

The Benefits of Service Learning in a Down-Turned Economy

Theodore Peters, Mary Ann McHugh, and Patricia Sendall
Merrimack College

With businesses struggling for resources during economic downturns, traditional business student internships were becoming more difficult to develop. One business school extended its experiential learning opportunities with specific management projects in community small business, healthcare, education, and non-profit organizations. The on-campus service learning center provided project development, logistical support, and assessment for forty-five business students to participate in thirty-eight on-site, Human Resource Management projects. Means and standard deviations for self-report, end-of-semester surveys were determined for six Likert-scale items that measured the students' satisfaction with the project experience, and percentages were calculated of students who indicated specific personal and intellectual benefits derived from the projects. Most students reported favorable experiences with these non-traditional learning sites. Student projects developed management career choice information through the on-site application of their practitioner skills. They also benefited from their classroom reflections and interactions in sharing their problems, insights, and outcomes among their classmates. Students indicated they felt increased self-confidence, more comfortable about entering the working world, and more awareness of the linkages between the business and community service worlds. Through service learning, students gained experience in leadership, scholarship, and citizenship to become better members of their communities despite an economic downturn.

With the declining economy of the early twenty-first century, the US economy was losing jobs "across a variety of sectors, including manufacturing, business, professional services, and technology" (Gavin, 2003, p. C1). After experiencing difficulties in developing business internships and co-op positions during this recent down-turned economy, one northeastern college sought to incorporate service-learning projects and reflections into a human resource management (HRM) course to offer practical experience for students to be more competitive and employable upon graduation. Contrary to other community service/campus partnership programs, which can close during an economic downturn (Kezar, 2002), the college's service-learning center has helped students gain résumé-rich experiences at non-profit organizations that suffer from funding and other resource shortages. These management-focused service projects helped student develop and apply their analytical skills while contributing to and reflecting on their service to the College and the non-profit organization.

Unlike the more traditional HRM internship experience, which often involves a more formal commitment of organizational resources through a broad, management development, supervised program, service learning in HRM can be designed to focus on individual projects within the context of serving the mission of the organization. Therefore, service learning can involve fewer financial resources for the organization yet still allow short-term organizational interaction and learning for students and the organizations.

Service Learning

Bringle and Hatcher (1995) defined service learning as a

credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity in such a way that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 112)

Thus, as defined, service learning involves the purposeful integration of thought and practice, of theory and real life. These "non-traditional educational experiences connect students' cognitive learning inside the classroom with their affective learning in the lab, on the job, or at the service learning site. The instructors and mentors involved begin to shape or enhance young adults' sense of professionalism in their fields well before they leave the campus" (Steffes, 2004, p. 46). It is active experiential learning that allows students to develop academically by learning to think critically about their experiences in order to make connections to their class work. As such, this method offers opportunities to students to learn within, not simply about, real work environments, which can address the need of business students to gain additional breadth and engagement as articulated by Porter and McKibben (1988). Furthermore, this external to the classroom

learning incorporates Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984) identifying four components related to learning: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (p. 38). Students can spend at least 20 hours per semester on-site to benefit from on-site supervision and training, to connect classroom content to the work site, and then to reflect and discuss their on-site experiences back in the academic setting (Gray, Ondaattje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000; Rama, Ravenscroft, Wolcott, & Zlotkowski, 2000). This model "provides a powerful framework...to help a student explain and describe, both cognitively and affectively, his[her] lived experience working in a soup kitchen versus reading about a soup kitchen in class" (Steffes, 2004, p. 46).

Incorporating service learning as an integral element of a course has been recommended (Howard, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Weigert, 1998) and appeared to offer better student outcomes (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Others have supported expanding curricula to integrate technical, personal, and broad-business skills, for example, a SWOT Analysis (Rama et al., 2000). Moreover, student motivation has been increased, leading to increased learning, by involving students in real world-types of activities (Bryant & Hunton, 2000).

Service experiences can give students a context within which to place course content, which increases the quantity and depth of their understanding. In particular, the complexity of real-world projects can help students become more open to uncertainty, recognize greater complexity in the problems they analyze, think strategically, and use learned material in new ways....[D]uring S-L experiences students may encounter people from diverse backgrounds who hold different points of view. Interfacing with such people can challenge students to reconsider or reaffirm their own perspectives, increase their understanding of other viewpoints, and contemplate a wider range of possibilities. (Rama et al., 2000, p. 660, 665)

Other service-learning outcomes have indicated students have improved their higher order thinking skills, including greater understanding, better communication, awareness of other perspectives, problem solving and decision making, and linking course material to outside work settings (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hamner, 2002). A variety of these outcomes are relevant for business students who can develop greater personal insights and knowledge concerning the various managerial skills that will be important for their subsequent success in the business world. Condensing the primary research of Eyler and Giles (1999), Steffes

(2004) presented the major outcomes of service learning as:

- Increased sense of citizenship (values, skills, efficacy, and commitment to social responsibility);
- Development of stronger analytical and problem-solving skills;
- Enhanced personal development (self-knowledge, spiritual growth, finding reward in helping others);
- Increased leadership skills;
- Greater cultural awareness and tolerance;
- Enhanced social development skills;
- Improved interpersonal development (working with others, communication skills). (p. 49)

Other studies have supported service learning contributing to improvements in self-confidence and self-esteem, ethical development, skills, professionalism, motivation and purpose, moral sensitivity and reasoning abilities (Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Jacoby, 1996; Kezar & Rhodes, 2001; Madsen, 2004). Furthermore, these student opportunities can lead to increased self-efficacy, the confidence "in their own ability to act and make a difference, which in turn can increase their leadership skills (e.g., willingness to be socially proactive, to believe they can influence change, to exercise effort to achieve change, and to anticipate the consequences of their actions)" (Rama et al. 2000, p. 673).

Campus Service Learning Center

Service learning also fit well with the educational mission of the college curriculum, with its "three principal aims: (1) to develop in students a coherent understanding of the world, (2) to engage students in active learning, and (3) to develop students' academic skills in analysis, synthesis, and judgment" (Merrimack College Catalog, 2004, p. 12). Furthermore, the business school recently adopted general learning outcomes that included critical thinking skills (problem identification and decision making), communications and technology, cultural diversity understanding and flexibility, and ethical reasoning, all of which can be supported by these service-learning projects and sites.

In response, the director of the service-learning center created discussion opportunities to educate faculty and students about the advantages and disadvantages associated with conducting service-learning projects in conjunction with classroom learning activities. Their anecdotal list (see Table 1), while unscientific, nevertheless was derived from and supported by comments from prior students and faculty who participated in service learning. The list offers

face validity to service learning, but more importantly, it strikes a responsive chord as a starting point for inviting new service-learning participants, faculty and students alike. The campus service learning center further assists faculty members in identifying placement sites, coordinating projects, transporting students to sites, tracking student hours and other administrative functions, and conducting the evaluation process and compiling the evaluation results. Evaluative processes have included reflective journals, service portfolios, debates, presentations, and/or research papers.

Human Resource Management.

Human resource management is a staff service function, providing service (a) to all organization employees for employee benefits, training, performance appraisal, recruiting and selection, labor relations, and more; (b) to executive management through strategic input regarding staffing assessments and planning, legal compliance issues, Quality Management programs, employee wellness programs, and more, and (c) to the organization’s respective communities, promoting organizational culture within as well as promoting a variety of citizenship and social responsibility actions across geographic, sociopolitical, industry and other constituent communities. With this service orientation, HRM inherently presents a variety of developmental opportunities for students interested in combining the tenets of service with the skills of business.

Furthermore, like other areas of business (e.g., sales and marketing, finance and accounting), HRM skills are equally necessary and applied across different organizational sectors. While the context for application may vary among for-profit, non-profit, government, education, healthcare, and other sectors and industries, the general skills to be employed are remarkably similar across these different organizational contexts. For example, regardless of context, organizational training should involve the same systematic development through needs assessment, instructional format, instructional delivery, and evaluation. Similarly, performance appraisal for all organizations should (a) be able to validly and reliably distinguish among employee behaviors and productivity, and (b) differentially reward such employee behaviors and organizationally-related outcomes. Thus, business skills are easily transferred to and among other sectors, and therefore, skill development and application are similarly transferable across sectors. The focus, then, is more to bring applicable skills to a broad host of application sites, rather than limiting the application to a few specific hosts in one sector.

TABLE 1
Advantages and Disadvantages of Service Learning
(Anecdotal)

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Students able to incorporate their practical, on-site learning with their academic study	1. Requires extensive coordination by the Service Learning Center
2. Some students may find practical experience more educational than their classroom study	2. Expands obligations of faculty who must take into consideration an extra layer of communication between the students & sites
3. Provides a sense of achievement for the student	3. Semester-length projects leave little time to adjust project should unforeseen events delay or eliminate a project and/or service learning site
4. Provides knowledge and confidence to enter the “real world”	4. Students often resent mandated service projects
5. Increases student’s ability to work and learn independently	5. Difficult to balance students time commitments and needs of placement sites
6. Develops functional skills – communication, assertiveness, problem solving	6. Communication failures between sites and students
7. Creates better relationships with faculty	7. Students and faculty must leave their “comfort zone” to address unpredictable circumstances
8. Allows insight into personal strengths and weaknesses	
9. Creates a positive attitude toward academics—enriched classroom learning, application of classroom knowledge	
10. Creates a positive attitude toward the College	
11. Meaningful projects that connect to themes in class; teaches reflection skills	
12. Exposure to new experiences – urban centers, diversity, and other challenges	
13. Assists students in their career search – eliminating choices and changing ideas	
14. Provides students with résumé building experiences	
15. Students learn about the business world – proper dress, office behavior, responsibility	
16. Civic Engagement – students become more likely to volunteer in the future by being more sensitive to others	

Service Learning Capstone Course

Seeking these expanded student learning opportunities and outcomes, a traditional senior-level, strategic management capstone course was developed to integrate service learning and human resource management content into applied, community settings. Individual and pairs of students addressed contemporary human resource management topics affecting organizations, industry, government, and/or society in general. These HRM-focused projects and on-site experiences were then augmented by critical reflection and analyses of these experiences through classroom discussions and presentations. The course incorporated student and instructor-led classroom, seminar-type discussions and exercises, as well as on-site organization activities and information gathering, and student presentations to faculty and organizational leaders. Students attended ninety-minute class sessions twice weekly, and they spent approximately three hours per week at the organizational site for twelve weeks during the semester.

In addition to the general learning outcomes described earlier, specific outcomes intended for this course included helping students (a) interact with human resource professionals in organizational settings, (b) increase their awareness and understanding of the dynamics involved in working effectively in groups and individually in organizational settings, (c) develop a comprehensive understanding of current human resource issues, focusing on a specific HRM topic within an organization, and (d) integrate tools and information from across the curriculum towards identifying, analyzing, and solving human resource issues and problems.

The course began with the campus service-learning center presenting the concepts of service learning and how these specific human resource management projects would be conducted at a variety of non-profit, for-profit, and government organizations. Student orientation to their service-learning projects included a discussion about the service mission of the organization, and the need, the challenges, and the value of these organizations.

Students then completed an interest sheet (see Figure 1) in which students ranked their top three areas of interest in human resource management. In addition, students completed an expectations sheet (see Figure 2) with open-ended questions so students could more fully address specific interests, issues, and concerns about types of organizations, types of projects, and any special considerations needed. As much as possible, students were then assigned organizations and HRM project areas that matched their stated interests.

Thus, the learning in service learning occurred in multiple, reinforcing components. Students first

learned the mission and the roles of the service provided by the organization, and then they experienced these mission and roles. Next, students learned the content for their HRM-context project, including how this project would serve the organization in meeting their service mission. Finally, student learning occurred as they returned to the classroom to share their experiences and perspectives through both informal discussions and formal presentation. These classroom sessions allowed students to learn from each other and to reify their experiences into a framework for retention and application.

Student Assignments

Graded assignments and weights for each assignment included:

- 1) a mid-term presentation and report (25%),
- 2) an end-of-semester presentation and report (40%),
- 3) a take-home final examination (25%), and
- 4) classroom participation and on-site, organizational professionalism (10%).

The mid-term presentation was designed for students to educate each other about their service-learning organizations and human resource projects. Students discussed their service-learning organization, addressing its mission, the type of service they provide, their population being served, the organizational structure, and organizational history. They also discussed their experiences in providing service to the target population, as well as their experiences in touring and working at the organization. Lastly, they gave a brief description of the HRM project they were developing.

In contrast to the more general organizational information presented in the mid-term presentation, the students' end-of-semester presentation focused specifically on their human resource project. Students were given an optional format and the content to be addressed in the presentation (see Figure 3). This focus included an introduction that briefly restated the service learning organization's mission, products and/or services provided, its history (e.g., when and why developed), and organizational form, geographic area, target market, customer needs and profile, and organizational culture, as well as general information about their human resource management function and environment.

The main elements of this final presentation, however, addressed their service-learning project. Students discussed the goals and expectations of their project, and how they identified their progress and learning objectives achieved, their individual and the

FIGURE 1
Service Learning Project
OS 413A
Service Learning Project

NAME _____

Due: 9/5/03

Please rank your five highest choices, with 1 being most highly desired, 2 being next most highly desired, etc. These results will be tabulated to determine group composition. Every attempt will be made to place students in one of their three most desired areas.

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>Chapter*</u>	<u>RANK</u>
EEOC/Legal	2	_____
Planning	4	_____
Selection	5	_____
Training	6	_____
Career Development	7	_____
Performance Appraisal	8	_____
Compensation/Incentives	9-10	_____
Benefits	11	_____
Safety and Health	12	_____
Labor Relations/ Collective Bargaining	14/15	_____
International HRM	16	_____
Work Systems	17	_____

* Used as a reference: Bohlander, G., Snell, S., & Sherman, A. (2001) *Managing human resources* (12th ed.). Cincinnati: South-Western College Publishing.

organization’s satisfaction with the project, and then, specifically, their relationship to HRM in terms of their functions and specific activities. Did their outcomes meet their expectations? What, specifically, did they learn? What worked? What did not work? In their conclusion, students offered any recommendations to improve the project, the student’s role in the course, or the course in general. Finally, at the conclusion of the course, the campus service-learning center conducted a written exit survey with all service learning students to further assess student’s overall performance including participation, communications skills and commitment.

Service Learning Projects

Whereas most traditional internship programs have involved businesses in the for-profit sector, service-learning projects can encompass organizations from a variety of non-profit, government, healthcare, and education settings, as well as for international corporations and local businesses in the for-profit sector. As presented in Appendix A, human resource management students in the Girard School of Business and International Commerce at Merrimack College conducted service-learning projects with non-profit

FIGURE 2
Expectations for Service Learning

Discuss the type of organization and/or industry you are most interested in, and why:

Discuss other types of organizations and/or industries that would be appealing to you:

Having listed on the prior page the five areas of HRM in which you would choose involvement, discuss they reason(s) these areas are of interest:

Any special considerations that should be included in determining your Service Learning Placement?

FIGURE 3
Service Learning Paper/Presentation
SENIOR SEMINAR, HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
MG 413, SPRING 2004
SERVICE LEARNING PAPER/PRESENTATION

The final deliverables for this course are a paper 7-10 pages in length and a presentation of 10-15 minutes. The presentations will be conducted during the last three class meetings, and the papers will be due on or before April 26, 2004, at 5PM.

The presentation should mirror the paper, although likely in less detail, and could use the following outline as a possible format, although students are encouraged to develop alternative formats to best fit their organizational setting:

- A. Introduction
 - Organizational Mission
 - History – why developed, when, etc.
 - Type of organization: sector, geographic area, customers served
 - Product(s)/service(s)
- B. Organizational Analysis:
 - Market
 - Customers
 - Culture
 - Human Resource Management
- C. Service Learning Project
 - Goals, expectations, measure?
 - Relationship to Human Resource Management
 - Activities, functions
 - Outcomes: meet expectations?
- D. Learning
 - What you learned, what worked, what didn't
 - Recommendations

Sections A and B should be very brief, as they would mirror your mid-term presentation, and are included here only as an element of continuity. Section C should be your primary focus, telling us about your HR project: why it was developed, what you did in the project, what were the outcomes, how it changed/helped the service learning site, etc. Finally, Section D is your own reflection: what you accomplished for yourself, what you learned, how you feel you grew, what you would do differently, etc.

organizations (e.g., American Red Cross) healthcare (e.g., Caritas Christi Health Care), governmental entities (e.g., Massachusetts Consumer Protection Agency), education organizations (e.g., Council on International Education Exchange), and small, local businesses, as well as other larger, multi-site, regional and international corporations (e.g., Gillette, Phillips Medical Systems).

In addition to crossing a variety of settings, the HRM projects also focused on a cross-section of human resource topics (Appendix A). For example, projects involved compensation surveys, orientation and other organizational training programs, employee handbooks related to organizational missions, and the strategic management of a merger and possible resultant layoffs in a business setting. Thus, regardless of the students' service-learning setting in big or small business,

government, education, or healthcare, the topics of their service learning projects were remarkably consistent, thereby indicating the broad applicability of their human resource skills across a broad spectrum of organizational settings.

Student Outcomes

These service learning projects and organizational settings created the context for the end-of-semester, service-learning, center-administered, self-report student satisfaction survey results related to their experiences. Although the sample size remained somewhat small, approximately 45, due to the newness of the recently instituted service-learning format in the human resource management seminar, the results were nonetheless instructive, directive, and highly

encouraging regarding students' value and satisfaction related to their experiences.

Two principal indicators involved the students' perceptions about the educational value of the experience, and how well they were able to incorporate their practical, on-site learning with their academic study. The first measure used a three point Likert scale (1 = not as educational, 2 = as educational, 3 = more educational) to assess the perceived educational value of the on-site service-learning projects relative to the classroom work. Students' overall mean assessment of the educational value was 2.27 (SD = 0.69, n = 44), as 86% felt their on-site experience had been *as educational or more educational* than their classroom work.

The second item measured the students' perceived abilities to incorporate their practical, on-site learning with their academic study. Using a five-point Likert scale (1 = inadequately to 5 = very adequately), students' overall assessment of their ability to incorporate their on-site learning with their classroom learning was 3.63 (SD = 1.18, n = 43), with 56% perceiving they were *very adequately* or *more than adequately* able to incorporate their learning across educational settings and 42% perceiving they were *somewhat adequately* or *adequately* able to incorporate their learning across educational settings.

In addition, students felt their investment of intellect, effort, and time had been valued and productive. Using a four-point Likert scale (1 = poor to 4 = excellent), students' overall assessment of their service learning experience was 3.38 (SD = 0.89, n = 45), with 87% rating their experience as *excellent* or *good*. Beyond rating their experiences positively, students also rated their experiences, on the same 4-point Likert scale, as being meaningful (M = 3.32, SD = 0.83, n = 44), as gaining acceptance (M = 3.42, SD = 0.76, n = 43), and providing recognition (M = 3.48, SD = 0.74, n = 42). Thus, regardless of the student's organizational setting, the overwhelming majority of students felt their service-learning project experience had been valuable.

Intellectual Outcomes

Students also identified other possible benefits from a list provided in the evaluation form (see Table 2). Using the typology of Rama et al. (2002), that categorized service learning outcomes as either intellectual or personal, students simply check-marked those benefits they perceived applied to them. Students were also provided the opportunity to add anecdotal comments. These individual responses encompassed a broad range of both intellectual and personal outcomes that included both anticipated and surprising outcomes.

Intellectual outcomes were defined as "cognitive

competencies, including knowledge of textbook content, relationship of [business] knowledge to the business world, and critical thinking skills" (Rama et al., 2002, p. 660). Among these perceived intellectual benefits (see Table 2), over 70% of students felt their service learning experience had led to improved "development of functional skills - communication, assertiveness, problem solving." Also, approximately 40% of students indicated they had benefited intellectually from the "development of occupational skills", the "acquisition of specific academic skills and knowledge", the "enriched classroom learning", and the "application of classroom knowledge".

Personal Outcomes

In addition, personal outcomes were defined by Rama et al. (2000) as "personal demeanor, leadership, and communication [and] values-related competencies...including honesty and ethical conduct, ability to analyze the impact of potential actions, and ability to promote constructive change" (pp. 672-673). These competencies increased students' awareness of issues as well as their self-confidence and self-efficacy in using their skills effectively (Rama et al., 2000). Students liked the experiential program (76%), followed by other positive, personal outcomes related to their academics (faculty, 53%; college 44%) and their community (44%). Students also indicated they had increased personal insights, including working independently (64%) and feelings of achievement (60%) (see Table 2). These perceived positive benefits clearly suggested the service learning experiential laboratory was helping the students' intellectual and personal growth in their understanding of themselves, their skills and abilities, and their interactions with other professionals and environments.

Furthermore, evidence of these positive benefits was reinforced by the open-ended comments provided by students when asked what their service learning experience meant to them (see Table 3). Again following the Rama et al. (2002) typology, student comments were categorized as Intellectual Outcomes or Personal Outcomes, with Intellectual Outcomes further delineated by two subcategories, Skills and Exposure, and Personal Outcomes similarly delineated by two subcategories, Accomplishment and Growth. The subcategories were loosely defined and groupings may overlap slightly. Within Intellectual Outcomes, Skills comments related to specific or general work skills developed and/or used on the project, and included organization, communication, time management, and working independently. Exposure comments related to external culture, settings, and networks afforded the students that were distinctly different from any classroom experience. These comments addressed real-

TABLE 2
Perceived Benefits of Service Learning Projects

Item	%	Outcome
Positive attitude toward experimental program	76	P
Development of functional skills – communication, assertiveness, problem solving	71	I
Ability to work and learn independently	64	P
Sense of personal achievement	60	P
Better relationships with Faculty	53	P
Insight into personal strengths and weaknesses	49	P
Positive attitude toward academics	47	P
Positive attitude towards community involvement/citizenship	44	P
Positive attitude towards [the] College	44	P
Improved self-confidence	44	P
Development of occupational skills	44	I
Acquisition of specific academic skills and knowledge	42	I
Sense of social responsibility	42	P
Enriched classroom learning	42	I
Application of classroom knowledge	40	I

Note. N = 45. I = Intellectual, P = Personal.

life experiences, different job/careers, hand-on training, and community awareness.

Within Personal Outcomes, Accomplishment reflected the student's internalized sense of achievement or action, and included broadening horizons, self-satisfaction, and making a difference in the community. Growth related to the student's reflection and maturation towards being prepared for their impending transition to the working world. Growth comments included having done new, interesting, and insightful experiences, increased confidence, and reflections on learning.

Discussion

Concurrent with the recent economic downturn, service-learning concepts and projects were integrated into an undergraduate capstone course in human resource management as an alternative for the more difficult to obtain business internships. The service-learning environment demonstrated benefits of service learning for student experiential learning, benefits that are comparable to business internships at larger, private sector organizations. By promoting long-term relationships with local area small business, healthcare, education, and other non-profit organizations, these organizations were receptive to modifying their more routine volunteer service functions to develop management-based projects that would provide learning laboratories for the students while simultaneously serving the organization with value-added management skills. Thus, the placement

sites gained needed services, the faculty developed different and effective experiential learning laboratories, and students learned and applied analytical, communication, and organization skills in real-world settings.

Academically, the students themselves benefited directly in having real-world experience to present on their résumé and in future job interviews. Students developed management content and experience, including problem identification and organization as well as behavioral insights and directions, in their work settings that they would likely not have developed in a classroom. Students also noted increased self-confidence in their ability to function in these work settings, which further enhanced their comfort in interviewing and beginning their business careers following graduation. Furthermore, and more indirectly, students benefited by the opportunity to address management problems holistically, whereby they integrated management content and application across their curricular experiences, much as would be expected of them in their upcoming job settings. Students made formal and informal presentations in class so that all students could learn from their shared and individual experiences.

Student self-report exit surveys were especially positive about these service learning experiences, as students indicated they had been able to incorporate their practical, on-site learning with their academic study, and most felt the practical experience was more educational than their classroom study. Similarly, nearly all respondents stated they had an

TABLE 3
Student Outcomes (Anecdotal)
A. Intellectual Outcomes

1. Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “chance to learn and apply skills” “planning” “reinforced ability to work well under pressure, meet strict deadlines” “research, policies” “showed my strengths in communicating with others” “strategy, organization, time management” “very, very good organizational skills” “work independently”
-----------	---

2. Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “allowed me to see a different aspect of the community” “apply to real-life experience, broadens real-life work” “brought classroom issue to real life” “excellent to see classroom experiences applied to the real world” “experience different jobs” “exposure to different careers” “hands on training” “learn more through hands-on experience” “learned purpose of HR office, apply to real world” “provided knowledge to enter real world” “seeing the world of healthcare”
-------------	---

B. Personal Outcomes

1. Accomplishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “able to experience first hand what I want to do after college for a career” “broadens horizons, contacts and relationships” “establish relationships at my company for future employment opportunities” “give back to the community, make a difference, friendships, enjoyed it” “great opportunity to position myself, interact with executives” “help organization while getting meaningful experience” “overall achievement [while being] self-satisfying”
-------------------	--

2. Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “allows to reflect on what learned” “do something I might never have done” “enriches the college experience” “gives me more confidence as far as interacting with others” “increased professional confidence” “interesting and insightful experience” “learned not to be afraid of new job” “made me feel better about helping others” “made me feel my teachers trust me; [I] like the feeling of independence and self-empowerment” “provided confidence to enter real world”
-----------	--

excellent overall experience that improved their functional skills (communication, assertiveness, problem solving) and enriched their classroom learning through their reflections. Such experiential reflection is the hallmark of critical thinking, learning, retention, application, assessing, revising, and relearning (Kezar & Rhodes, 2001).

The organizations also benefited by having the students as new, external resources who brought fresh perspectives to the organization’s problems, projects, and the organization itself. The students functioned as self-starters who required minimal supervision.

Operating under faculty direction, they were committed to the projects, and most importantly for these organizations, the students required few organizational resources.

In conclusion, by expanding service learning into the business curriculum, in lieu of less available for-profit internships, the students, faculty, and organizations all contributed to and benefited from these meaningful and successful learning experiences that might otherwise have been lost. Service learning can also help distinguish the college from other similar colleges and its students can become

better citizens in society (Kezar & Rhodes, 2001). Even without economic stagnation, service learning can continue to provide valuable work experience and career opportunities for management students. Thus, service-learning projects and experiences have the potential to become a highly beneficial alternative to business internships.

References

- Astin, A. A., Vogelgesang, L. J., Ikeda, E. K., & Yee, J. K. (2000). *How service-learning affects students*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California.
- Bohlander, G., Snell, S., & Sherman, A. (2001). *Managing human resource* (12th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing.
- Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1995). A service-learning curriculum for faculty. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, 2, 112-122.
- Bryant, S. M., & Hunton, J. E. (2000). The use of technology in the delivery of instruction: Implications for accounting educators and education researchers. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 15 (1), 129-162.
- Conrad, D., & Hedin, D. (1982). The impact of experiential education on adolescent development. *Child and Youth Services*, 4(3), 57 - 76.
- Eyler, J., & Giles, D. E., Jr. (1999). *Where's the learning in service learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gavin, R. (2003, September 6). 93,000 jobs lost in August: Concerns raised some posts may be gone forever. *Boston Globe*, p. C1.
- Girard School of Business & International Commerce. *Learning Outcomes*. Retrieved August 29, 2005 from <http://www.merrimack.edu/PublicFolders/GirardSchoolAssessment>.
- Gray, M. J., Ondaatje, E. H., Fricker, R. D., Jr., & Geschwind, A. (2000). Assessing service-learning. *Change*, 32(2), 30-39.
- Hamner, D. M. (2002). *Building bridges: The Allyn & Bacon student guide to service-learning*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Howard, J. P. F. (1998). Academic service-learning: A counternormative pedagogy. In R. A. Rhodes & J. P. F. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection. New directions for teaching and learning No. 73* (pp. 3-10). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kezar, A. (2002). Assessing community service learning: Are we identifying the right outcomes? *About Campus*, 7(2), 14-20.
- Kezar, A., & Rhodes, R. A. (2001). The dynamic tensions of service learning in higher education: A philosophical perspective. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 72(2), 148-171.
- Kolb, D. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 15(1), 45-57.
- Madsen, S. R. (2004). Academic service learning in human resource management education. *Journal of Education for Business*, 79(6), 328-332.
- Merrimack College. (2004). *Through knowledge to wisdom, 2004-2005 (college catalog)*. North Andover, MA: Flagship Press.
- Porter, L. W., & McKibbin, L. E. (1988). *Management education and development: Drift or thrust into the 21st century?* New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rama, D., Ravenscroft, S. P., Wolcott, S. K., & Zlotkowski, E. (2000). Service-learning outcomes: Guidelines for educators and researchers. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 15(4), 657-692.
- Steffes, J. (2004). Creating powerful learning environments beyond the classroom. *Change*, 36(3), 46-50.
- Weigart, K. M. (1998). Academic service-learning: Its meaning and relevance. In R. A. Rhodes & J. P. F. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection. New directions for teaching and learning No. 73* (pp. 3-10). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

THEODORE PETERS is Assistant Professor of Management and PATRICIA SENDALL is Associate Professor of Information Systems and Chair of the Management Department; both are in the Girard School of Business and International Commerce; MARY MCHUGH is Director of the Stevens Service Learning Center and teaches in the Department of Political Science; all are at Merrimack College, North Andover, Massachusetts.

Appendix A
Service Learning in Human Resource Management Projects
(Sorted by Project Type)

Organization	Project	Type
Northeast Independent Living	Americans with Disabilities and funding review	Non-Profit
Gillette Corp.	Americans with Disabilities investigations	Profit
Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center	Analyst/Generalist	Healthcare
Stevens Center for Service Learning	Business Enterprise 102 Service Learning Project	College
Town of Westford, MA	Compensation Survey	Government
Heritage Healthcare	Compensation Survey	Healthcare
Merrimack Athletic Department	Computer training for employees	College
Adelante	Consumer Handbook	Non-Profit
Massachusetts Consumer Protection Agency	Consumer Service	Government
Greater Lawrence Habitat for Humanity	Database management	Non-Profit
Lowell Fire Department	Education and Training	Government
Asian Center	Employee Database	Non-Profit
Reproductive Science Center	Employee Handbook	Profit
Emmaus House	Employee Handbook	Non-Profit
Holy Family Hospital	HR Recruiting	Healthcare
Stevens Center for Service Learning	HRIS database/Service Development	College
Lahey Clinic	Human Resource Information System	Healthcare
Greater Merrimack Valley Human Resource Association	Membership database	Non-Profit
American Training	Orientation/Culture	Non-Profit
American Red Cross	Outreach	Non-Profit
Moynihan Lumber	Personnel Management System/Handbook	Profit
Perfect Parties	Personnel Management System/Handbook	Profit
Council on International Education Exchange	Personnel Management System/Handbook	Non-Profit
Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Lawrence	Personnel records/Reference Checks	Non-Profit
Federal Court	Policy Handbook/Manual	Government
Sakowich Student Center	Program Development and Evaluation	College
Christmas Tree Shops	Selection	Profit
Merrimack College Human Resources Dept	Sexual Harassment Training	College
Phillips Medical System	Strategic HRM – Layoff/merger	Profit
Stevens Center for Service Learning	Student (Employee) Project Development	College
Merrimack College Student Life	Student Event Planning	College
Bellisini Academy	Training	Non-Profit