Service-Learning as a Path to Virtue: The Ideal Orator in Professional Communication

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This article examines service-learning as a means to bridge the gap between practical courses in the curriculum such as professional communication, which are linked to a market-economy, and the ideal of public service. By outlining ways in which service-learning has been used in the professional communication field, and problems and concerns with its use, the author explores the charge of "vocationalism." The historical connection between rhetoric and professional communication is developed through a detailed case study analysis covering the author's partnership with a non-profit organization over several semesters. The author suggests that when used with care and reflection, service-learning can be a path toward virtue for students, helping them to inculcate a public service ideal.

In a recent article, V. A. Howard, relying on a detailed study by Engell and Dangerfield (1998), decries "the market-model university" and its adverse effects on the humanities. According to Howard (1999), the market-model leads to "pegboard vocationalism," a term he coined to describe a belief held by many students and parents that higher education's primary responsibility is to prepare students to fit into an array of job slots. In Howard's opinion, this view has led to a decline in the enrollment in and a devaluing of the humanities, resulting in coarsening values and a general loss of concern for public service ideals (p. 125).

As a professional writing program director in an English department at a major technological, research-oriented university, I read Howard's article with interest. The modifier "professional" is integral to my work: I am responsible for preparing students for "job slots." Yet, while acknowledging that responsibility, I reject the notion that what my colleagues and I teach, despite its clearly practical nature, must be vocational in Howard's pejorative sense. Nor do I believe that, even if a field has a practical approach toward the economy, such a field must, by its nature, devalue the ideals of public service. My beliefs are predicated upon a strong connection between my field and classical rhetoric. Such a connection opens up opportunities for examining the civic values of rhetoric extolled by classical rhetoricians (e.g., Aristotle, Quintilian, Isocrates, Cicero) and integrating them into current pedagogy.

Classical Rhetoric and Service-Learning

Classical rhetoricians were concerned with preparing young men[1] for their roles as citizens by teaching them to be skilled persuasive speakers in various situations (e.g., legal, political, and ceremonial) for both public and private audiences. They taught practical skills to be used for the common good. For instance, in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle addressed human conduct in relation to activities that maintain community life (1954; Miller, 1989). He spoke of the orator's duty to "attempt not only to prove the points mentioned but also to show that the good or the harm, the honor or disgrace, the justice or injustice, is great or small" (1954, 1359b19-23). Learning rhetoric was "useful" (1355b9), but it also had a "moral purpose" (1355b19).

Other classical rhetoricians and educators, such as Isocrates and Quintilian, had similar goals for teaching rhetoric. Isocrates (1990) sought to use rhetoric and oratory to advocate interests that bind communities together (Papillon, 1995), arguing that the "art of discourse . . . is the source of most of our blessings. . . . and if it were not for this we should not be able to live together" (p. 50). In *De Oratore*, Cicero (1969) builds on Aristotle and Isocrates by promoting the need to prepare orators—citizens who, by uniting wisdom and eloquence and integrating theoretical and practical knowledge, work to shape the community's political life. According to Cicero, the orators' importance lies in their ability to "bring help to the suppliant, to raise up those that are cast down, to bestow security, to set free from peril, to maintain men in their civil rights" (I, viii). Quintilian (1972) extended Cicero's ideals to produce speakers and writers who had their communities' best aims at heart (Murphy, 1987). In his *Institutes of Oratory*, Quintilian explained that he wanted each orator,

"whose character [he was] seeking to mould, [to] be . . . a true statesman, not in the discussions of study, but in the actual practice and experience of life" (p. 126). In his mind this could only happen with "the broadest education," (p. 126) which would be applied to human affairs. All these rhetoricians are part of a tradition that helped to shape our western educational system's core (Barber, 1992, 1994; Halloran, 1976; Marrou, 1964), a tradition rich with evidence that higher education's mission in general is to be of practical service to society (Boyer, 1990; Wallenfelt, 1986; Waterman, 1997).

Many scholars and educators in my field see professional communication as classical rhetoric's direct descendant (Deans, 2000; Halloran, 1976; Johnson, 1998; Miller, 1989; Reynolds, 1992; Whitburn, 1984). As a result, we see our mission as practical in what Richard Bernstein calls the "high" sense: we see it tied to the Aristotelian notion of *praxis*, which involves human conduct (C. Miller, 1989; T. Miller, 1991). This connection has led a recent movement for many in our field to consider service-learning as a pedagogical strategy, which enables us not only to teach our students practical skills but also to address the civic issues involved in using those skills. Thus, we see our goals for implementing service-learning as similar to those of Isocrates and Quintilian: we want to teach a useful skill set, but we also want to inculcate a sense of civic idealism.

Many educators, to include Howard, see service-learning as having a strengthening effect for the humanities and liberal education in general (e.g., Barber, 1992; Checkoway, 2001; Taylor, 1995, to name just a few). I have seen its positive effects, and in this article, I interrogate the value of service-learning pedagogy as a bridge between a practical, "market-driven" focus and a humanistic, service-oriented one when teaching a practical course. In so doing, I outline ways in which service-learning has been used, discuss problems and concerns with its use, and offer, by presenting a case study from my own use, how service-learning may serve to unite conflicting goals embedded in the terms "service" and "learning." My goal is to address the tensions at the hyphen—between service and learning, organizations and clients, workplace preparation and civic literacy, and to show that, when used with care and reflection, service-learning can be a bridge or a path toward virtue and can create ideal orators in the classical sense defined by Quintilian (1972): orators and citizens who put their knowledge and skills to work for the common good.

Because the study of rhetoric has been intimately connected with civic participation and service since the 5th century B.C.E, an infusion of contemporary theory and practice of service-learning does not revitalize my field so much as it builds upon a pedagogical goal and praxis that is two-and-a-half millennia old. By integrating the "two complex concepts: community action, the 'service,' and efforts to learn from that action and connect what is learned to existing knowledge, the 'learning,'" (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999, p. 2) we in these more professional, market-driven fields can create a "symbiotic relationship" (Migliore, quoted in Jacoby, 1996, p. 5) not only between the two concepts, but also between those served and those serving (Coles, 1993).

The Debate about Vocationalism

The accusation that my field, professional communication,[2] is utilitarian or vocational is quite common, particularly among members of my own department, many of whom teach literature, one field that Howard points to as declining or threatened. It is interesting that concerns about the professional communication field do not come just from those outside our field. In a recent article in *Technical Communication Quarterly*, one of the field's top journals, Jack Bushnell (1999) argues that we in professional communication have "become training departments for corporate 'clients' who provide us with internships and fellowships for our students, and ever increasing numbers of good-paying jobs for our graduates" (pp. 175-76). As "training departments," he believes that we are losing sight of our "mission as college and university teachers . . . to prepare our students to be critical thinkers," who are responsible not only for reporting information to serve their companies but also for writing future decisions that could affect larger communities (p. 177). Bushnell's concerns are neither new nor unique to members of our field. Others who approach our field from very different theoretical positions, such as Patrick Moore (1999), have raised similar concerns about our role as teachers, about "how professors define technical communication," and about how that definition influences what gets taught (pp. 211-12). Moore, for example, also addresses the issue of training; however, he is concerned that, due to an over-emphasis on rhetoric and theory, we are not preparing our students effectively enough to enter the job market, a position almost diametrically opposite, in aim and curricular emphasis, from Bushnell's. Taken as two competing positions inside our discipline, Moore and Bushnell represent the horns of a dilemma that Carolyn Miller (1989) described over a decade ago when she explained that "courses and programs in

technical writing are both praised and damned for being 'practical,'" which to Miller, "suggests a certain attitude or mode of learning" (p. 14).

As a teacher and program administrator, I take the debate about training and learning seriously. The three issues outlined above—our "mission as college and university teachers," the question of "how professors define technical communication," and the attitudes we have toward learning—are concerns, I would argue, that we cannot afford to take lightly. We in professional communication are at a critical place in our discipline's development (Staples, 1999), and I am thankful for voices such as Bushnell's and Moore's. They are creating necessary conversation about our disciplinary goals, conversation that is also applicable beyond our field. Because our programs are growing and our status in and out of the academy is increasing, along with the status of our graduates (Geonetta, 1997), those of us in the more practical fields need to talk about curricula and come to definitions we can agree upon in order to "meet the disciplinary responsibility of preparing students to meet citizenship and workplace responsibility with integrity as well as with knowledge and skill" (Meyer & Bernhardt, 1997; Staples, 1999, p. 161). Meeting this responsibility is critical as we work to create what Billie Wahlstrom (1997) calls a "unified vision of our discipline" (p. 303), one in which professional communicators "emerge as educated decision maker(s) whose professional decisions are informed by critical thinking skills, theory, application, ethics, communication ability, and knowledge about technology," (Staples & Ornatowski, 1997, p. xii) so that they may be valued members of their workplaces and society.

Service-learning is a topic in recent curricular discussions outlining ways we in professional and technical writing might prepare students to think critically and become educated decision makers. In the past five years, educators have begun to demonstrate that service-learning, used in what Deans (2000) has called "writing for the community," has the potential to improve academic learning for, and inculcate civic ideals in, students in professional communication courses (Hafer, 1999; Heilker, 1997; Henson & Sutliff, 1998; Huckin, 1997; Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999).[3] Based upon the case studies I have read and my own experience with this pedagogy, I am convinced that service-learning, used fully and reflectively, helps students develop the critical thinking skills Bushnell advocates; it also prepares students for the workplace in a more comprehensive way than many other pedagogical strategies because students apply what they have learned by working with real audiences. Most importantly, it helps students to meet their citizenship responsibilities. Service-learning pedagogy enables us to make our courses "a matter of *conduct* rather than of production" [italics in original] and to bridge the theory/praxis and academe/workplace splits Miller (1989) highlighted because it is practical in the fullest sense (p. 23). Students learn the skills they'll need in the workplace, and they gain a practical wisdom (*phronesis*) that enables them to be critical citizens.

Service-learning is a valuable and powerful pedagogy, but integrating it fully and reflectively into professional/technical communication courses is not easy. Even as the evidence for its value mounts, so does the evidence for problems and concerns associated with it. For example, the logistics of working with organizations in the community are complicated; and coordinating projects requires significant effort and time from teachers, students, and community partners. There are also problems associated with projects that are not done well. Such problems may increase the divide between academe and community, particularly if the students' projects are done poorly or if the students believe that their projects would have been better if the community partner had been more available.

Logistics and time are just a few of the problems. Others include asking students to write for communities they do not know, which can lead to frustration for both the students and the community partners (Bacon, 1997). Then there are problems in motivating students to go beyond the instrumental course goals. Sometimes, even when a course is well planned, some students will see service as "lame" because they see the course's goal (or their own) is limited to "improv[ing] [their] technical skills" (Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999, p. 391). If we, as educators, accept that argument about the centrality of technical skills and production, still more problems may occur because of the vocational or credential building emphasis. With that emphasis, students may miss the point of the service altogether, or so minimize its value that the civic learning is limited (Adler-Kassner & Collins, 1994; Lisman, 1998; Mattson, 1998). Finally, if we emphasize service, but refer to it as volunteering rather than as working to effect change, students may simply see their service as a charitable contribution. While charity has positive features, focusing on volunteering tends to result in a sense of altruism in students—they "feel good about themselves and their work," (as did one of my business writing students), but few long-term benefits for the community or society result (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Morton, 1995; Rhoads, 1997).

These problems and concerns are real; I have

experienced them all in courses I have taught using service-learning pedagogy. But they can be overcome, and when they are, the benefits to students, the community, and our discipline are worth the effort. Students who participate in a class that balances service and learning and establishes partnerships with community organizations with change, not charity, as the goal are more likely to become citizens who use their rhetorical abilities for society's good. They become rhetoricians for change (Cushman, 1996).

I intend for this essay to continue the conversation about the need for curricular reform by extending and modifying the argument advanced by Matthews and Zimmerman (1999) that we integrate service-learning into our curricula. Some of their suggestions are excellent, particularly the recommendation to "develop and maintain close relationships with…nonprofit organizations" over extended periods (p. 401). Other suggestions about how to accomplish this integration, however, such as requiring students to apply for these service-learning courses or offering a two-semester sequence, are problematic (pp. 397-400). If the reason for integrating service-learning lies in our desire to prepare students to meet citizenship and workplace responsibilities, limiting enrollment defeats that goal. As for having a two-semester sequence, such a solution could work for our professional communication majors/minors (and we should consider it), but it would be a luxury that most students who take our technical and business writing courses and their departments cannot afford. Thus, instead of complicating the curriculum by adding hurdles or additional courses, I argue that most solutions lie within individual teachers' grasps: many problems outlined result from the ways in which service-learning is defined, framed, and taught.

To make my argument, I begin by defining service-learning, focusing on the need to achieve a balance between service and learning. In a classroom that achieves such a balance, students shift from a perspective that focuses more on production to one that focuses on conduct by developing reciprocal relationships with their organizations. An interesting point to note is that when the balance is achieved, the emphasis on conduct does not diminish students' enthusiasm for the course nor does it result in students losing sight of the positive benefits they gain from this experiential learning type. Finally, I suggest that service-learning should be mandatory for all professional communication curricula if we are interested in bridging academe and workplace and assisting our students to become ideal orators who meet their citizenship responsibilities.

What is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is neither easily defined nor practiced (Adler-Kassner, 2000; Kendall, 1990). As I have come to understand and practice it, the pedagogy combines three axes: *learning* (establishing clearly defined academic goals), *serving* (applying what one learns for the communal/societal benefit), and *reflecting* (thoughtful engagement about the service-learning work's value). Service-learning is *learning-by-doing* for others.

When students participate in service-learning, they

> participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and then reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, *a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility* [italics added]. (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222)

In order to meet the needs of their community, students must learn to deepen connections and relationships with their partners. As they deepen these relationships, they gain a better understanding of others and the contexts in which they live. Then, because they develop these relationships, they begin to *care* about their community and seek to improve it. Kahne and Westheimer (1996) call this model of service-learning the "change" model, explaining that change, as opposed to charity, adds a political dimension to the learning and helps students become more civic-oriented by asking them to think more critically about their role in society as they develop a reciprocal relationship with their organizations (p. 595). The emphasis on service's civic nature addresses arguments that challenge using the word "service" because it "suggests inequality among the participants," implies oppression, or connotes charity in a negative, self-righteous sense (Jacoby, 1996, p. 8). This emphasis also renews the universities' civic mission and prepares students to more fully participate in our social institutions (Barber, 1992, p. 248).

By providing opportunities for our students to work with community partners, we prepare them to participate in society, helping them become what Quintilian (1972) calls "ideal orators." Service-learning in the change model is the vehicle for such preparation; it involves connecting our classrooms to the world beyond campus while creating an ethical base for learning (Boyer, 1994; Coye, 1997). It focuses on "how-to" *and* restores a link between citizenship and service that has historically been a concern of our educational system (Barber, 1992; Barber, 1994; Boyer, 1990; Boyte, 1993; Miller,

1989; Staples, 1997; Waterman, 1997). Because service-learning is concerned with getting things done for the common good, students gather the necessary "know how" along with an opportunity to bridge theory and practice by taking the knowledge they accumulate and applying it to human affairs (Whitburn, 1984, p. 229).

I draw on Quintilian (1972), specifically, because I have come to believe, as Whitburn (1984) did, that the "beginnings of a model for addressing our current problems in professional communication" are present in his works (p. 228). According to Quintilian, the ideal orator was "a good man, skilled in speaking" (p. 118). Quintilian's emphasis was on goodness and skill, and on an inherent virtue that the orator uses for the common good. The ideal orator is "no specialist"; rather, because "all knowledge is his province" and because he is willing to put that knowledge to work for the common good, the orator reveals himself, as I indicated earlier, "'in the actual practice and experience of life'" (Quintilian, quoted in Whitburn, p. 228). He bridges gaps by reaffirming human capability and "performing well in particular cases" (p. 233).

By emphasizing the importance of working with community members and applying what is learned in the classroom to "particular cases" in order to solve problems, service-learning becomes the path to virtue that Quintilian advocates. This work recognizes how knowledge is situated and the need for individual rather than prescriptive solutions. Problem-solving in these instances is not a narrowly utilitarian term (Boyte, 1993, p. 63); nor is it linked to charity, a common complaint about service-learning (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999; Morton, 1995). Instead, solving problems engages students as both practitioners and citizens who use their knowledge and skills to work for their organizations and for the entire society (Whitburn, 1984).

From Charity to Change

Thus far, I have mentioned two competing models for service-learning: charity and change. As I indicated earlier, I borrow these models from Kahne and Westheimer (1996), who by asking "in service of what?" define goals in terms of learning and community change. In their "charity" model, learning focuses on giving, and the service aspect adds to the learning experience. It is this model that I see many in our discipline practicing. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this model, it is incomplete if we are seeking to meet our civic responsibilities by helping students gain a "broader appreciation of the discipline" and become educated citizens who participate actively in their communities to solve problems and effect change (Cushman, 1996).

In Kahne and Westheimer's "change" model, learning focuses on caring, which is linked to creating more lasting relationships among service-learning participants in order to encourage students to reflect critically on social conditions and individual responsibilities. This model is better suited to achieving the goals outlined by Meyer and Bernhardt (1997), Staples (1997), Wahlstrom (1997), and others because the service experience, valued equally with the learning, enhances how students understand citizenship and helps them shift from a self-oriented to an other-oriented focus. Students not only see the benefits inherent in this kind of learning-by-doing; they also see the value inherent in working with community partners to solve problems, and they begin to recognize that they have a responsibility to continue that work as they move from academia to the workplace.

For the past two years, working to move from a charity model to a change model, I have seen this model's benefits for students and their service-learning partners. In this section, by describing changes in student attitudes between two successive workplace writing course semesters, I illustrate the differences between the two models. These differences manifested themselves in three ways: 1) students emphasized their contributions to the community instead of emphasizing how the course prepared them for the workplace; 2) students and the service-learning partners worked more closely together, and by doing so, eliminated some of the problems dealing with coordination and commitment; 3) students did not see the work as charity, as something they were "giving" to those less fortunate; instead they saw the work as an opportunity to get involved in their community and work to solve problems.

Basic Course Structure

In both semesters the major project in the course was a collaborative project involving a community organization. In the first semester, there were 24 students; in the second semester, 23. I designed the course so that the service-learning projects were worth 45% of the semester grade. In the first semester, I offered students the option to choose a project involving a nonprofit organization or an unsolicited recommendation report with an invoked client (a college administrator responsible for the promotional materials of any college in the University); in the second, the service-learning was mandatory. All of the students in both semesters chose the service-learning project. They worked in teams and completed service-learning agreements

with our University Service-Learning Center. These agreements outlined their responsibilities and provided an opportunity for them to conduct an initial audience analysis by learning about their organization's mission, history, and structure.

The project followed Huckin's model (1997), with some checks and balances that I added throughout the semester: a bid proposal that the client has to approve, a progress report—sometimes two, the project itself, an oral presentation, and a reflection report submitted at semester's end. All interaction with organizations was conducted on site (at the YMCA for instance) or at a site chosen by the team and the site representative (sometimes the site representative would meet the students on campus to save them a long drive). I stayed in touch with the organizations throughout the semester by phone and email, asking them to complete evaluations on the teams' progress during the project, but I didn't participate in the teams' meetings. At the term's end, the students presented their finished projects to the class, got feedback, and then revised them for their organizations. After the students presented their projects to the organizations, I asked for and received evaluations from the organizations, which I factored into the project grade.

My students worked with six organizations each term (e.g., YMCA, the Free Clinic of the New River Valley, the Montgomery County Office of Youth, and Giles County Housing Development Authority) to produce a range of products (e.g., annual reports, newsletters, brochures, Web sites). All of these organizations had requested help via the University Service-Learning Center because they were short-handed, and they were glad to have collaborative teams of three to five students offer whatever help we could give them.

Documenting Change

My course structure and the project design, as outlined above, remained constant. However, as I became aware that my students were focusing more on self than on others and were not developing reciprocal relationships with their organizations—in essence, as I became aware that we were not really involved in service-learning as I defined it earlier, I altered my course materials, my approach (such as making it mandatory rather than optional), and even the language I used to describe service-learning. The revisions resulted in significant changes in the students' perceptions of, and attitudes to, their projects and to service-learning. To illustrate how the students' perceptions about the value of the service-learning projects stem, to a large degree, from my emphasis and focus rather than from any problems or deficiencies in the students, let me offer a table and two stories.

First, the table (see Table 1 below). In it, I categorize comments from two successive semesters that students made on anonymous, end-of-course questionnaires that accompany the instructor evaluation form. I use the end-of-course evaluations because, more so than in reflection reports and journals, students tend to be frank and less likely to tone down any criticism; they know that I am not the primary audience. In addition, these forms, unlike the reflection reports, are not evaluated, and I do not see them until after the semester is over. In these questionnaires, standard in our department, students are asked only two questions: 1) "What has been most beneficial to you about this course, and why?" 2) "What suggestions do you have, if any, for improving it?"

To distinguish among their comments about the project's value, I created five categories: 1) comments about the project's value; 2) comments about career enhancement as an important benefit; 3) comments about service's value in general; 4) comments about service being perceived as a means to help others, as charity; and 5) comments about service being valuable because problems affecting quality of life and ability to support others needs in the community are solved.

Table 1
Changes in Student Perception

	Value of service-learning project	Service-Learning as Career-enhancement	Service as valuable (in general)	Service as "helping"	Service as solving problems and/or meeting needs
Before (Charity Model) (24 students)	22	19	5	5	1
After (Change Model) (23 students)	23	20	17	3	9

The table provides comparative data on responses to the first questions. In both semesters, most students mentioned the project as the course's most beneficial aspect. The differences, however, are in the nature of the benefits. In the first semester, labeled my charity model, nearly 90% of the students mention the career-enhancing benefits, but only 20% mention the value of the service, and these students frame that value in terms of helping or charity (one student talked about it as both helping and solving problems). In the second semester, however, after I redefined the course goals and shifted my emphases, the number of students mentioning service as a valuable benefit increased nearly 60% (to 78% from 20%). About 40% of those students saw the value of the service in terms of problem-solving or change. Most interesting is that even with this shift in emphasis toward service, there is little change in the emphasis the students placed on the project's practical, career-enhancing value. Elevating the importance of service did not result in any corresponding diminishment in learning or the benefits of production.

Now the two stories—the first from the fall semester, the second from the spring. Here I rely on student comments from their written work: reflection reports, journals, and online discussion lists. The first story is about a group of young women who worked with the YMCA to learn about the different programs that the YMCA offered and the ways in which the YMCA serves the community in order to create an annual report. These students began by meeting with the associate director to understand what the YMCA wanted in terms of content and layout. Then, after learning what programs were offered, they began a long process of interviewing program directors, volunteers, and participants in programs in order to write articles for the report. By semester's end, they had put a lot of time in the fact-finding, writing, designing, and editing. The end result, minus the budget, which was not ready by semester's end, was an annual report that was clear, well organized, and professional. The YMCA published the report (adding only the budget) as written and designed by the students. The associate director said that the "report helped to bring a new perspective, which was needed." She also said that the "writing style made reading enjoyable."

All told, the students were understandably proud of their accomplishment. But how they described their achievement is telling. Their emphasis was primarily on career enhancement and secondarily on "helping." Only once, in a six-page reflection report, did they mention any benefits that the YMCA would accrue or anything about the populations that the YMCA served. Here are a few excerpts, including the one reference to "helping":

> Through this project, we both have gained the knowledge we did not have coming into the project that we will be able to take with us as we pursue our careers. We have an activity to put on our resumes that we can discuss with a potential employer so that they can see that we have had experience in the workplace.

> We learned real world concepts and applied them. We liked working for an organization, but at times, we felt distanced; even though they were our client, we didn't feel a strong commitment.

> We learned other things as well. By actually creating the product, we were able to see how the YMCA helps people, and we were also helping people by writing articles about the success of the YMCA.

Reading their report and working with them during the semester, I believe that they learned about an organization that works to "empower others to achieve shared goals that promote the common good" (interview with director). But, based on their comments, it appears that what they valued most was what they learned in terms of skills, having an opportunity to practice those skills in a "real" setting, and how that experience would help them in the future. They did gain some larger perspective about the YMCA's place in the community and derived satisfaction from "helping people," but this benefit was clearly secondary. And, when I look for any indication that they perceived their work as effecting change, I found none.

The second story is about a group of three students who worked with the YMCA to write a grant proposal to help fund an after-school program for low income children. These three students had to work closely with the YMCA director to find a granting agency, evaluate the request for proposal, assess the needs of the community being served, and write the grant. This team spent a lot of time working out of class; they had to contact the granting agency, the school where the program would be implemented, and community members who would be affected. In addition, they had to research the issue of childcare availability and cost in order to make a strong case. This work meant digging into county and state statistics and conducting interviews with parents and administrators. By semester's end, they too had a finished product, and they too were proud of their work. However, their reflection report and journal entries had a different slant. Instead of focusing on the benefits they accrued, they focused on the problem they were

trying to solve and how their grant proposal might accomplish the task. Here are a few of their comments:

> Our task wasn't easy. Unlike some of the other groups, we had a very restricted format for our grant. That said, we learned how to come to terms with a problem. Many families in our community (mostly single moms) who need childcare can't afford it. The YMCA, in one of its many efforts to reach out and help people in our community, saw this problem and worked to solve it. We were glad to be a part of this team, and we hope that the grant is funded. Those kids need it!

> Service-learning opened up working and the community; it was real work for people. Not only will I use what I learned, but I feel good about learning—a bit of a new feeling. The organization we worked for has some real needs and few resources. I was surprised to see this; I didn't expect to see poverty here, and children going without. Working with these people and this organization has given me a new set of lenses to see the world outside, a world too few students ever see while in school.

Looking at these excerpts from their reflection report, it seems clear that this group had a different take on the service-learning project than the previous semester's group. Their emphasis is on how their work would serve the community's needs. They talk about being part of a "team" with the organization, rather than having a client relationship. One could argue that the project type they were involved in played a role, and I would have to agree that it may have contributed to their attitude. However, when I take the statistics from the table into account, I know that there is more to it than just the project type. And I believe that the difference lies primarily in the approach I took.

My Approach

My teaching philosophy is predicated on the notion that teaching is a *teche* (an art with a focus on the end—in this case, civic values and practical skills), and that to be successful, teachers must be reflective practitioners who are capable of recognizing problems and who, after identifying problems, work to solve them by making changes in their pedagogy (Cochran-Smith, 1999; Schön, 1995). In the two stories and the table above, I offer evidence that documents some changes in my students' attitudes about service-learning. In the brief section that follows, I describe the process that led to those changes.

I began working with service-learning pedagogy a year prior to the two semesters I discuss above. At first, due to not completely understanding the need to balance service and learning (and the methods necessary to achieve that balance), I treated service-learning as a kind of experiential learning with an added value. I "sold" it to students by emphasizing the practical (instrumental) advantages and added that they would learn to help others. We worked hard, produced good products, and were successful. Our clients used most of the documents we produced, and nearly every client was satisfied; some so much so that they requested more help in subsequent semesters (e.g., the YMCA, as illustrated above). In general, the students and I felt a sense of accomplishment.

We were especially pleased because the organizations we assisted responded positively. For instance, a senior staffer at the Montgomery County Department of Social Services sent her student team and me an email describing the work the student team had done to create a newsletter:

> We are pleased with the newsletter your students have created for us…Their choice of layout, folding design, graphics, and paper resulted in a slick, professional newsletter…We appreciate the students' efforts in giving us ideas and suggestions on how we can improve. All in all, they did us a great service.

I received similar statements from other agencies such as the Village of Newport, which needed newsletters produced in order to seek funds to continue their work to restore their three covered bridges, and from the Blacksburg Senior Center, for whom we produced a basic instruction manual about computer and email use. The work my students produced had tangible effects on the community, bringing people together, sharing news, raising funds for essential human services, and providing necessary instruction.

This success of creating deliverables that met certain criteria and satisfied the clients we worked with, was seductive. So were the positive comments from my students, who, in person and on the anonymous course evaluations, emphasized that they learned what they came to learn (to produce professional documents for clients) and gained experience they could use later. In addition, many noted that their work, the documents they produced, were helpful, which made them feel good.

The success made it harder for me to see the shortcomings in terms of service-learning pedagogy. We were being useful; we were doing good work, work that furthered the organizations' goals we supported. That said, I could see, based upon those same comments, that while what we were doing was good work, we were not "doing good" in

the fullest sense. The emphasis for most students was on how the projects benefited them, not on how, through the projects, they were solving problems for others and making a difference in their communities. And virtually no one talked about change; instead, the few who mentioned service did so by talking about how they felt good because they helped others. While helping is good, it is not sufficient if we seek to develop civic ideals fully. As Cushman (1996) says, "service focuses not on 'helping' others but on joining them as relative equals in a common project of social change" (p. 199).

To shift the emphasis from charity to change, I looked at my course in the mirror. When I did, I saw the reflection of someone who had focused far too much on the instrumental sense of being practical by emphasizing experiential learning's advantages in terms of future employability. In addition, I realized that I had not included the service as a text; instead, I had treated it as an outcome (Morton, 1996). The result? My students were not mentioning service or problem-solving because we were not engaging with the community; I was not helping them achieve reciprocal relationships with their community partners. As far as I could tell, the heart of the problem lay in the course design itself and the manner in which I had implemented service-learning pedagogy.

Definition

As I re-visioned the course, the first problem I addressed was definition. What was service-learning and how did my students understand it? As I examined their course evaluations and reflection reports, I looked for clues that might explain why students seemed to say so little about the projects' civic benefits and/or why they focused so prominently on the instrumental benefits. My first clue had to do with how they defined the relationships with the organizations. All but one of the students talked about the organizations they worked with as "clients." By talking about clients, they were following my lead (I had used the term "client project" in my syllabus and in class), and I was following others' lead in our discipline (Crawford, 1993; Henson & Sutliff, 1998; Huckin, 1997). I believe that the term "client project" worked to undermine the service aspect. Students acted more like consultants for hire. They talked about *working for* clients rather than *working with* partners. In general, this language to some degree predefined the relationship. As a result, an essential element in the service-learning definition—developing a reciprocal relationship with their organization—was not met.

In addition, as stated earlier, I promoted the pedagogy's learning side to motivate the students to tackle the additional work involved with these projects. Looking back at my course documents, my emphasis is evident. The course description emphasizes that students will

> learn how to communicate effectively in the workplace. By reading and writing the kinds of 'real-world' texts that professionals use daily and having opportunities to work collaboratively with organizations/businesses in the community, [they will] learn the essentials of writing clearly, correctly, and concisely.

From stem to stern, from syllabus to semester evaluations, my focus was on the work's practical benefits of what they produced and how it would benefit them and their future careers. The students responded by telling me how they had met the course goals that I had laid out.

Finally, I had not helped them see a full context for service. I had portrayed their work as volunteering, as giving. As a result, students developed an attitude that, while altruistic and noble, did not engage them in citizenship, in being responsive to the community needs by first understanding those needs and then seeking to change the situation to meet those needs (Barber, 1998; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Shutz & Gere, 1998).

Service as Text

Another problem in the way in which I framed the course was that I did not give enough attention to the concept of "service." Keith Morton (1996) argues that if we think of service as a text, we suggest that service is equal to written work in its learning potential. Students also give service more weight when confronted with it in a manner equal to readings about, say, proposal writing (p. 282). During those first semesters, I focused far more attention on the course texts and the student texts than I did on *service as text*. I spent the majority of my time helping students learn the necessary skills in order to ensure that we met the organizations' needs by creating the best documents/products. I did not discuss the idea of service, or issues surrounding the service (e.g., why these organizations had such insufficient resources or why some organizations were funded sufficiently but others were not) until the course's end (to prepare them for the reflection report). Nor did I discuss the actual documents they were preparing, in regards to biases or social and political agendas. By ignoring the service, I gave priority to the texts we were using, thus contributing to the emphasis on producing deliverables. The result was to diminish the concept of service and to emphasize the instrumental tasks. In addition, when combined with my emphasis on a

business rather than a social relationship with the organizations, my students had little to guide them toward establishing reciprocal partnerships.

Course Re-Design

To counter this over-emphasis on training and working toward civic goals, I redesigned the course by refining the service definition, shifting my emphasis, and using service as a text in the course. In so doing, I was able to transform a course that was more heavily weighted on training to one that balanced training and service, and my students' attitudes toward the course improved, even though I required them to serve.

In my re-design, one goal is to expand the notion of service by working at the hyphen. I am convinced that achieving service-learning is most explicitly difficult at the hyphen, a symbol of the reciprocity or "symbiotic relationship" (Migliore, quoted in Jacoby, 1996, p. 5) not only between the two concepts, but also between those served and those serving (Coles, 1993). I have also found that by including an emphasis on the hyphen and thus on my goals for both service and learning, I help my students see the need for achieving reciprocity.

Achieving reciprocity is essential, as is making the course goals explicit. I have come to agree with Joan Schine (1997), who explains that service-learning should begin with clearly stated educational objectives. For her, service-learning must:

- Be rooted in the conviction that schooling at its best concerns itself with the humane application of knowledge to life
- Be carefully introduced and creatively promoted
- Be directed not just to the community but also toward the school itself
- Be focused on something more than preparation for a career
- Be set up so that students not only be asked to go out to serve; they should also be asked to write about their experience and, if possible, discuss with others the lessons they have learned. (p. 187)

These objectives are foundational as I seek to balance service and learning and succeed in helping students grow as citizens, the university and community grow as partners, and all three come together to achieve a version of democratic caring and a true union of the liberal arts and vocational education to achieve a humane direction to education (Dewey, 1944).

To close the gap between service and learning, to work toward reciprocity, I make my pedagogy more explicit. First, I share the objectives listed above with both my students and their "service-learning partners," a term I have adopted to highlight the work's reciprocity and the need to achieve a deeper level of intimacy with the organizations we are supporting. I also add more explicit discussions of the nature of service, addressing its many forms and uses. By introducing readings and short, reflective writing assignments in addition to the final reflection report, I make service a text in the course. With service as a text, we not only talk about how to produce better documents; we also talk about why and for whom. I challenge my students to think about the role(s) they will play in their communities and their obligations to those communities. By integrating the concept of service into the course, students see that it has the same weight and value as layout or style issues.

One of the most important issues that we address is the distinction between charity and change. Focusing on what service means, we discuss how one's attitude toward the work predefines, to some extent, the results. In addition, we also talk about language, focusing on terms such as "client" and "partner." I ask students to write informally about these issues in a NetForum (an online discussion area), then we discuss their responses in class. With a clearer sense of service as change, we talk about the social issues surrounding their projects, highlighting the problems and frustrations that they see their partners, and the individuals their partners serve, experience.

To deepen the relationship with, and encourage more involvement by, the community partners, I have asked the partners to come to class at the semester's beginning and end to share in roundtable discussions about the projects. Having the community members come to class at the beginning helps to bridge the distance between academe and community, and everyone involved gains an understanding for what the semester relationship will entail; at the end our meetings help us see what we have accomplished and what remains to be done. The course-ending meetings are more of a celebration than a briefing, sharing work done well for some greater good. My goal is to make the relationships (between students and agency, faculty and agencies, students and faculty) more in line with Robert Coles's (1993) suggestion that service requires *connections*.

Conclusion

After working with this pedagogy for nearly three years, I have learned that to succeed at service-learning students must build a bridge between service and learning, one that they may have to

cross many times before actually reaching knowledge. The bridge is not uni-directional; in fact, I am convinced that the hyphen in the term "service-learning" applies not only to the space between service and learning for the student; it also applies to the space between the student and the agency or organization the student supports, between the students and the teacher, and between the teacher (as the academy's representative) and the organizations (as the community's representatives). The more omni-directional the movement (between service and learning, student and organization, organization and educational institution), the more likely that reflection, and therefore service-learning, will occur.

Earlier, I shared a few of my students' comments that pointed to their satisfaction and their focus on career building first, and service second. Then, I showed how the changes I made increased the balance between service and learning. I cannot claim that the changes I have begun to make have transformed my classes completely. I do not think transformation happens overnight, and I am still not sure that I have found the right balance of service and learning. That said, I can say that many more students now seem to see their work differently and recognize their civic responsibilities. They also are learning that the work they will do has the potential to effect change. Some students actually write mini-epistles about this change in attitude. Here are two students' ideas about the value of service-learning:

> Many Americans today lose sight of the importance of community service. Distracted by our busy lives, we overlook the positive role we can play in the betterment of our neighborhoods, and how this effort can lead to a happier, healthier America. For much of my college career, I was among those students whose busy lives cause us to be myopic. However, my involvement with the Christiansburg Managing Information in Rural America (MIRA) Team through a service-learning project changed my outlook. My work with MIRA has had a profound impact on my commitment to volunteerism and has solidified my plans to become an active member of my community.

> Service-learning projects offer students a chance to give to the community. Students receive a number of benefits from the New River Valley community, enjoying the transportation system, local libraries, parks, emergency services, and a number of other services that are provided or underwritten by the local governments. Service-learning projects provide a chance to work for a community organization, enabling students to join with community members and participate more fully with them.

These two students worked hard to give something to their partners and their community. They worked to develop a reciprocal relationship. Although it was quite difficult at times (due to group dynamics and the nature of the organization they supported), they still came to see that there is a larger purpose to their service and their schooling.

Asking students to consider a larger purpose to their service and schooling is just the beginning. As we consider curricular questions, we must answer: what is our discipline for? and by extension, what is college for? The answers to those questions vary, naturally, upon whom you ask. However, given service's long tradition at many higher learning institutions and the service tradition that we, in our discipline have, I would argue (as I have elsewhere) that

> The tacit tradition linked to the pejorative term of 'service' needs to be brought out into the open for examination and discussion. We need to 'see' the text that was first written around the time of the Morrill Act, and we need to argue that the very forces that produced the universities and colleges many of us teach in are the same forces that created the need for our courses. We should wear the mantle of *service* [italics in original] proudly as we demonstrate the value of service to the university. We need not hide our relationship with service in order to claim disciplinarity. (1999, p. 42)

If we accept this service mantle, we might also want to expand what that service means and for whom.

Taking the cue from Quintilian, I believe the service is to our students and to society at large. According to Barber, "the university [does not have] a civic mission . . . the university *is* [emphasis added] a civic mission, is civility itself defined as the rules and conventions that permit a community to facilitate conversation and the discourse upon which all knowledge . . . depends" (1992; p. 186). Our mission is to help our students become valuable, viable orators who see their work as important to the communities in which they live. We are responsible for more than giving them skills and knowledge; we need to help them learn to "act through" that knowledge with a sense of responsibility (Johnson, 1998, p. 155). One of the best ways I have found to accomplish that goal is the service-learning pedagogy.

As I have come to understand it, service-learning pedagogy can bridge the gaps and the horns of the dilemma Miller described. Implemented reflectively, it creates a learning attitude that enables stu-

dents to boost critical thinking skills and improve the integration of theory and practice. They learn to do *for* others and themselves by *working with others* in a reciprocal relationship, thus preparing themselves for the workplace and for their place as citizens. As such, the work they produce is truly a matter of conduct. I have also learned that one must be very aware of the tensions inherent in our curriculum and the pedagogy, particularly the tensions at the hyphen—between service and learning, organizations and clients, workplace preparation and civic literacy. The key to success is to make those tensions explicit to students and the agencies they work for by creating truly reciprocal relationships.

Notes

[1] In ancient Greece, only young men were given rights to be citizens, and citizenship was determined by birthright, not wealth (Crowley & Hawhee, 1999).

[2] Professional communication as a term describes the various ways the field in which I work is identified (technical writing, technical communication, technical and scientific communication, business communication, professional writing, and so on). While there are some distinctions that are important (see Sullivan & Porter, 1993, for an overview), they are not essential to the argument that I am making here about vocationalism, service-learning, and civic idealism.

[3] That a major publisher, Allyn and Bacon, has contracted to produce a textbook focusing on service-learning pedagogy in professional communication testifies to its growing stature. This text will follow in the footsteps of the earlier text by Watters and Ford (1994), which focused on service-learning strategies in writing-across-the-disciplines.

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