflection on both the shared experiences and differences between themselves and those from other backgrounds.

The ability to relate to and respect others also lies at the heart of the mission statements of various colleges and universities across this nation. An example of this is seen in my own institution, as well as peer institutions across our state. At the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, respect

for diversity is highlighted in the University's Value and Mission statements. One of five values articulated by the university is a "commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives," while our mission clearly states that we are:

...(c)ommitted to the development of the individual, the growth of personal and professional integrity and respect for diversity and global perspectives. These are met by providing academic and co-curricular programs that emphasize the pursuit of knowledge and understanding and a commitment to service within a safe and secure environment (<http://www.uww.edu/registrar/catalogs/12-14/mission.html>).

Likewise, the University of Wisconsin System schools have a shared core mission statement that expounds on nine missions common to all participating four-year institutions. The eighth item listed articulates that each university shall "serve the needs of women, minority, disadvantaged, disabled and non-traditional students and seek racial and ethnic diversification of the student body and the professional faculty and staff" (www.uww.edu/registrar/catalogs/12-14/mission.html). Clearly, fostering a respect for diverse perspectives and creating an inclusive environment that is respectful and understanding of difference is essential to the University of Wisconsin System mission and those of many other universities across the United States. How that mission is carried out, however, varies greatly across schools, colleges, departments, and programs. It is my position that one of the most effective ways to achieve these goals is through the incorporation of service-learning projects that engage students with the local and regional communities and provide the opportunity to meaningfully interact with diverse populations.

Service Learning in Advanced Spanish: Integrating Diversity through Immersion Experiences

Background

According to Wehling (2006), "Apart from studying abroad, service learning is one of the best approaches to combine praxis and knowledge in second language acquisition and cross-cultural competence" (p. 300). Further, "'doing' is a kind of engagement and has been shown to be positively associated with student achievement" (Miller, 2009, p. 6). At the heart of service learning is this

very notion of "doing", or putting into action the lessons presented in the classroom in a way that allows students to personally experience the material in a way that is often not possible within the confines of the classroom. Kuh further affirms the likelihood that students participating in service learning and other types of experiential learning will "experience diversity through contact with people who are different from themselves," adding that "these experiences often challenge students to develop new ways of thinking about and responding immediately to novel circumstances as they work side-by-side with peers on intellectual and practical tasks, inside and outside the classroom, on and off campus" ("Why Integration...", p. 28).

Cognizant of all of the benefits of service learning and its importance as a methodology to teach diversity perspectives in foreign-language classrooms, I have worked over the course of my career to integrate service learning into my Spanish language courses, from beginning-level to advanced-. Because of the fluid nature of this pedagogical method, it has been a work in progress. However, each semester provided lessons to be integrated into future semesters, all with the goal of continually improving partnerships with community agencies, increasing learning and immersion opportunities, and incorporating meaningful reflection activities that maximize student learning. Because of the rigorous nature of this type of teaching pedagogy and the need to continually update, I have decided to focus my efforts more recently on complete integration of service learning into my Advanced Spanish grammar course (5th semester). The result is an iteration of a service-learning model that is well-integrated with the curriculum and has well-established partnerships throughout the community, thus affording students a wide-range of choices in terms of project selection. What follows is first an overview of the structure of service learning in my course, followed by a qualitative analysis of the reflective feedback from one sample of 70 participants in a recent semester, illustrating the impact service learning has had on them, specifically highlighting the strides made in the arena of diversity perspectives. I analyzed data collected through a reflective composition, a mid-term oral presentation, a roundtable discussion, and summative written student evaluations of their experiences. The results illustrate that students developed a new-found respect for and understanding of diversity through their participation in various service-learning projects, and in the process, met some of the ELOs specified by the LEAP Initiative.

Service-Learning Model

In a typical semester, there are 20-25 students in each section of my Advanced Spanish course. I generally teach 3 sections of this class each semester. The course encompasses a grammar review that has as its focus the refinement of typically difficult topics for second-language learners. We also work intensively on writing skills, incorporating ever-more-advanced syntax and lexicon through multiple writing assignments, with each undergoing rigorous review and revision. Apart from this grammatical and structural focus, we strive to develop conversational skills through daily discussions about relevant topics to Spanish-language study. Lastly, I integrate articles and short literary selections to begin to introduce students to both oral and written literary analysis. In a rigorous course such as this, it may seem at first glance that the addition of service learning would overwhelm the language learner with yet another requirement. However, I have found that service learning has the opposite effect on my students; it integrates all of the topics covered in class through practical application, and as a result, students often show increased interest and motivation in the classroom, striving to improve their cultural and linguistic knowledge so that they perform better in the community. This positive-feedback loop was an unexpected, but very positive, result that I witnessed in a majority of students and is affirmed through their feedback.

After experimenting with offering service learning as an optional assignment in my courses, I have ultimately decided to make it a mandatory element of my course for all students, largely because of the positive results I observed in previous semesters in students who chose the service-learning option versus those who participated in the alternative (attending cultural events of their choice related to the Latino community). I found that those who were actively involved in service as opposed to being passive observers at various cultural events (movies, art exhibits, plays, concerts, speeches, etc.) reflected more positively on the experiences, saw the connection to pedagogical goals more clearly, and exhibited a greater understanding of diversity at the end of the class. As a result, my students are now required to complete a minimum of 15 hours of service learning throughout the 16-week semester; most go on to complete 20-30 hours, on average, and many continue beyond the semester requirement.

In order to maximize the potential benefit of service learning, I believe it is important to allow

students to have some control over the process of selecting a service site so that they can find the best fit for their own personal and professional goals. With this in mind, I have created several long-standing partnerships with a number of non-profit groups and programs in the community that welcome my students as service-learning participants and are cognizant of the pedagogical goals I have for them, making them active partners in the educational process of service learning. Among the established partnerships are several literacy agencies that provide ESL classes, emergent literacy training, citizenship exam review, and other services. The most well-established connection is with a County Literacy Council, and nearly a quarter of my students choose to fill a role in one of the aforementioned projects. Other agencies include a local ESL program, where students help provide bilingual activities for the children of the adult learners in the program; as well as another County Literacy Council, which offers ESL and citizenship classes in an adjacent county. Closer to campus, many students also choose to develop and teach a basic Spanish course to the children in the 4K program at the University Children's Center and its satellite program, held at a local elementary school. In addition to these opportunities, a number of students complete projects at a local health clinic that provides free medical service once per week, serving a predominantly Spanish-speaking population. Despite the numerous opportunities listed above where I have already established a contact, several students each semester choose their own projects in agencies that interest them in other ways. These include schools, churches, a local food pantry, and social service agencies, among others.

Because of this multi-faceted approach, it is imperative to hold a one-on-one consultation session with each student at the beginning of the semester to aid in the selection of an agency and a project that fits each student's educational goals, while still addressing the pedagogical goals for the course, which include the following: (1) practice language skills while interacting with Hispanic individuals at various community agencies; (2) gain insight into the diversity of Hispanic cultures, particularly those represented in the counties surrounding the University; (3) perform a valuable service to the community; (4) begin to explore answers to specific issues discussed in class, including questions about bilingual education, the use of Spanish and/or English in our country, the English-only debate, and immigration; and finally, (5) begin to conceptualize ways to forge

cooperative relationships with Spanish-speakers in the community. These goals are explicitly outlined for students at the inception of the project and are reinforced throughout the semester, particularly during various reflective assessments.

Methodology

For the purposes of this specific study, I analyzed students' written and oral reflections about their service-learning experiences during a recent semester. There were 70 students participants in this study, which was also the total number of students in my three sections of Advanced Spanish in the semester of this study. Students in this course are a fairly representative cross-section of our campus population and the semester of this study was no exception. According to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (www.uww.edu/irp/factsandfigures/enrollemnt), approximately 82% of our student body is comprised of state residents, with 17% from other U.S. states, and approximately 1% from other countries. In terms of ethnic and racial background, the majority (85%) of students self-identify as white (non-Hispanic), with the remaining students identifying as African-American (4.8%), Hispanic (3.8%), American Indian (0.2%), Southeast Asian American (0.9%), other Asian American (0.8%); the remainder identify as two or more ethnicities (<http://www.uww.edu/ir/student/demographics>). The majority of students also self-reported little to no experience with people from diverse backgrounds prior to entering my course.

Students began their service projects within the first three weeks of the semester and continued in the project for a minimum of one semester. The minimum commitment was 15 hours of service throughout the semester. On average, the students in this study volunteered 16 hours, with some spending as many as 25 hours throughout the semester at their selected site. Throughout the semester, students were presented with several opportunities to reflect upon their experiences and tie them to the specific course learning objectives. These were incorporated into the course as required course assignments. Students:

1. Completed a reflective essay (2 pages) during the first month of the semester (week 4).
2. Gave a 5-minute mid-term oral presentation at the mid-point of the semester (week 8).
3. Participated in a round-table discussion at the end of the semester (week 12).

4. Filled out a post-service written evaluation in which they were asked to succinctly describe the impact that service learning had on them as a person and as a student (week 16).

In each instance, students were explicitly asked to reflect upon their perception about and experiences with people from racially, linguistically, and culturally distinct backgrounds. I took care to integrate these reflective activities at different points in the semester to have a sense of the changes in thoughts and perceptions over the course of the semester. I viewed the samples holistically to observe any changes that occurred during the service-learning experience. Then, I performed a qualitative study of these four reflective pieces to analyze the impact that service learning had on my students' perspectives about linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity, particularly when pertaining to Spanish language and cultures. When summarizing the results below, the general summaries draw upon my observations from this holistic, qualitative analysis of all of the samples taken as a whole, with the goal of describing overarching tendencies and trends in the areas of linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity. I then included quotes from students' post-service written evaluations to illustrate specific examples of how these general results impacted individual students.

Much like the results reported by Tilley-Lubbs (2004), my students "experienced changes in perspectives resulting in blurring of Otherness" (p. 135). The dichotomy of "us-them" showed clear signs of erosion as students grappled with reconciling previously held beliefs (often stereotypical) in the face of cooperative experiences that allied them with individuals with whom they had previously had few interactions.

Results

Linguistic Diversity

The most significant area of impact was in the realm of linguistic ability. The following comment succinctly summarizes the sentiments of a majority of students:

The service-learning project has brought me more confidence with the Spanish language. While preparing the lessons and presenting them to the children, I realized that I know more Spanish than I thought. To be able to teach a different language brings you the confidence needed to

advance. We are of the select few that are able to understand a different language in America. It is good to learn another language in America, especially because of its mix of different cultures. The children we are teaching are already gaining a better understand of the society around them and how they can help to make it function at a better level.

Nearly every student who used Spanish in his/her service project reported overcoming a significant linguistic barrier by the end of the term. Most students at this level of study have had little or no opportunity to speak Spanish outside of the classroom prior to participating in service learning. They reported feeling nervous, anxious, and insecure in their communicative abilities at the outset of the project. However, after learning that, even in imperfect Spanish, they were comprehensible and were able to make a positive impact in the lives of real people in the community, they reported a significant increase in confidence in their speaking abilities and more significantly still, a desire to continue studying Spanish and interacting with the Spanish-speaking community to improve their abilities. Numerous students reported that after the completion of the semester, they made the decision to declare either a major or minor in Spanish, with the goal of becoming bilingual professionals in a number of fields.

Another positive result of participating in service learning was that students had the chance to meet and speak with people with a variety of accents and those who spoke different registers of Spanish, ranging from an informal, slang-filled Spanish often spoken by teenagers and young adults to a professional, formal Spanish used by several of the clients served and the majority of the volunteer coordinators in the service agencies. Consequently, students were forced to negotiate meaning and were challenged to activate all of their previous knowledge to make themselves understood. This required the use of circumlocution, an essential communicative skill that students need to develop as they strive for increased fluency. In the case of students serving as ESL tutors, they witnessed the language-learning process from the perspective of instructor and learned valuable lessons in patience, not only towards their “students”, but for their own language learning process. They now understand that becoming proficient in a language is a process that takes significant effort and time.

A number of students also commented on the

considerable language barrier that they witnessed at their service sites and showed compassion for individuals who struggled to communicate in a language they didn’t understand, especially after having been in that position themselves. In many cases, students who had, at the beginning of the semester, decreed that all Spanish-speaking immigrants need to “learn our language” began to consider the complexity of the issue and contemplate ways to address the language barrier that often exists between Spanish and English monolinguals in this country. As a result, they proposed potential solutions to the issue, often inserting themselves into the process, thus shattering the “us-them” dichotomy and proposing a cooperative solution. They asserted that it is the responsibility of both Spanish-speaking immigrants and U.S. citizens to work together to solve the issues confronting both groups today. For instance, several students suggested that more English-speaking adults take Spanish classes in order to learn the language and cultures of Spanish-speakers so that they avoid making judgments based on stereotypes and ignorance. Another echoed this sentiment, lamenting the apathy in our nation regarding learning a second (or third, etc.) language, particularly when viewed in comparison to other nations where bi/multi-lingualism is the norm. Other students proposed that one way to overcome the aforementioned language barrier was for our government to offer widespread ESL classes to new immigrants and for U.S. citizens to take a more active role in these programs to aid in language instruction, much like they did through their service projects. Students cautioned, however, that even though they saw language classes (both ESL and second-language) as one method to overcome the linguistic barrier in this country, they felt strongly that immigrants should not give up their cultural identity in the process because of the potential benefit all citizens can gain from coexisting in a diverse society.

Cultural Diversity

This cooperative language continued in students’ discussion of what they learned in relation to cultural diversity. They began to envision adaptation and acclimation as bidirectional processes, asserting that it is the responsibility of all citizens to take the steps necessary to adapt to our ever-changing society and the people in it. Students expressed amazement, admiration, and respect for the people they met and the cultural traditions that they shared. They also began to see commonalities

and parallels between their own lives and cultural traditions and those of the people with whom they worked, especially after they took the time to learn about life in the U.S. through the perspective of the immigrants they met. One student, whose parents were against her studying Spanish and volunteering in a predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhood, reflected that after the experience, she found shared values and experiences with the immigrants she tutored in her ESL class and learned a significant amount about the challenges related to the immigration process through the eyes of immigrants. She found this tremendously valuable and commented that she no longer could understand her parents' dislike of immigrants and concluded that it was borne out of ignorance, fear, and a lack of interaction with people from diverse backgrounds. She strove for something different for herself and decided to not only major in Spanish, but has made plans to study abroad in a Spanish-speaking country.

The theme of breaking the cycle of prejudice was echoed by numerous students, who referred to the importance of sharing the information they had learned with young children. Those who worked in projects where they served in some sort of mentoring capacity for children envisioned themselves as cultural and linguistic liaisons, responsible for teaching the next generation Spanish language skills, as well as imparting an appreciation and respect for cultural diversity. They expressed hope that this would help forge a greater respect for multiculturalism and help combat prejudice. In fact, one student was so profoundly impacted by her position as a volunteer in a bilingual classroom that she has decided to change her focus to bilingual education, sharing that she learned a tremendous amount about diversity and other life lessons from her students and was truly sad to have the experience end. Yet another student mentioned that the interactions he had had with Latinos during his 16-week project were more numerous and meaningful than those he had had in his entire 20 years of life in the small town where he was raised. He, too, spoke of plans to pursue Spanish as a field of study to be able to incorporate it into his future career in business.

Racial Diversity

For many, like the young man mentioned above, this experience is truly the first time that students have had the chance to have meaningful interactions with members of a different racial group than their own. As was previously mentioned,

85% of the student population in 2012 identified as "White" (non-Hispanic). Consequently, it is not uncommon for a majority of students in my Spanish courses to be Caucasian and of European descent. A fair number of students also hail from small towns around the state in which the University is located, also likely to have populations that are predominantly white, and consequently, they have had little or no experience with racial diversity prior to entering college. These facts, in my opinion, make service-learning experiences, such as the one outlined here, even more vital for not only teaching about diversity perspectives, but for providing experience with diversity. The reflections indicate that this is indeed the case, and for a number of students, the results are eye-opening. Service learning is often the first time that these individuals have found themselves in the position of racial or linguistic minority and by experiencing first-hand the resultant disorientation that often accompanies that position, they tend to display more empathy for people who are racial minorities in our society. Students also gained greater insight into immigration as an issue and showed much greater compassion for immigrants from Latin America.

Discussion

LEAP Learning Outcomes

Throughout this process, students made great strides toward achieving several of the ELO's specified in the LEAP Initiative. Most notably, the results illustrate that students came out of this experience with a greater "knowledge of human cultures..." specifically, the diverse Hispanic cultures that are prevalent in our area, as well as their own cultural backgrounds. Further, through in-depth reflection about their direct experiences with people from diverse backgrounds, I saw greater "intercultural knowledge and competence," which was expressed through more cooperative language that broke down the "us-them" binary and began to shift the way students situated themselves in relation to other cultures. The division and boundary between themselves and those from varied backgrounds seemed more tenuous and less defined. Most encouraging, perhaps, was the expressed intent from a majority of participants to continue to seek out additional opportunities that would provide for connection and interaction with those from linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Areas for Improvement

While these results reflect the experiences of a

majority of my students, there were a few students who did not report such profound changes as a result of service learning or who did not enjoy the experience for a variety of reasons. The chief complaint came from students who, for one reason or another, found themselves not using the Spanish language as much as they had hoped while on site. They wanted more challenge and opportunity to interact with Hispanic individuals and expressed regret either for their site selection or for circumstances on-site that didn't allow them ample opportunity to speak Spanish (for example, they may have spent time writing or reading Spanish or doing other language-related tasks). Others expressed disappointment with their supervisors, feeling as though they did not challenge them to use their skills on site to the extent that they had hoped they would. This was especially the case for a few students who volunteered at one particular school and found themselves observing more than actively engaging with students. The last complaint I heard was from a few students who chose sites outside of the city where the University is located and felt that at times, the time spent traveling to and from their sites detracted from the experience. They requested more opportunities in the city itself, which is something I am continually working to enhance through new and expanded partnerships. Overall, however, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive and this constructive criticism will only serve to improve the program for future semesters.

Recommendations

Despite the strides made in regards to using service learning as a high-impact practice to teach students about the diversity of the human experience and thereby incorporate several of the LEAP ELOs in my Spanish curriculum, questions still remain that I hope to explore in future semesters. As I mentioned at the outset, I take a pluralistic approach to service learning, allowing students to choose from a wide variety of projects to suit their individual needs. I know that some other practitioners structure their service learning around a single, common project for all members of the class, which is something I have yet to try. In thinking about the two approaches, I can see benefits and drawbacks to both styles. I think it would be particularly enlightening to repeat this study in the future using the common-project approach to compare results. A second area of inquiry that I intend to pursue revolves around the long-term impact of service learning. As I noted in the literature and demonstrated in my own results,

service learning has been shown to positively affect students' views about individuals from different backgrounds, making them more sensitive toward and tolerant of diversity. However, there is little that I have seen in the literature discussing how long these results hold true. I have not yet had the opportunity to undertake a longitudinal study to measure student viewpoints and actions related to diversity at different intervals post-service learning, but it raises important questions that I intend to study in the future. For example, do students' linguistic gains continue or do they disappear once they are again in a traditional language classroom devoid of conversational opportunities with heritage Spanish speakers? Does professed open-mindedness about multiculturalism actually translate when applied to real-world situations? Do students act respectfully towards individuals of diverse backgrounds in future classes, jobs, volunteer sites, and other situations? For how long does this respect for diversity continue? Although I am optimistic that the gains reported in these areas will continue to positively impact both the students and those around them, I don't have any concrete evidence to support that supposition and as such, it leaves open futures avenues for research.

Based on the feedback received from students, as well as my own reflections on this project, I have compiled a list of considerations for future service-learning projects so that I can continue to enhance the experience for all involved. In general, the following are recommendations for any practitioner to strengthen the learning experience for all students:

- Continue to work with partner agencies to reiterate student learning goals to ensure that the on-site experience is positive for all participants. This includes reiterating the goal of utilizing Spanish-language skills in meaningful ways and allowing students to participate actively in the agency activities. Specifically, I would recommend a mid-semester site-visit to address any questions or concerns that arise.
- Ask both students and community partners to share any issues or questions that they have on a more frequent basis. One idea would be to incorporate a comment/question section on the monthly timesheet that students and supervisors fill out to make sure that I can respond more quickly to issues that arise.
- Continually work to develop and expand

local and regional partnerships so that students do not feel the need to choose an agency whose distance distracts from the learning experience.

- Add a quantitative survey to the post-service evaluation form so that, in addition to qualitative feedback from students, I also receive numerical data to measure several indicators of student learning and success.
- Develop a similar evaluation form for each agency to complete at the end of each semester. Currently, I ask supervisors for feedback via email, but I believe that a structured evaluation form might provide more meaningful measures of success.

Despite some of the drawbacks identified by students and myself, this study does show that in the context of a semester- or year-long class, service learning has proven to be an effective pedagogical method for teaching diversity perspectives in Spanish language classes. It illustrates precisely why service learning is such a high-impact practice: the experiential nature of these projects drive home lessons presented in class and make them “real” and tangible in a way that other methods simply do not. In the process, students are actively involved with diverse communities and encounter real-world challenges that allow them to learn more about human cultures and develop greater intercultural awareness and competence. This also gives them the opportunity to develop a well-rounded approach to education through valuable campus-community collaborations. According to Crutcher (2011), an education centered on the LEAP ELO’s provides students with the opportunity to hone the skills necessary to function as productive citizens in the world outside of college. He asserts that “a liberal education by design builds both capacity (rich knowledge, high-level skills, social imagination) and commitment (an examined sense of ethical and civic responsibility) to create and test responsible solutions—and to learn with and from others, not just ourselves” (p. 20). I would assert that this description is also apt for service learning itself, in that the give-and-take that occurs in the collaborative space between classroom and community challenges students to actively engage not only as students, but as citizens, both of the university community and of the diverse community that surrounds them, providing the foundation for future interaction, understanding, and partnership.

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