1. Executive Summary

In 2008-2009 the Office of Service Learning was relaunched and reorganized. A new director started in August 2008. Due to the transitional post-Katrina period (05F-08S), service learning at Loyola was characterized by some disarray at the beginning of the year. Primary activities included outreach to faculty, students and community partners; reevaluation of program goals; development of new procedures and policies; documentation/cataloging of existing service learning activity; and other significant restructuring.

2. Unit Identification or Profile Summary

2.1 The Office of Service Learning supports the development and implementation of service learning and community-based learning experiences in academic courses and programs of study at Loyola University New Orleans. Its goal is to bring education to life by connecting the classroom to community needs. OSL supports and enacts Loyola’s Jesuit mission of forming students toward social responsibility and a concern for justice and the common good.

2.2 OSL reports to the Office of Academic Affairs, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. OSL does not oversee extracurricular, non-course based service activities at Loyola, although OSL staff work closely with those who do. Because OSL focuses strictly on academic, course-based service activities, its primary clients are Loyola faculty members. OSL is located on the first floor of Bobet Hall.

2.2.1 1 full-time director. 1 Federal Work Study student worker (8-10 hours/week). Dr. Carol Jeandron, Loyola’s former service learning director, lives in Nashville and was on retainer for 10 hours per week and provided occasional consulting.

2.2.2 In 2008-2009, 15 Loyola faculty members taught a service learning course.

2.2.3 In 2008-2009, 322 undergraduate students did service learning for an academic course.

2.2.4 In 2010-2011, 3 graduate students did service learning for an academic course.

2.2.5 NA

2.2.6 NA

3. Assessment

3.1 As part of its relaunch this year, OSL devised a provisional assessment plan combining surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The goals have been to
identify focus areas for future, more exhaustive assessment efforts, and to
determine faculty, student and community priorities for program improvement.

3.2 OSL’s goals for 2008-2009 included: (a) provide oversight and management for
existing service learning courses while (b) implementing new policies and
procedures and (c) standardizing these policies and procedures across courses,
departments and colleges. OSL had the following additional goals: (d) cultivate a
new corps of partner agencies and lay the groundwork for lasting, mutually
beneficial partnerships with these agencies; (e) bring renewed visibility to
Loyola’s community engagement efforts; (f) redevelop the service learning
website; (g) develop training opportunities and workshops for service learning
faculty.

3.3 Student learning outcomes for 2008-2009 included: (a) ability to make
connections between classroom material and out-of-class service learning
experiences; (b) awareness of social problems and ability to articulate possible
causes and solutions; (c) understanding of social justice; and (d) critical thinking.

3.4 At the end of 2008-2009, OSL administered a short 15-question survey to service
learning students, and a separate short 10-question survey to community partners.
The goal was to identify focus areas for future, more exhaustive assessment
efforts. Another significant assessment activity undertaken in 2008-2009 was
individual interviews with over 45 members of Loyola’s faculty. The group
included faculty members from all ranks, most departments, all colleges, varying
years of service at Loyola and varying levels of SL experience. The goal of these
interviews was to determine faculty priorities and desires relative to SL. Finally,
the director held over 75 meetings with community organizations. The group
included organizations of all sizes, focus areas and levels of establishment. It
also included past partners, current partners and prospective partners. The goal
was to assess community needs and priorities and determine what sorts of
partnerships would be most sustainable for Loyola, as well as what policies and
procedures should govern Loyola’s community partnerships.

3.5 All assessment activities listed in 3.1 and 3.4 are directly related to community-
based learning and community-engaged activities. All assessment mechanisms
are focused on measuring outcomes and impacts related to community work.

3.6 Student surveys showed widespread satisfaction with service learning courses
and agencies. A large majority of student respondents indicated that they both
enjoyed and learned from their SL experience. Respondents also indicated a high
level of interest in taking more SL courses in the future. Responses, however,
also highlighted some areas for program improvement: (a) more transportation
support for students; (b) the need for a more structured and standardized process
for selecting and confirming SL placements and recording service time; (c)
clearer training for community partners on appropriate tasks for service learners;
and (c) more accountability between professors and agencies. All of these areas
have been partially addressed in 2008-2009 and will continue to be priorities in
the upcoming year. Community partner surveys indicated that agencies were
overwhelmingly satisfied with their relationships with Loyola and with Loyola
students. The strongest wish was for more students serving more hours at their
agencies. 45 faculty interviews were conducted. Excitement about service
learning among faculty is broad and deep, but expertise and prior experience are on the whole very low. Training, mentoring and one-on-one consulting are needed to harness this enthusiasm and transform it into pedagogical confidence. Interviews confirmed the new director’s initial impression: SL at Loyola is characterized by some disarray and very little uniformity. Clearer processes and procedures for incorporating SL, documenting service learning hours, and differentiating SL from other models (community service, internships) were needed. Moreover, faculty expressed a strong desire for more support and incentivization of service learning (for example, workshops, stipends and developmental opportunities, as well as RPT recognition). Over 75 interviews with community agencies were also conducted. These interviews revealed that (a) New Orleans’ nonprofit sector has been completely rearranged post-Katrina; (b) many new organizations are emerging (1-4 years old) and bringing dynamic, outside-the-box approaches to solving social problems; (c) most organizations cannot accurately gauge their volunteer management capacity (definition: the extent to which an organization has the knowledge, expertise, resources, policies, procedures and systems to effectively manage volunteers); (d) in the past, Loyola’s community partnerships had been short-lived, largely ad hoc – determined by the needs of specific courses, faculty, etc. – and not formalized in any written agreement, contract, or memorandum of understanding. Community agencies expressed a strong desire for ongoing, long-term partnerships and clear expectations communicated in a written document. These priorities will guide OSL’s efforts to cultivate and maintain partnerships in the coming years.

4. Summary of Achievements

4.1 OSL provided oversight, management and leadership for 28 service learning courses in eight different academic departments (representing all 4 undergraduate colleges). 325 students completed service learning in partnership with approximately 20 agencies. OSL piloted an intensive one-day workshop “Service Learning 101,” providing faculty members with a basic toolkit for starting or deepening their service learning practice. This workshop was attended by 16 full-time faculty members.

4.2 OSL helped three faculty members (Jean Meyer, ACCT, and Cathy Rogers and Valerie Andrews, CMMN) apply for and obtain Campus Compact Course Development Mini-Grants to improve service learning courses. The Director of OSL documented 109 hours of labor as in-kind match toward these mini-grants.

4.3 Kelly Brotzman successfully re-established Loyola’s connection to Louisiana Campus Compact and applied for a full-time Americorps/VISTA position at no cost to Loyola through LACC. This position should begin in August 2009 and will help build capacity for course management, student support, and community partnership-building. Kelly was also awarded the Alvaro Alcazar Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Pursuit of Social Justice by the members of LUCAP. She attended the biennial AJCU Service Learning directors meeting at
Fairfield University and reestablished Loyola’s connection to this vital network, which was founded through Loyola’s efforts in 2002.

4.4 1 student served as a work-study in the Office of Service Learning. 2 students obtained jobs from their service learning agencies. Another 2 students obtained internships through service learning connections.

4.5 In 2008-2009, approximately 75 nonprofit agencies were interviewed and investigated. The result was very high visibility for Loyola’s relaunched service learning program and a high level of buy-in from partners. As partnerships have begun to be formalized and expectations clarified through written documents and in-person meetings, the community has responded with tremendous support and enthusiasm.

5. Budget for previous year and upcoming year’s goals

5.1 FY 2008-2009: $11,000 operating. Supplemented by $3000 deposit from Center for Faculty Development to offer faculty seminar/training. Total $14,000. $77,444 salaries ($60,000 director, $17,444 retainer for Carol Jeandron, director emeritus).

5.1.1 During the current fiscal year, $3,000 was allocated to OSL from the QEP budget by the Center for Faculty Development (Melanie McKay). This was used to fund OSL’s faculty development efforts, which are a key priority in Loyola’s Quality Enhancement Plan. In 2008-2009, OSL’s operating budget was $11,000. Only due to the QEP allocation was the office able to fund any faculty development efforts. Allocations funding faculty development initiatives must become a permanent addition. Of the $11,000 operating pool, approximately $1000 was spent on the placement fair; $3000 was spent on office supplies; $2500 on printing and duplication; $900 on books, research publications and subscriptions; $500 on professional development; $1200 on a pilot program to provide transportation support (in the form of RTA tokens) to service learning students; $800 on postage; $500 on equipment and supplies for SL projects; and $600 on mileage and travel and entertainment costs associated with community meetings.

5.2 OSL has been informed that all centers within Academic Affairs will experience a 10% operating budget reduction for FY2009-2010 ($9900). Allocation from QEP budget for faculty development efforts may be continued. 10% time retainer for director emeritus will expire. Salary budget will be limited to one full-time position.

5.2.1 OSL’s expenditures can only increase as service learning courses increase and the overall volume of service learning activity continues to grow. From fall 08 to spring 09, OSL experienced a doubling on both counts.
OSL’s $9900 operating budget will be insufficient to support its projected growth, since the FY08-09 budgets were only sufficient because office furniture, computers, and other startup infrastructure/equipment costs were paid for by the Office of the Provost. Staffing issues for 09-10 will be greatly aided by the Americorps/VISTA partnership. Other large but needed expenditures – software and technology to assist with tracking and assessment, additional workstations, etc – will have to be deferred.

6. Planning and goals for upcoming year

6.1 Strategic planning in OSL has fallen into two distinct categories: (1) the formation of long-term goals guiding the design and delivery of OSL’s programs and services; and (2) strategic planning for community partnerships. The former is following the institution-wide strategic planning process (Loyola 2012) and will continue to be fleshed out to support Loyola’s strategic priorities. The latter has begun through consultation with community partners, faculty and students. Several possible strategic priorities have been identified (Latinos, arts-related organizations, adult literacy organizations, the Freret corridor, and the Central City neighborhood). At least two will be selected for prioritization within our program within next 2 months.

6.2 As we have relaunched this year, OSL’s primary strategic priority has been to focus on growing the quality of service learning at Loyola as this is distinguished from, but also related to, the quantity of service learning at Loyola. This supports Loyola’s Jesuit mission, because we focus on high-impact, sustainable partnerships rather than drive-by, light-touch service, and because we focus on exciting, multidimensional learning which engages the whole student (mind, spirit, character, etc).

6.3 Program goals for 2009-2010: (a) Identify more ways to use technology to streamline service learning records, (b) re-brand OSL under the paradigm of “community-based learning”, (c) explore with key stakeholders the problem of service learning transportation, (d) effectively train, manage and supervise full-time Americorps/VISTA (recently approved through Louisiana Campus Compact); and (e) expand the number of SL courses and students by 20%.

6.4 Learning outcomes identified and measured in 2008-2009 were somewhat basic given the re-launch of the program. They included: effect of service learning on understanding of social justice; effect of service learning on students’ perception of the value and success of their in-class learning; and effect of service learning on participants’ awareness of Jesuit educational ideals. Based on surveys and interviews conducted this year, learning outcomes will be significantly expanded and much more specific for 2009-2010. Assessment efforts will focus on the connection between in-class and out-of-class learning; awareness of social problems/social justice; and sense of connection to fellow students and the larger community.
6.5 The non-Loyola community has played a central role in all stages of planning and assessment within OSL. Interviews and regular meetings with community partners, as well as survey feedback, provided the basis for this program’s re-launched priorities.

6.6 Resources needed to achieve goals for 2009-2010 include: cooperation with Residence Life on free housing arrangements for Americorps/VISTA (to address staffing needs); added computer software/hardware for Americorps/VISTA and work-study student; and either a budget sufficient to implement SL transportation solutions or full access to and a voice in designing a meaningful university-wide transportation program.

6.7 OSL’s assessment plan will include: twice-yearly surveys of service learning students; twice-yearly surveys of service learning faculty; and annual surveys of community partners. In 2009-2010, another form of assessment will include a comparative study of Loyola’s service learning program and similar programs at AJCU peer institutions.