

Executive Summary of Fall 2013-Spring 2014 Course Survey Results

Since 2009, the Office of Service-Learning (OSL) has administered a voluntary, end-of-course survey to students in service-learning courses. The content and items were substantively reworked in Summer 2013 to better address questions of interest relating to service-learning course activities and outcomes. The following provides a snapshot of information from the current survey.

Who took the survey?

546 students in 43 courses incorporating service-learning (SL) during Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 responded to the end-of-course survey. Respondents were:

- 57% female.
- 60.8% White, 9.9% Asian, 6.8% Black/African-American, 2.2% Hispanic/Latino.
- Mean age 22 (ranging from 17 to 50).
- 6.1% first-year, 8.1% second-year, 23.2% third-year, 44.4% fourth-/fifth-year, 12.5% master's, 4.2% doctoral, 0.2% professional programs, and 1.3% other.

Students reported having taken between zero and 10 previous courses with SL at UGA (mean, 0.79, SD 1.27) and outside of UGA (mean, 1.20; SD, 1.76). Additionally, 66.6% reported already volunteering in the community before taking this course.

Students generally reported that the SL component of the course was required (83%) rather than an optional assignment; and that they knew the course included SL when registering for it (70.7%).

What were the service activities?

Service activities reported included educational programs for children (56.9%) and adults (19.3%), projects (10.1%) or research (10.8%) benefiting an agency; environmental restoration (9.2%); language translation/interpretation (7.7%); food security/anti-hunger activities (6.1%); working with animals (7.2%); building/construction (4.3%); and other activities. Students reported taking part in their service activity as part of a small group (53.7%), as an individual (45.4%), and/or as a whole class (28.3%).

These service activities involved students in working with community members different from themselves in terms of age (78.9%), race (69.8%), economic background (67.0%), culture (59.9%), gender (59.5%), and ability/disability (22.5%).

Students estimated that 35.9% of their in-class time over the course of the semester was spent on service-learning (range 0-100%; SD 28.9); and that they spent an average of 26 hours (range, 0-300; SD 24.3) on the service-learning outside of class time. They estimated that their course instructor was on-site with them for off-campus service activities 46.9% of the time (range, 0-100%, SD 41.6).

52.6% reported that the students had the primary responsibility for selecting the community partner or making the service placement, while 46.1% reported that the instructor had that responsibility. Most service was centered in Athens (82.5%), but also in other parts of the state, other states, internationally, and online. Also, 85.2% reported that their service included off-campus activities.

What did students learn?

Student responses indicated that taking the service-learning courses was a positive experience with substantial benefit to themselves in several areas.

Consistent with prior versions of the survey and with other research studies across the country, the results demonstrate that UGA students report strong learning outcomes across a range of domains. For instance, following are the percentage of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that the service-learning component of their course led to the following outcomes, as well as direct quotes from open-ended responses.

Academic Learning:

- The service-learning component of this course...
 - Helped me see how the material covered in this course can be useful in everyday life or other situations. 84.9%
 - Helped me to develop a greater sense of my personal responsibility for my own learning. 81.8%
 - Helped me better understand the subject matter of this course. 80.1%
 - Helped me to develop my problem-solving and critical thinking skills. 74.4%
- “It is much more effective to learn by doing than by reading and discussing.” (Student in MUSI 3450S)
- “I really enjoyed the service learning portion of this class. It really helped us apply what we have learned during the course.” (Student in ENGL 4695S)
- “I learned so much about the culture behind the language of Spanish in the United States. I wish I could repeat this course over and over again.” (Student in SPAN 4090S)

Self-Awareness, Personal Learning, and Professional Skill Development:

- The service-learning component of this course...
 - Helped me enhance my leadership skills. 82.8%
 - Helped me define my personal strengths and weaknesses. 78.6%
 - Enhanced my ability to work as a member of a team. 72.1%
 - Has made me more marketable in my chosen profession. 68.6%
 - Helped me clarify my personal values. 65.0%
 - Assisted me in defining my major or which profession I want to enter. 49.2%
- “Service-learning has helped increase my cultural capacity for social work and better prepare me for my future career.” (Student in IHDD 5720S)
- “I really developed a love for community service in this class. I never knew what a social entrepreneur was before this class, however that’s now what I plan to be.” (Student in FCID 3700S)
- “I was privileged to have an opportunity to work with the Department of Justice. I was given my own set of cases (4) to work on, and drafted briefs and motions on those cases from start to finish. I even got the chance to do a moot oral argument on one of the briefs I wrote. I felt like

an actual lawyer, and not a student. I think it may be difficult to adjust to going back to class after this.” (Student in JURI 5973S)

Citizenship and Community Outcomes:

- The service-learning component of this course...
 - Provided real benefit to some segment of the community. 87.7%
 - Helped me to gain more knowledge about the community with which I worked and the issues that the community faces. 87.0%
 - Made me more aware of my responsibilities as a member of the community. 80.0%
 - Helped me reconsider some of my attitudes about social problems. 72.6%
 - Helped me to develop my citizenship skills. 67.6%
- “It feels great to help my community, and I will continue to volunteer after this class is over.” (Student in ENGL 4695S)
- “I appreciate the way that this course allowed me to interact with the community in Athens that was not collegiate. So often we have the ability to invest in UGA as a school, yet miss out on the bountiful opportunities to get involved with the Athens community as a whole. Overall this was a challenging yet extremely positive experience.” (Student in SPAN 4090S)
- “While I thought I was simply going to fulfill hours required by this service learning class, I was actually fulfilling a need in the community. This is the essence, the beauty, and sort of impact service learning has!” (Student in ENTO 3300S)

Students also identified additional benefits to taking service-learning courses, for instance agreeing that “The service-learning component of the course positively influenced my intention to complete my degree” (73.5%); and that “My relationship with the course instructor or teaching assistant was more positive as a result of the service-learning component” (68.9%).

Not surprisingly, almost all respondents (89.9%) agreed that “UGA should offer service-learning courses for all students who are interested”!