Incorporating eService-learning opportunities in public health education through partnerships with local health departments

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• Service-learning in higher education is used to provide **real-world experiential learning** to students through civic service and engagement.

• Graduate education in public health epidemiology offers students the ideal conditions to practice the **learn-by-doing approach** while simultaneously providing expertise and insight to the community through partnerships with local public health departments.
Background

- eService-learning is service-learning mediated by technology in an online or hybrid learning environment.
- eService-learning allows students to collaborate with classmates and community partners without the typical geographic constraints observed in traditional in-person course offerings.
Project Descriptions

Project 1: Spring 2018
• The service-learning topic was improving a local drive-thru flu clinic in order to promote emergency preparedness and increase vaccination coverage in the community.

Project 2: Spring 2019
• The service-learning project consisted of conducting a literature review to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve hurricane preparedness among targeted populations in Georgia.
Course Design

• The course consisted of didactic lectures, as well as the service-learning project.

• At the beginning of the semester, students were divided into groups based upon their stated preferences and assigned tasks.

• Objectives for each group were provided, so they knew how their work fit into the overall project. A class leader or leadership group was also formed.
Course Implementation

• The eService-learning activities specifically included opportunities to develop key public health skills related to conducting literature reviews, engaging in critical analysis, developing communication strategies, and applying epidemiologic concepts at the community-level.
Course Assessment

• **Data Sources:** End-of-semester course evaluations, service-learning evaluations, and reflection surveys were used to gather data on student experiences in the course.

• **Data Analysis:** Quantitative measures from the course/service-learning evaluations and the total number of (self-reported) student hours spent on the service-learning component were used to provide an overall measure of student satisfaction, as well as time spent on the service-learning component. Direct quotes taken from the evaluations and student reflection pieces were used to describe the strengths and challenges observed when undertaking the service-learning project.
Project 1: Course Deliverables

Students' final project included marketing, research, and evaluation plans for the drive-thru clinic.

Treutlen County and Wheeler County Drive-Thru Flu Vaccination Program Proposal: Marketing, Evaluation, and Research

Prepared by Social Epidemiology Students (Spring 2016)
Jian-Ping Hsu College of Public Health
Georgia Southern University
Project 2: Course Deliverables

Students’ final project included a literature review and evidence-based recommendations for evacuation plans.

Students also placed 1st and 2nd at a Service-Learning Poster Competition.
Findings

• Qualitative and quantitative findings from evaluations showed students gained insight into the intricacies of public health practice as future epidemiologists, as well as provided an enhanced learning experience on how evidence-based, targeted interventions can reduce health disparities in local communities.
Project 1: Findings (n=23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score (1-5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>The service-learning I did in this course helped me <em>to think critically.</em></td>
<td>4.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>The service-learning in this course helped me to apply the subject mater in a ‘real-world’ situation.</td>
<td>4.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>The course helped me understand that I can <em>make a difference</em> in my community by being involved.</td>
<td>4.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>The service-learning I did in this course helped me <em>to analyze problems.</em></td>
<td>4.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>At the end of the semester, I thought that the service-learning aspect of this course was valuable.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
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Hours Spent on Project: ~271
Average time spent per person: **12 hrs**
Average Rating from Course Evaluations: **4.7/5.0**

**Selected Quotes**

“I wish there were more opportunities through epidemiology coursework for service learning experiences that allow exposure to what an epidemiologist may experience in the workforce.”

“Knowing what we did in the classroom is going to affect lives for the better, is just an amazing thought.”
Project 2: Findings (n=7)

Hours Spent on Project: ~115
Average time spent per person: 16 hrs
Average Rating from Course Evaluations: 4.9/5.0

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<tr>
<td>At the end of the semester, I thought that the service-learning aspect of this course was valuable.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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Selected Quotes
“I really did enjoy the service learning component. It allowed me to utilize skills and concepts that I have learned during my graduate career at Georgia Southern and further solidify that public health is what I want to do.”

“I really enjoyed the service learning component of the class. I really liked doing the poster and showing people the work that we had done and how impactful and important it is to the community that we are serving.”
Looking Ahead

Opportunities

• The service-learning components showed positive evidence of meeting its goals for both students and community partners.

• It proved to be an important way to enhance the students’ academic experience and establish a lasting relationship with local health departments in nearby rural communities.

Challenges

• Finding balance between the motivated and not-so-motivated students. Each person plays a very important role in the group dynamic.

• Sometimes the students feel disconnected from the community, so it is important to have ongoing dialogue about the helpfulness of their projects.
How can you use eService-Learning to improve the student learning experience and benefit your local community?

Questions?
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Email: jschwind@georgiasouthern.edu
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