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## Doing Impacting Being: A Case Study of Service Learning as a Method of Faith and Learning Integration

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### Abstract

C. S. Lewis argues that Christians become more like Christ by practicing to be something they are not: "Pretense leads up to the real thing . . . very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you had it already" (Lewis, 1952, p. 160). Likewise, educators indicate that when students practice and apply their learning "true understanding is demonstrated" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 67). Even Jesus, the Master Teacher, modeled experiential integration in training His disciples (Matthew 10:1-15; Luke 9:1-6; Mark 6:7-13). Doing impacts being—what we do and experience shapes what we think and who we become. Engaging students in authentic experiences helps bridge the gap between academics and the real world. Service learning offers experiences in education where learning occurs through action and reflection as students work to alleviate community problems (Eyler & Giles, as cited in Brescia, Mullins, & Miller, 2009). Different than extracurricular service projects, service learning in the academic context includes relevant service activities that are connected to course and academic material through critical thinking and reflective activities (Roberts, 2008). This study analyzed methods for faith and learning integration through classroom service learning projects and short-term missions activities that were directly related to the academic courses and professions.

## **Doing Impacting Being: A Case Study of Service Learning as a Method of Faith and Learning Integration**

Calvin G. Roso, Oral Roberts University

### **Abstract**

C. S. Lewis argues that Christians become more like Christ by practicing to be something they are not: “Pretense leads up to the real thing . . . very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you had it already” (Lewis, 1952, p. 160). Likewise, educators indicate that when students practice and apply their learning “true understanding is demonstrated” (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 67). Even Jesus, the Master Teacher, modeled experiential integration in training His disciples (Matthew 10:1-15; Luke 9:1-6; Mark 6:7-13). Doing impacts being—what we do and experience shapes what we think and who we become. Engaging students in authentic experiences helps bridge the gap between academics and the real world. Service learning offers experiences in education where learning occurs through action and reflection as students work to alleviate community problems (Eyler & Giles, as cited in Brescia, Mullins, & Miller, 2009). Different than extracurricular service projects, service learning in the academic context includes relevant service activities that are connected to course and academic material through critical thinking and reflective activities (Roberts, 2008). This study analyzed methods for faith and learning integration through classroom service learning projects and short-term missions activities that were directly related to the academic courses and professions.

### **Introduction**

Faith and learning integration (FLI) is a common concern in Christian academic circles (Claerbaut, 2004; Holmes, 1975; Steeg, 2012) and is defined as “a scholarly project whose goal is to ascertain and to develop integral relationships which exist between Christian faith and human knowledge . . . in the various academic disciplines” (Hasker, 1992, p. 231). The goal of FLI is to train students to de-compartmentalize faith from the rest of their lives—to train them to holistically connect biblical truths

and academics for the purpose of life application (Claerbaut, 2004; Harris, 2004; Holmes, 1975; Morton, 2004). The professor at a Christian college promotes faith and learning integration through a variety of curriculum and instructional methods so that the students will, in turn, practice faith and learning integration in their own lives and future professions. For the sake of this study, faith and learning integration includes the intentional and consistent analysis of the relationship between biblical principles and research throughout the academic subject area and one’s chosen profession. While multiple methods of FLI are used in Christian colleges and universities, it appears these instructors often fail to present a holistic approach of integration that includes the intellectual, spiritual, and professional components necessary for life-application of faith and academics:

[Some say] Christianity and learning must be disentangled and drastically pruned, so much so that either learning is no longer recognizable as learning or, more often, Christianity no longer recognizable as Christianity. I propose that we throw away the pruning shears and live with the entanglement. (Wolterstorff, 2004)

Methods of the integration of faith and learning, when aligned to critical-level thinking skills necessary for student understanding and application (Harris, 2004), can be categorized into three components: biblical worldview (Eckel, 2010; Harris, 2004; McKay, 2012), morality/character training (Smith, 2004), and service to others (Schaffer, 2004). In these methods a biblical worldview focuses on beliefs, values, and attitudes revealed through the academic subject. Morality and character training discusses biblical motives and ethics related to the given profession. Service to others demonstrates the use of academic knowledge and one’s profession to serve humanity. This is done by using biblical principles to address current

problems within the subject area and preparing students to address the needs of others through their future professions. While several FLI methods focus on the teacher's instructional methods for integrating faith and learning, research undertaken by Sties, Garzon, Milacci, and Boothe (2009) suggests the importance of teachers creating student experiential integration opportunities to build the consistency between one's faith and his or her way of life.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the efforts of many Christian educators, high percentages of students continue to graduate from Christian schools, colleges, and universities and leave their faith (Barna, 2006; 2011). For those who remain Christians, less than 20 percent of young adults understand how the Bible should influence their academic and professional experiences (Barna, 2011). Part of the reason for this gap between faith and learning is due to a lack of understanding of how faith applies to life outside the classroom (Sites, et al., 2009). Effective teaching should help students make the connections between academics and real-world problems (McTighe & Wiggins, 2005). Likewise, Christian students should understand that there should be no grounds for the compartmentalization of their faith as separate from academic and professional beliefs and practice (Harris, 2004; Lee, 2004; Wolterstorff, 2004).

Educators agree that "when students are able to apply their learning thoughtfully and flexibly, true understanding is demonstrated" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 67). Experiential integration as modeled by Jesus Christ helps bridge the gap between academics and the real world. Christians see that Jesus, the Master Teacher, modeled experiential integration in training His disciples (Matthew 10:1-15; Luke 9:1-6; Mark 6:7-13). Doing impacts being—what we do and experience shapes what we think and who we become. Jesus said that he who hears His words and "puts them into practice" (*italics added*) is the one whose faith will stand firm in the storms of life (Matthew 7:24, NIV). This suggests that practicing biblical principles enables people to remain secure in their faith. In other words, Jesus' words suggest that practice brings permanence to learning. In order to better fulfill the mission of Christian higher education and fully equip Christian students for

their lives and professions, holistic methods of FLI such as experiential integration allow opportunities for students to practice the biblical principles they have learned in the academic courses.

Service learning (also called problem-based service learning) is an effective method of experiential integration that enables students to practice biblical integration in daily life and future professions. In addition, service learning promotes a cycle of action and reflection for students as they collaborate to apply what they are learning to various community problems (Brescia, Mullins, & Miller, 2009). Because service learning is an effective method of faith and learning integration (Brescia, et. al, 2009; Schaffer, 2004), it is necessary to understand the procedures and practices of instructors who use service learning as a method of FLI.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to observe how professors at a Christian university used classroom service learning projects and/or short-term missions experiences to integrate faith and learning into the related academics.

### **Research question**

How is service learning and/or short-term missions used to integrate faith and learning in selected academic subjects at a Christian university?

### **Literature Review**

–Faith and Learning Integration

Research on the topic of faith and learning integration in Christian K-12 schools and Christian colleges and universities demonstrates the importance of FLI to Christian educators during the past half-century (Claerbaut, 2004; Harris, 2004; Lee, 2004; Lockerbie, 2005; McKay, 2012; Moreland, 1999; Pearcey, 2004; Rasmussen & Rasmussen, 2005; Smith, 2009). Because FLI is foundational to Christian education as a whole, Christian educators continue to research and theorize further methodology for the integration of faith and learning (Lockerbie, 2005; McKay, 2012). When an intentional and holistic approach is applied to faith and learning integration, students are better equipped to have a holistic view of life (Claerbaut, 2004; Dockery, 2000; Eckel, 2007), or, what Lockerbie (2005) calls, "achieve[ing] a harmony in faith and action" (p. 28).

## Service Learning

Service learning is a method of experiential education that employs a cycle of student action and reflection as students apply academic knowledge to solve community problems (Brescia, Mullins, & Miller, 2009). It is also a research-proven method of effective teaching (Stronge, 2010) that requires students to connect classroom instruction to help solve real problems in their communities and abroad. Such practices are common among effective teachers who create “a classroom climate where error (i.e., risk taking) is welcome, where student questioning is high, where engagement is the norm, and where students can gain reputations as effective learners” (Stronge, 2010, p. 67). Research shows that three out of seven instructional practices employed by effective teachers can be presented through service learning which “involves students in cooperative learning to enhance higher-order thinking skills, uses students’ prior knowledge in an inquiry-based, hands-on format, and uses remediation, skills-based instruction, and individualized instruction” (Stronge, 2010, p. 46). One reason service learning is so effective is because it allows students to move from understanding and lower-level learning to competence and application (Brescia, Mullins, & Miller, 2009; Fetterly, 2011) and positions students to build the essential connections between reason and sentiment (Holmes, as cited in Rasmussen & Rasmussen, 2005). Elements of effective service learning include the application of previous learning, student engagement, assessment activities, and ongoing self-reflection (National Service-Learning Cooperative of the National Youth Leadership Council, 1998, as cited in Payne, 2000).

Christian educators see the benefit of service learning as a method using practical application that “allows [students] to make the connection between their personal faith and values and their service to the community” (Schaffer, 2004, p. 6) and put these connections into action. According to Smith (2009), “We are formed or trained to be aimed at particular configurations of the good life” (p. 63) that goes beyond simply head knowledge and requires practice. Moreland (1999) suggests that a practical application of biblical knowledge to answer life’s questions can help students better apply principles of faith to academic subject areas. Moreland also suggests as we implement the integration of faith and learning in our vocations we should show how

Christianity and intellect converge. According to author and educator Harro Van Brummelen (2002),

We help our students sense that God calls them to be His servants in His world. . . . Our students learn about, use, and value, mathematical, physical, and biological entries and theories. They also experience how God-given norms can promote love, integrity, and justice in communication, economics, social interaction, the arts, government and law, and family life. (p. 51)

**Service learning and FLI issues.** FLI in the classroom does not always include opportunities for students to practice or apply FLI beyond theory (Smith, 2009; Wolterstorff, 2004). The active and self-reflective nature of service learning enables students to make connections between Christian faith, thought, and action (Schaffer, 2004) that can be used in their future professions and life beyond college. By allowing students to practice service (i.e., justice) directly connected to academic curricula, students form habits of service (Wolterstorff, 2004) that become a lifestyle of service within their chosen professions.

**Service learning and educating the heart.** Faith and learning integration has more recently focused on developing a cognitive understanding of biblical principles and a biblical worldview. Smith (2009), in *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, suggests that since habits are formed in the heart of an individual, FLI should focus on educating the heart as well as the head. Educating the heart, according to Smith, is done through the practice of Christian worship, and one element of Christian worship is honoring God by investing in the lives of others. For example, Smith suggests that a seminar in philosophy might include practicing hospitality in a homeless shelter. Such approaches to service learning enable students to make deeper connections between religious instruction and their own love for God and others.

**Service learning as a faculty responsibility.** While some institutions allocate service learning primarily to the university student affairs and/or summer missions department, having service learning become a faculty responsibility more clearly aligns the academic content with biblical practice. Classroom and academic-related service projects create ideal situations for integrating the values of

faith and learning to our students: “Young people assimilate [values] more from example than from precept, more from their peers than from their elders, and more from being involved than being spectators” (Holmes, 1975, p. 101). Research reinforces the idea of service learning as a faculty responsibility, showing that students who improved in “issue understanding, practical action planning, and critical thinking” were enrolled in service learning courses where “reflection [was] intense and frequent, and tightly linked to service experience” (as cited in Brescia, Mullins, & Miller, 2009, p. 2). The means and methods the faculty member uses to integrate faith and learning directly influence a student’s ability to integrate faith and learning into his or her own life and profession.

**Service learning and Christian higher education.** While some authors focus on the terms integration of faith and living (Plantinga, 2002; Rasmussen & Rasmussen, 2005), this study proposes that the integration of faith and learning includes living because higher-level learning requires the ability to put concepts and ideas into practice (Smith, 2009; Wolterstorff, 2004). Ironically, while several faith and learning integration models agree that the purpose of integration in the classroom is to create individuals who live integrated lives relationally and professionally, the literature revealed only a small percentage use service learning as a medium for FLI. This study observed how professors at a Christian university promoted FLI through academic service learning projects and/or course-related short-term missions experiences.

### **Methodology**

This embedded case study included open-ended questionnaires of three professors at a Christian university who promoted FLI through academic service learning projects and/or course-related short-term missions experiences. An embedded, single-case design was chosen since the professors were each part of the same university (Yin, 2003). The professors were selected because each had a reputation of promoting service learning and FLI among his/her students. The courses taught were a culminating course for mass media (MMC) MMC 489, a senior-level nursing class (NUR) NUR 405, and an English language learners (ELL) trip to China for education majors. A questionnaire survey (Creswell, 1998) was designed using structured

questions that were deemed relevant to the study (Yin, 2003). This survey was developed by modifying a previously designed self-report questionnaire created to validate the use of service learning (National Service-Learning Cooperative of the National Youth Leadership Council questionnaire, as cited in Payne, 2000, p. 12) and adding an additional question based on literature discussing FLI. The questions were as follows:

1. Describe how the course or service-outreach requires the application of concepts, content, and skills from the academic disciplines and involves students in the construction of their own knowledge.
2. Describe how the course or service-outreach engages students in tasks that challenge them cognitively.
3. Describe how the course or service-outreach uses assessment to enhance student learning.
4. Describe how the course or service-outreach engages students in service activities that have clear goals, meet genuine needs of others, and have significant consequences for themselves and others.
5. Describe how the course or service-outreach employs systematic formative and summative evaluation for the improvement of the service experience.
6. Describe how the course or service-outreach involves the student in selecting, designing, implementing, and evaluating the service activity.
7. Describe how the course or service-outreach reflects diversity in participants, practices and outcomes.
8. Describe how the course or service-outreach promotes communication, interaction, and collaboration in the community and with partners.
9. Describe how the course or service-outreach prepares students to understand the nature of the task, their role, required skills, and interpersonal dimensions of the service activity.
10. Describe how the course or service-outreach employs student reflection before, during, and

after the service experience, and as a central element in fulfilling the objectives of the course or activity.

11. Describe how the course or service-outreach engages students in multiple celebration activities to validate service work.
12. Describe how the course or service-outreach integrates faith and learning in the service activities.

The questions were sent and collected via email. After the questionnaire results were collected, the answers were organized into a descriptive. The descriptive reporting of the entire survey results was included to create the rich, thick descriptive nature of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998) and strengthen the validity of the research (Yin, 2003). In addition to the questions, syllabi for the two courses were examined as artifacts to exhibit further insights into the research. The findings were then narrowed into themes showing similarities and differences through the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003).

## Findings

### –Questionnaire Questions and Responses

Following are the questions and verbatim answers.

#### **1. Describe how the course or service-outreach requires the application of concepts, content, and skills from the academic disciplines and involves students in the construction of their own knowledge.**

ELL. The [university] mission team to China comprised five students who majored in either Elementary or Early Childhood Education. One of the five had ELL training (she was a 2011 graduate) and two [were] Secondary Education majors. Their primary assignment was to develop a curriculum that they would teach to Elementary aged Chinese students in a two week summer camp. Due to their preparation in their majors they were able to pull from their background knowledge about elementary aged children, their cognitive development and what were the best strategies to teach the age group. The two secondary education students did not have any major challenge adjusting to the age groups.

MMC. [This is] a capstone course incorporating teamwork to develop, create, and deliver a specific product to a defined audience, utilizing print, media, and personal presentation. Seniors work in teams to

identify a basic problem in a developing country. Students research and evaluate solutions. A viable plan is presented in a term paper. Finally team members plan and present a multimedia presentation to a corporation for funding. MMC 489 is the only required MMC class addressing concepts and issues about cross-cultural communication. As the global economy develops due to technology and other world events, international communication and business opportunities require an understanding of other cultures. Mass Communications Strategy is the only MMC class in which students learn to think and plan strategically. Strategic planning is critical in the development of communication leadership. While working in groups, students experienced project-based learning, service learning and develop servant-leadership skills. The topic of the project may be community development or address some basic human need such as: health, agriculture, education, literacy, creating a clean water supply or developing a sustainable livelihood. Projects do not focus on evangelism or church growth as its emphasis. The class focuses on various communication processes necessary to develop the project. These processes include: secondary research, creative problem-solving, teamwork-contracting-small group work, real world client interaction[s] and in-depth interpersonal communication to solve problems, writing-rewriting/revision if necessary, public speaking, creating a marketing plan, self-reflection and group evaluation, developing various media components-such as: PowerPoint presentations, video/DVD creation, flash programs, and internet development.

NUR. The Nursing 405 Patterns of Leadership course requires students to utilize principles of Community Health Nursing to perform a community assessment, identify a community problem and then develop and implement a health program for the community.

#### **2. Describe how the course or service-outreach engages students in tasks that challenge them cognitively.**

ELL. The main challenge that the group faced was how to teach non-English speaking students in a non-English speaking context. That was where my role kicked in. So, prior to the trip I worked with the [university] team to design the curriculum and gave them a “crash course” on how to teach English Language Learners (ELLs). The group was more

cognitively challenged when upon arriving in China (a week before my arrival) they learned that plans had changed and that they would be teaching a different group of students from two different Elementary schools. Unlike the previous arrangement where students were grouped according to age and abilities. The new group had very little structure: the students were not group[ed] according to age, language or academic levels. However, by the time I arrived in China, a week later, despite their nervousness, the team had already mapped out an action plan with respect to how they could adapt the materials they had already prepared for the new group, and they did an excellent job as they were able to implement the plan with very little help from me.

MMC. Creative problem-solving, teamwork, research and the desertification of outside resources, application of previously learned skill sets and knowledge.

NUR. Students perform a comprehensive community assessment and identify strategies for community participation and collaboration to implement their program.

### **3. Describe how the course or service-outreach uses assessment to enhance student learning.**

ELL. During the course of the summer camp, I conducted an official evaluation of each of the student's instruction and shared the assessment with them. The [University] students also conducted ongoing informal assessment of their students [those they were teaching] learning and noticeably adjusted their lessons as was necessary.

MMC. Students assess every aspect of their performance in this class. Working in teams, students complete a five part white paper. Each part is evaluated by a faculty member who gives it a grade. Students are responsible to evaluate everyone in the group to determine how much of the faculty members' grade each student will receive. Students also assess other groups performances as well is individual presentations. Finally students are asked to evaluate their four year academic experience as well as their student life experience as a requirement for Eportfolio within this class.

NUR. Students participate in weekly peer reviews to evaluate their work as well as develop unique

nursing care standards for their clinical group during the course.

### **4. Describe how the course or service-outreach engages students in service activities that have clear goals, meet genuine needs of others, and have significant consequences for themselves and others.**

ELL. The summer camp was organized by our students. However, prior to the camp we had the opportunity to liaise with the Chinese Elementary teachers and shared the curriculum with them. They were able to dialogue with us (despite their limited English) about how they were able to support the student teachers. For the most part this took the form of translation and classroom set up and discipline. At the end of the camp the students were able to demonstrate what they learned to their parents in a mini closing exercise. The parents were pleased with the English their children learned in the short time and the [University] students gained valuable experiences. The six who did their student teaching this year attested to the fact that the experience helped their confidence and classroom management. They stated because they were able to successfully teach Chinese students when they do not know the language, they were confident they could teach English speaking students in their native language.

MMC. Students work with real-world clients to come up with viable solutions create media that the client will use. There is an intensive amount of interaction with the client to make sure that the products developed are viable.

NUR. Students write an Analysis of Professional Performance Paper which allows for this evaluation.

### **5. Describe how the course or service-outreach employs systematic formative and summative evaluation for the improvement of the service experience.**

ELL. At the end of each day, the team met to evaluate their lessons and openly talked about how they could improve. I also talked with them as a group about anything I noticed that they needed to work on. In addition, the team also had to write a report about the experience for the mission department and for a sponsor who gave each one a scholarship. They had set questions they had to address, many of which required them to do a



summative evaluation of their experience. I was also asked to submit an evaluation.

MMC. There is ongoing evaluation on a weekly basis as well as informal feedback from faculty and the client to the student work group.

NUR. A group analysis of professional performance paper and community health program paper.

**6. Describe how the course or service-outreach involves the student in selecting, designing, implementing, and evaluating the service activity.**

ELL. The students designed, taught and evaluated the summer camp curriculum. They were able to do this from a description of the theme that the host administrator wanted the group to emphasize.

MMC. Students have little input into the service activity they will participate in. Students have great input in the selection/ building of the team as well as identifying what strategies will be used to solve the client's problem.

NUR. Review addendum.

**7. Describe how the course or service-outreach reflects diversity in participants, practices and outcomes.**

ELL. The team comprised seven students: one Hispanic, one African American, four Caucasians, and one international student from Europe. As was already mentioned, the group represented secondary, elementary, early childhood and ELL majors/concentrations.

MMC. Again students choose among many practices in order to achieve an appropriate desired outcome. Groups are formed from students with expertise in public relations, advertising, media production, convergence journalism as well as international community development. Most groups include men and women. Most groups include people from multiple ethnic backgrounds.

NUR. Students integrate critical thinking, communication, and culturally competent leadership skills into community focused nursing practice.

**8. Describe how the course or service-outreach promotes communication, interaction, and**

**collaboration in the community and with partners.**

ELL. The [University] team had several team meetings, retreats, prayer times, and the mission department's ropes training which allowed them a variety of opportunity to work together. While in China, outside of their teaching assignments the group went into the village to socialize the natives, went to church services, and participated in several events with adult Chinese students from the host school. They also helped out in the foster home.

MMC. Students are responsible to find external resources which support the solutions the client needs. Students are responsible for ongoing and weekly communication with your client.

NUR. See Criteria for Community Health Program and weekly Seminar Assignments.

**9. Describe how the course or service-outreach prepares students to understand the nature of the task, their role, required skills, and interpersonal dimensions of the service activity.**

ELL. The China mission trip was a good opportunity for the [University] team to understand the importance of being equipped to reach individuals from a variety of backgrounds. They learned how to be flexible even when it was uncomfortable. They began to understand that being a Christian (living their faith) is primary, as there are times when they do not have the freedom to talk about their faith. Another important lesson was that the group is only as strong as the weakest person; or that each person's gift(s) and abilities are extremely important to the success of Christian mission.

MMC. Through the process of this semester long class students realize how they can use their strengths to communicate the efforts of those working in Christian and humanitarian efforts in developing nations. They also realize the power of connecting people and organizations with various expertise and resources, bringing to bear various assets to make a difference to a specific people group.

NUR. Students write an Analysis of Professional Performance Paper which allows for this evaluation.

**10. Describe how the course or service-outreach employs student reflection before, during, and after the service experience, and as a central**

**element in fulfilling the objectives of the course or activity.**

ELL. The [University] Education Mission trip to China was a response to the request of an alumnus to send an education team to the area where he lived and worked. In preparation for the trip the team spent many hours praying and preparing for the mission. Part of the preparation involved times when the team reflected on the spiritual state of China and praying for the nation. The team also set aside times each day to reflect.

MMC. Early on students are engaged in a brainstorming and reflection to identify possible solutions. Students must discuss the effectiveness of their progress on a weekly basis. A summative reflection is required after the project is complete.

NUR. Students write a Philosophy of Nursing Practice paper which describes their specific time as leader for their clinical group during the course.

**11. Describe how the course or service-outreach engages students in multiple celebration activities to validate service work.**

ELL. At the end of the camp in China, the host school planned a social for the [University] group. Students also had the opportunity to fellowship with another [University] alumnus who planned a celebration dinner for the group. Upon their return to the United States there were no celebration activities as the team returned a week prior to the start of the new school year. However, at the end of the spring 2012 semester the team met for breakfast to talk about the trip and how it impacted their final teaching assignments.

MMC. Students receive feedback from clients throughout the process as well as at the end. Faculty evaluates the final products and gives feedback. Finally, the last class includes a commissioning service where students efforts are recognized, a communion service is held, students reflections are shared and faculty reflect on the student's processes.

NUR. Implementation of the service-learning activities allows the students to be exposed to many diverse celebration activities.

**12. Describe how the course or service-outreach integrates faith and learning in the service activities.**

ELL. While in China, apart from praying for the country and students, the [University] team did not have the privilege of openly sharing their faith. Nevertheless they were extremely conscious of the need to model their faith in the way in which they related to the students, parents, staff and teachers at the camp. The ability to integrate faith was limited to their dispositions.

MMC. The core question this class attempts to answer is: If we are gifted and called to work in the fields of media production, convergence journalism, public relations and advertising, what is our responsibility to the widow, the orphan and the stranger among us? Through the process of this semester long class students realize how they can use their strengths to communicate the efforts of those working in Christian and humanitarian efforts in developing nations. They also realize the power of connecting people and organizations with various expertise and resources, bringing to bear various assets to make a difference to a specific people group.

NUR. Objective 2.3 of the course is integrate critical thinking, communication, and culturally competent leadership skills into community focused nursing practice.

**Artifacts**

MMC. The course syllabus for MMC 489 (Syllabus, 2012) directly addresses problem-based service learning in the course description: "Through these processes team members develop servant-leadership and acquire skills through project-based learning and service learning" (p. 1). The course description also specifies that while students are required to identify and present solutions for funding a corporation in a developing country, "Projects do not focus on evangelism or church growth as its emphasis" (p. 1). Course goals include developing solutions to meet specific needs and developing "a mass communication strategy to take the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to the nations, includ[ing] cultural considerations and elements of the problem-solving model" (p. 1). Course assignments include papers and presentations that identify problems, and plan and evaluate solutions for a non-profit organization working in a developing nation. Self-reflection papers are also required by students.

NUR. The course syllabus and addendum material for NUR 405 (Thompson, 2013) includes the concept of service in the course Conceptual Framework on page two. Mark 10:42-45 is cited to emphasize the need to serve through nursing: “Whomever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (as cited in Thompson, 2013, p. 2). In addition, the Conceptual Framework reminds students that the role of effective leadership in nursing is improving the health of others. The course objectives focus on both concepts and practices of leadership in nursing without directly discussing the term of service. One course objective required students to incorporate “Christian and professional” leadership principles into their individual personal leadership styles. Methodology in the course includes a focus on “promotion, maintenance, and restoration of wholeness” for others (Thompson, 2013, p. 2). The course written assignments include a variety of self-reflective assignments including a Personal Philosophy paper, a Group Analysis of Professional Performance, a Community Health Project (requiring clinical hours, needs assessment, goal-setting, and evaluation) and an Artistic Expression of Nursing Practice. The Artistic Expression project allows students to “take any artistic format, written, photos, drawings, paintings, music, contextual (e.g., cross stitch, needle point)” to present the student’s personal expression of his or her nursing practice.

### **Themes**

Through the examination of the questionnaire responses and the review of artifacts, the following themes relating to service learning emerged: academic application, student training, student engagement, evaluation and assessment, student reflection, and faith and learning integration.

**Academic application.** Each professor concurred that students were well able to pull from their background knowledge both in preparation for and implementation of the service learning tasks. The ELL students (from a diversity of levels, majors, and experiences) applied learning more during the service learning activities while the MMC students (who were in a senior-level course) had more applied learning in the initial stages. The NUR students were required to do activities similar to those of MMC—including an initial community

assessment—and then implemented a health program for that community. Course documentation showed that because the MMC and NUR courses were both culminating courses for their degree plans, additional skills in critical thinking, report writing, and presentation were required.

**Student training.** Students in each activity were taught flexibility and communication skills and the importance of working together as a team. The ELL students learned the “importance of being a Christian (living their faith)” while the MMC students learned “how they can use their strengths to communicate the efforts of those working in Christian and humanitarian efforts in developing nations.” Nursing students wrote an analysis paper to evaluate their understanding and performance. Documentation implied that students came into both courses having previous training that was necessary for success.

**Student engagement.** Students were all cognitively engaged through the creative and implementation processes. The ELL students’ cognitive engagement took place when they arrived in China, while the MMC and NUR students were engaged at the beginning of the course and throughout the process. Creative problem-solving and the application of previous learning were common to all groups. Each professor gave students freedom to develop the goals of the service activities within set guidelines from the professors and the clients being served. Communication with the clients, and therefore flexibility, were ongoing processes. Course documents confirmed that students were required to be highly engaged (both in groups and as individuals) in the learning process and service learning activities.

**Evaluation and assessment.** Each professor discussed the use of ongoing evaluation and assessment which came in multiple forms: peer assessment, professor assessment, and client assessment (specifically with the MMC and NUR students). Informal formative assessments and reflections were used to adjust the process in the midst of the service learning projects. While each professor utilized a summative assessment, these assessments seemed to be more holistic and not specific to the individual service learning projects. Documents in each of the courses also showed numerous types of assessments were used.

**Student reflection.** Students in the ELL trip and the MMC and NUR courses were involved in ongoing brainstorming and self-reflection activities. Furthermore, the MMC professor acknowledged that students were required to compose a self-reflection essay at the end of the course. The course syllabi and documents confirmed that self-reflective papers were implemented as both formative and summative assignments.

**Faith and learning integration.** The three professors responded differently to the question regarding FLI. The ELL professor stated that students were quite limited in the application of faith to the learning process, due to it being an academic trip to a Communist nation. Other than prayer, “The ability to integrate faith was limited to [students’] dispositions.” It seems that, in contrast, the courses did a better job helping the students understand that the act of service itself was a form of FLI. For example, the MMC course used FLI as the foundational question for students asking, “If we are gifted and called to work in the fields of media production, convergence journalism, public relations and advertising, what is our responsibility to the widow, the orphan and the stranger among us?” The application of this question was addressed throughout the course. The NUR professor noted that the implicit values of “critical thinking, communication, and culturally competent leadership skills” were the evidence of FLI in the course. Each of the two courses approached FLI differently in the documentation. In addition to the specific questions regarding FLI, both the ELL and MMC professors said students grew in their understanding of Christian principles through the course. The NUR course began by citing the biblical principles for the course and included one learning objective that explicitly addressed biblical principles and some course objectives that implicitly addressed biblical principles. The MMC course syllabus required students to use service learning while developing a “communication strategy to take the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to the nations.”

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study on service learning and faith and learning integration supports the literature that says service learning is a natural and effective method of promoting FLI (Moreland, 1999; Shaeffer, 2004; VanBrummelen, 2002). Just as there are multiple

ways to integrate faith and learning, there are also multiple ways to use service learning to promote faith and learning integration at a Christian university. These methods include course-related missions trips and/or outreaches to the community, course-specific service learning projects, and culminating service projects for students within their majors.

No matter which approach is used, it is important to remember that in order for service learning to integrate faith and learning, service learning must be intentionally linked back to academics and biblical principles. To be most effective, educators who wish to use service learning to integrate faith and learning should also apply the following: (1) Choose problem-based service learning projects that require students to use their previous course learning to solve real-life problems. The application of previously learned information to problem-based service learning is a real-world method that engages students and offers insights on learning that can be used to meet the needs of others. (2) Train students in service learning and academic application before, during, and after the event. Continue to help students understand that service to others is part of the Great Commission and is a tangible method of bringing hope and healing to those who cannot help themselves. (3) Allow students to use higher-order thinking skills of synthesizing, critiquing, applying, etc., in identifying problems and creating solutions to solve those problems. Throughout the process, require students to find biblical principles that support the choices they make regarding service. (4) Create multiple opportunities for self-reflection prior to, during, and after the event. Self-reflection requires students to link faith and learning to meet the needs of others. (5) As a result of service learning, deliberately help students create project and life goals based on real-life problems that can only be solved through the integration of faith and learning. Use the service learning project as a means of helping students see the link between short-term service and the Christian lifestyle. Challenge students to articulate how service to others is faith in action.

Perhaps problem-based service learning is potentially one of the most effective methods for faith and learning integration to “stick” because it allows students to practice using their faith to solve real problems. Doing does impact being—what we

do shapes what we think and who we become. Whether used within a course or short-term missions trip, service learning can help students grow in their faith while meeting the tangible needs of others.

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