Service Events:
World on Fire
or
Scorched Earth
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I. Common assumptions about service events are unfounded or inaccurate

II. Outcomes of service events obscure social justice concerns
National HEI Community Involvement

1990s  Quantity

2000s  Quality Accountability

2010s  Sustainable Impact

Community Service  Service Learning  Community Engagement
Evaluation of Days of Service Model (DoS)

4 Days of Service Events:
Spark, Into the Streets, Wolves on the Prowl, MLK Day

- Participant observation
  - Planning meetings
  - Event leader trainings
  - Days of Service in progress

- Interviews and focus groups
  - Staff coordinators
  - Community agency liaisons
  - Student leaders

- Document review
  - Budgets and expenses
  - Registration records
  - Schedules, agendas
  - Recruitment and promotional materials
  - Survey data from sponsoring offices, when available
  - Agency agreements
  - Agency mission statements and website content
**Campus Assumptions about DoS**

- Teaches students Jesuit values
- It’s free
- It’s easy
- It’s a gateway to more service
- Any service experience is great for students
- High participant satisfaction
- Demonstrates group’s dedication to community

- Wholesome, feel-good activity
- Sacrifice is one-sided
- Great memories
- Great press
- Tradition—expectation
- Virtuous
- Builds camaraderie
- Service activities are better than free time
DoS Evaluation Findings

• Planning
• Funding
• Reporting
- Responsibility hot potato
- Old habits die hard
- Disconnect b/w DoS advocates and implementers
- #1 priority = University convenience
- Result=supply/demand mismatch
DoS Evaluation Findings

Funding

• None or ad hoc

• No auditing or accountability
Reporting

- None or thin
- Focus on:
  - Quantity (head-counting)
  - Anecdotal student satisfaction
Key Evaluation Results

- No assessment of student outcomes

- No “Do No Harm” mentality

- No accountability to stakeholders
  - No follow-up with partners about positive/negative results

- No expectation of improvement
So What?
Exploring Assumptions and Drawing Conclusions
Exploring Assumptions: Are DoS really free?

DoS Cost Breakdown

- Transporting large groups to service sites
- T-shirts with logo
- 1-2 meals, water, snacks
- Tools for volunteers use
- Materials costs
- Event publicizing
- Student volunteer recruiting
- Host agency fees
Exploring Assumptions: Are DoS really valuable to the community?

Independent Sector’s 2011 Value of Volunteer Time in Louisiana ($19.33/hr)
Exploring Assumptions: Are opportunity costs hidden in DoS?

• University staff time and funds lost to other CE programs

• Partners accommodating HEI needs
  • working on days off, stopping other work to supervise, preparing work sites and materials in advance

• Partners receiving less support than expected
  • hours shrink after registration, meals, transport, and are orientation factored
Models injustice for students
- Key stakeholders excluded from decisions
- Power imbalance in play between universities and partners once they are identified
- Partners accommodate, bear the cost, under pressure to host more students than they need

“For their own good”
Community Involvement Frameworks

Charity

- Understands the cause of the societal problem to be accidental or the person’s fault
- Action to address the societal problem doesn’t change the person’s need for ongoing help

Both

- Deal with societal problems

Justice

- Understands the cause of the societal problem to be social forces that oppress the person and others
- Action to address the societal problem aims to change the social structures that cause the oppression
Community Involvement Frameworks

- Helping
- Fixing/Charity
- Empowerment
- Capacity-building
- Solidarity
- Social Justice
Charity Framework Controversy

Helping
Fixing/Charity

Empowerment
Capacity-building

Solidarity
Social Justice

Gateway
or
Tradeoff?
Gateway or Tradeoff?

The Active Citizen Continuum

Member
Not concerned with his/her role in social problems.

Volunteer
Well-intentioned but not well-educated about social issues.

Conscientious Citizen
Concerned with discovering root causes; asks why?

Active Citizen
Community becomes a priority in values and life choices.
Charity Framework Controversy

**Gateway**
- Service helps people progress from the charity end to the social justice end.
- Serving the needy teaches volunteers humility and compassion.
- Being on the spectrum is what counts, not your location on it.

**Tradeoff**
- Charity reinforces injustice by propping up the status quo.
- Charity reinforces volunteers’ belief that some people can’t help themselves.
- Charity paints an oversimplified picture of complex issues with multiple root causes.
Guidance from Kolvenbach

Kolvenbach

We have learned to our regret that mere appropriation of knowledge does not inevitably humanize.

DoS Evaluation

We have learned that mere appropriation of service hours does not inevitably humanize.

We need to discover ways that will enable students to form the habit of reflecting on values.

Habits are not formed only by chance occasional happenings. Rather, habits develop only by consistent, planned practice.
Now What?

Recommendations and Emerging Questions
Recommendations

Correct mistaken assumptions

Create and implement standards

Align intended outcomes and activities
## Correct mistaken assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• DoS are free</td>
<td>• $7/hour/student</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have no opportunity cost</td>
<td>• Agency &amp; campus staff time</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates commitment to the community</td>
<td>• PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teaches Jesuit values</td>
<td>• Teaches charity over justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Good for the community</td>
<td>• Disempowers community for fleeting impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Better when students do something rather than nothing</td>
<td>• Ongoing partnerships designed to generate meaningful outcomes is better</td>
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## Align intended outcomes and activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Outcome</th>
<th>Appropriate Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Gateway to life-long service</td>
<td>• Introduce students to multiple alumni who embody a life of service differently</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promote social justice framework</td>
<td>• Invite community partners and members to address students about social justice and injustice issues</td>
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<td>• Community benefit</td>
<td>• Include partners and students to help govern community-based programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop student leadership</td>
<td>• Develop civic mentors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop compassion</td>
<td>• experience discomfort</td>
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Create and implement DoS standards

Service Learning
- Intended outcomes fixation
- Leadership voice by all stakeholders
- Reciprocal partnership model
- Risk management
- Assessment protocols
- Accountability to stakeholder advisory boards

Jesuit Values
- Solidarity
  - Honor the dignity of every stakeholder
- Structured Reflection
  - Root causes of need
  - How we unwittingly benefit from oppression
- Lots of other possibilities
Can DoS be redeemed?

- If new standards were designed to redeem DoS
  - A gap would still exist between research and practice
  - Presumes the issue is simply a lack of standards

- What other factors would be necessary to redeem DoS?
  - Empowered internal and external standard-bearers
  - Updated expectations for DoS proponents
  - Inclusive model of leadership & governance
  - Buy-in from all stakeholders
New Questions Arise

If DoS were successfully redeemed with:
1. Accountability to standards
2. Social justice framework
3. Outcomes focus
4. 100% stakeholder voice and buy-in

• Would the DoS model continue to exist? Would DoS still be relevant?
• Or, is the community engagement model actually the result of decades of applying stringent quality standards onto large-scale community service events?
  • If so, would attempting to redeem DoS be a step backwards?
Thank you

Questions?
Contact Heather Mack, Loyola University New Orleans at hamack@loyno.edu.