

California State University Monterey Bay Service Learning Institute
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Summary of Service Learning Research: Student Impact  
October 1999

### I. Impact of SL 200: Pre-post change in students' values and self-perceptions

Each semester beginning Fall 1996, the Service Learning Institute has assessed the impact that participation in SL 200 has for students with a pre- and post-experience questionnaire. The instrument used in this assessment was adapted from the Student Service Assessment developed by the Service Learning Research and Assessment Center at UC Berkeley. The instrument has three scales. The first of these is **Civic Participation**. The items in this scale address the value students place on participating in community through service. For example, the students are asked to rate the importance of "finding time to contribute to the community" and "finding a career that directly benefits others." The second domain examined with this instrument, **Career Preparedness** is assessed with items that ask students to rate their confidence in a work situation and their understanding of daily job responsibilities in a career which interests them. The third scale, **Academic Relevance**, assesses students' motivation to enroll in courses which have "real-life" applications as well as students' perceptions of the extent to which they learn best in courses that involve "hands-on" experiences.

Students completed this self-report questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Their rating scores were summed for each scale and paired comparisons (t-tests) were made of the students' pre- and post- scale scores. We found that students' responses on all three scales increased from the beginning to the end of their SL200 experience. At the end of the semester,

- **Students were more committed to civic participation;**
- **Students felt better prepared for their careers; and,**
- **Students were stronger advocates of academically relevant course.**

The table below presents the combined data for four semesters --1996-97 and 1997-98 academic years. Instrument modified 1998-99 academic year; results pending.

Scale	Number of Students	Change Pre-Post	T
<b>Civic Participation</b>	232	Increase	4.21 $p < .01$
<b>Career Preparedness</b>	229	Increase	2.69 $p < .01$
<b>Academic Relevance</b>	166*	Increase	2.91 $p < .01$

\*Data from 3 semesters only

In the Spring and Fall of 1998, in order to assess whether the service learning experience promotes students' sense of competence as community participants, we developed and

administered a fourth scale, **Community Service Self-efficacy**. This scale contains items that ask students to rate, for example, the extent to which they feel they "can have a positive impact on local social problems"; consider themselves to be "active members of the community"; and have a good understanding of the "needs" as well as the "strengths" of the local community. Although data are available for only two semesters, the results encourage us to believe that students' sense of their ability to address community issues is strengthened over the course of the service learning experience in SL200. **Both semesters (129 students total) students' scores on the Community Service Self efficacy increased, and the increase was statistically significant.** (Spring 1998 paired t-test comparison = 4.20  $p < .01$ ; Fall,  $t = 3.39$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Scale	Number of Students	Change Pre-Post	T
Community Service Self-efficacy	59	Increase	4.20 $p < .01$

## II. Student evaluation of service learning experience

The Service Learning Institute asked students in SL 200 and the service learning courses in the majors to evaluate their service learning experiences at the end of each semester. The following summarizes the responses of 918 students in 85 service learning course over 6 semesters. The following tables present the proportions of students who answered positively to our questions about the impact the service learning experience had had on their learning and on their attitudes toward community participation. Note: numbers in parentheses represent the number of students completing questionnaire each semester.

### 1. Impact on Academic Learning

Question	Fall/Spring 1996-97 (n=222)	Fall/Spring 1997-98 (n=270)	Fall/Spring 1998-99 (n=426)	Total (n=918)
<b>To what extent did your service activities enhance your learning experience?</b> % students who answered "A great deal" or "quite a lot"	89%	91%	93%	91%
<b>Would you enroll in another course with a service component beyond the CSUMB requirement?</b> % of students who answered "Yes"	64%	77%	78%	74%

### 2. Impact on attitude toward community service

<b>Question</b>	<b>Fall/Spring 1996-97 (222)</b>	<b>Fall/Spring 1997-98 (270)</b>	<b>Fall/Spring 1998-99 (426)</b>	<b>Total (918)</b>
<b>As a result of this experience my attitude toward service has become:</b> % stating "more positive"	67%	67%	71%	69%
<b>I feel more comfortable participating in the community after this class.</b> % Stating "Yes."	85%	94%	93%	91%
<b>I feel that the service I did through this class was beneficial to the community.</b> % Agree or Strongly agree	95%	96%	95%	95%
<b>Do you plan to continue serving with this community program after completing the course?</b> % Stating "Yes."	57%	49%	63%	53%

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