Executive Summary and Key Findings

2012-2013 Student Survey on Service

Saint Louis University – Center for Service and Community Engagement
Introduction

The 2012-2013 Student Survey on Service was administered to the entire student body of Saint Louis University from April 23rd – May 9th, 2013. This was the third year in a row that the survey was conducted, and similar to past versions, it was meant to assess the service efforts of our students. This included:

- Percentage of students engaged in service
- Intensity of service (time commitment, number of hours, etc.)
- Community organizations impacted
- Information on service as a requirement
- Reasons why students did not engage in service
- Motivations for students to engage in service
- Impact of service on students

New for the 2012-2013 iteration, the survey also addressed the percentage of students who participated in some aspect of the 2012 fall election cycle, with the intention of examining correlations between service and civic participation. Also newly collected for the 2012-2013 academic year was qualitative data, gathered from a select group of students who had an ongoing service experience.

As with past surveys, data gathered will allow us to gain valuable insights into not only what our students are doing in the community, but also how their experience is affecting them, and what they are learning through the service. Data will also allow us to gain a greater sense of impact on specific community organizations, as well as geographic areas of the St. Louis area. Finally, we hope to identify any gaps related to our students and service to the community, whether in learning outcomes, intensity of service, or student populations engaging in service at lower-than-normal levels.

Methodology

Survey

The survey was administered via email on April 23rd, 2012, to all 13,356 students enrolled at Saint Louis University. This included all undergraduate, graduate, full-time, part-time, and professional students, as well as those enrolled in our Madrid campus. The survey was made available for approximately (2) weeks, and was sent using the University-sponsored survey tool, Qualtrics©. Three reminders were also sent to students periodically over the course of the survey.

3,077 students participated in the survey, resulting in a 23% response rate. This rate was higher than the 2011-2012 survey (22%) as well as the 2010-2011 version (16%). The 2012-2013 version collected specific demographic data on the students who took the survey, which included:

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
Results seem to indicate that sample is fairly representative for Race/Ethnicity, and very representative regarding University Status (exact percentages in fact). For Gender, females seemed to disproportionately complete the survey. Under College/School, students from the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Health Sciences completed the survey at a much higher rate, with students from the School of Nursing and Other completing it at a lower rate. Still, for the most part, the sample collected seems reasonably representative.

Qualitative Study

As mentioned earlier, a qualitative study was also conducted on a select group of students who had been connected to ongoing service opportunities by the Center for Service and Community Engagement. 60 students were selected to participate in a four-question, open-ended survey, meant to
more deeply measure impact and learning. Students were offered $5 in Billiken Bucks to complete the survey. 29 students fully participated and completed the survey.

Key Findings – Student Survey on Service

The following are several key findings and themes from data collected from the Student Survey on Service. Key findings are broken down into five categories: 1.) General Results, 2.) Barriers to Engaging in Service, 3.) Community Sites, 4.) Voting and Service, 5.) Student Motivations and Impact.

NOTE: For purposes of this survey, service was defined as “The giving of your time to assist a community organization (e.g. school, non-profit, church, government agency, etc.), in which no monetary payment was received”.

1.) General Results

- **80% of SLU students who responded engaged in service** at least once during the 2012-2013 school year. This marks the third consecutive year achieving a rate of at least 80%, and this rate is **more than three times that of college students nationwide (26.1%)**, as measured by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

- **3,722 instances of service were reported**, totaling **229,525 hours from August-May**. This is significantly higher than in previous years, as highlighted in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Service Hours</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-'11</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-'12</td>
<td>175,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-'13</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **55% of students who engaged in service did so on an ongoing basis (2-3 times per month)**. This is the same level reported in 2011-2012.

- **Less than half** of all service (48%) was done to satisfy a requirement, down from 51% in 2011-2012.

- The two most common requirements for service were **Service-Learning Courses** and **Student Organization Membership**. **Student Conduct Violations made up only 1% of all required service.**

2.) Barriers To Engaging in Service

- For students who did NOT engage in service, **the primary reason was “Lack of Time” (71%)**, followed by “Unsure of How to Get Involved (14%).

- **“Lack of Transportation” was highlighted as the primary reason by only 6% of student respondents**, which is incongruent with a commonly held belief amongst key staff members in the area of service.
• Students who DID engage in service were asked what the biggest challenge for them getting involved. “Finding the Time” was again the overwhelming response, also at 71%. “Coordinating Transportation” was next at 14%.

• Least challenging for both sets of students were “Reluctance to Leave Campus” (1%) and “Concerns for Safety/Security (1%). This is reassuring in terms of our students being willing to step outside the “SLU Bubble”, and not being fearful of places off-campus.

3.) Community Sites

• As with previous years, data on location and intensity of service was collected and analyzed to determine sites which received the most number of student volunteers and the most contact hours. Results are as follows:

Table 2: Community Sites Most Impacted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top sites with regards to Number of Student Volunteers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Health Resource Center (101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Campus Kitchen (75)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Habitat For Humanity (66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Urban FUTURE Mentoring Program (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Louis Crisis Nursery (58)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top sites with regards to Number of Hours:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Health Resource Center (2,753)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Saint Louis University Hospital (2,684)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Louis Public Schools (2,283)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Big Brothers Big Sisters (1,782)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Campus Kitchen (1,674)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• The Top Ten Sites by Number of Volunteers had 563 combined students, or 15% of the total instances.

• Make A Difference Day was the again the most often mentioned program by which students engaged in service.

• As with previous years, the two most popular fields to serve in were Healthcare and Youth.
4.) Voting and Service

- Since 2012 was a major election cycle, students were asked if they participated in any local, state or federal elections during Fall 2012, with the intention of comparing service levels with voting activity. This was the first time such a question was asked.
- **69% of students voted, higher than the national average for college students** in the Fall 2012 elections (60%), as measured by The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).
- **84% of students who voted also volunteered, while only 72% of students who did not vote volunteered**, as can be seen in Table 3.
- **Students who voted also seemed more likely to engage in Ongoing Service**, as can be seen in Table 4.

5.) Student Motivations and Impact

- **Top Motivations** for students to engage in service were:
  - “To make a positive difference in my community” (72% were “Strongly Motivated”)
  - “To help others in need”. (72%)
- **Lowest Motivations** for students were:
  - “To meet others or to socialize” (25%)
  - “To further promote SLU’s culture of service” (28%).
- Noted differences on motivations from the 2011-2012 Student Survey on Service include:
  - 43% of students were strongly motivated to engage in service “To work for social justice equality, compared to 38% in 2011-2012.
  - 33% of students were strongly motivated to engage in service “Because their faith or spiritual tradition inspired” them, compared to 30% in 2011-2012.
- **Top Impacts** of service on students included:
“A greater respect of others’ differences and diverse backgrounds” (93% either Strongly Agreed or Agreed)
“Enriched my personal identity, e.g. self-understanding, values and beliefs” (89%).
- 84% of students were “moved to a deeper concern for social justice and equality”.
- The Lowest Impact of service on students was “Encouraged me to become more involved in the democratic process” (42% Strongly Agreed or Agreed). Only 39% Strongly Agreed or Agreed with this statement in 2011-2012.
- 65% of students had their faith or spirituality strengthened or reaffirmed (62% in 2011-2012).

Key Findings – Qualitative Study

New to the 2012-2013 Student Survey on Service was a qualitative assessment performed on 29 students who engaged in Ongoing Service, meaning they volunteered on a regular basis at the same site for the majority of the school year. Students were asked to respond to four questions that focused on the following:

1.) Relationships and Connections Formed with People and Community
2.) Connections between Service and Social Justice
3.) Effect of Service on Career/Vocation
4.) Linkages between Service and Faith/Spirituality

Key findings for each area are listed below, along with select quotes from students.

Relationships and Connections Formed with People and Community

- All students formed relationships with at least one person during their service experience.
- Most students felt a stronger connection to a specific community through their service, i.e. the immigrant population or at-risk youth in a particular neighborhood in North St. Louis.
- Over half identified something specific that they learned from the people they served.
- Select quotes include:

  “My time at Mission St. Louis has been wonderful. Sometimes problems in our world can seem very removed from a college student’s life, but volunteering weekly has shown me that this is not true. There are problems that can be fixed just around the corner from SLU and there is so much we can do in the effort.”

  “Hearing stories [of the people I worked with] continuously paints my view of the struggles of people in poverty in a compassionate and empathetic light that I then share with my friends and family. In a way, working with these populations evokes a deeper sense of ownership of my enrollment at Saint Louis University because I have worked with those that the city does not typically want its residents to see.”
Connections between Service and Social Justice

- Most students were able to connect their service experience to at least one specific issue of social justice (education, poverty, healthcare, etc.)
- Several students spoke about a desire to do more in addressing a specific issue, and a few had already engaged in advocacy efforts.
- Some students spoke with great knowledge about the policy surrounding the particular issue of justice related to their service.
- Select quotes include:

  “After spending more and more time [with the kids I tutored], I have gone to more talks and tried to gather information on the subject of the public education system because I did not know anything about it. It makes me want to tell my friends and get the word out about what can be done to help kids who are struggling in school.”

  “I think hospitals should have a better understanding of patients’ needs. There is only a 75% satisfaction on the level I worked in the Hospital. This level needs to be improved, because health care is not free here in the United States. I feel inspired to advocate for free health care and better satisfaction between patients and medical staff.”

Effect of Service on Career/Vocation

- Several students said that their service experience had an effect on their career or vocational path:
  - 13 students had their career aspirations or post-graduation plans reinforced; i.e. they felt reassured of going into healthcare, becoming a social worker, doing a year of service, etc.
  - 5 students intend to now change their academic focus and/or career aspirations. Two of these five are now planning to do a year of service after graduation.
- The remaining 11, while reporting that their service experience did not necessarily impact their career or vocation, did comment on their desire to continue to serve in their communities after graduation.
- Select quotes include:

  “Even though my major is criminal justice and I plan to attend law school, I would say that my experience will stay with me through that and one day affect my work. For example I would be more open to providing legal counsel for low income families for little to no cost, because I understand the needs they have but cannot always meet with no money.”

  “Working at Places for People has definitely solidified my decision to become a Social Worker, not just by exposing to a population that I find intriguing and in need of serious aid, but also in confirming my passion for service and consequential decisions to devote a year of my life volunteering after graduation.”

  “My service created a total 180 on what I wanted to do after I graduate. I always knew I wanted to make a difference in children’s lives, I just did not know exactly what way. Doing Ready Readers helped me decide that...”
I was going to make a difference in the lives of young children from low-income families.”

**Linkages Between Service and Faith/Spirituality**

- 19 of the 29 students commented on a specific link between their faith or spirituality and their service experience. This number (65%) mirrors the findings on Impact and Faith from the quantitative results (also 65%).
  - Nine of these students had their faith lives strengthened as a result of their service
  - Five commented on how it reinforced their spirituality, but did not necessarily strengthen it
  - The remaining five spoke more on how their faith and/or spirituality inspired them to serve
- 10 students commented that their faith had nothing to do with their service, or vice versa.
- Select quotes include:
  
  “My faith helps to keep me strong in my service work. When working with almost anybody at Almost Home, I can see God working through them. These people show a joy for their work and the mothers show determination. I am learning that if I keep my faith and am motivated I can do anything just like these mothers.”

  “Although I think my faith and spirituality have inspired me to give back, I think my passion for teaching others, my parents and other role models along with my Catholic and Jesuit education have pushed me to volunteer and be a servant leader every day.”

  “My Catholic upbringing was a major component in switching my major to Social Work. I have Grown up in a culture that encourages giving one's whole self for the good of another, and it is an attitude I have tried to continue to cultivate throughout my college career. The populations I have come to know at Places For People endure injustices that are difficult to process, at times, but I believe it is the strength of my faith that pushes me forward to see the beauty in each person, the blessing in every situation, and the opportunity for change in our social systems.”