

Beyond Debits and Credits...
Service Learning in Accounting
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Abstract

Join us and “jump in” to service learning. We have designed and implemented a service learning project in two accounting courses to enhance student skills in communication and teamwork. These skills will become assets to the students as they begin their professional careers.

Learning Objectives

Project Objective – Develop educational seminars for non-profit organizations on financial topics utilizing teams created between Principles of Accounting II and Intermediate Accounting II class.

Individual Objectives:

Develop teamwork skills

Develop communication skills,

Develop leadership skills.

Core Competencies Addressed

Personal competencies:

Professional Demeanor

Interaction

Communication

Detailed Project

Planning

- Interview area service organizations to identify target participants for workshops
- Coordinate with service organizations to determine meeting dates/time.
- Determine the number of students to assign to each site.

Team Building Meeting

Combined meeting for both participating classes

- Group Dynamic skit – portrayed various team member roles
- Icebreaker – teams participated in exercise to introduce members to each other
- Team roles – each group identified a facilitator and note taker
- Teams were informed of workshop topics, meeting dates and times for their service organization

Preparing Students for Service

- Presentation – Student associates discussed “Service Learning : What is it?”
- Stereotype Activity – Student associates led class in exercise of various types of music and perceived characteristics.
- Personal Cash Budget – Students prepared and discussed their monthly budget (similar to budgets prepared on-site).

Student Expectations

Group meetings – Teams met prior to each on-site visit

- Students developed and implemented activities relevant to each site.
- Group members determined who would facilitate each section of the workshop
- Note taker corresponded with group members to remind them of team meetings and assignments
- Team facilitator lead group meeting and then reviewed with faculty representative the agenda for each session

On-site visits – Teams presented three times during semester with each session lasting 1 hour.

- Faculty provided teams with general topics and were available for questions.
- Student associate or faculty representative accompanied each group to their on-site visits.

Topics for on-site visits

- How Much Money Will You Make?
 - Budgeting
 - Value of savings
- Roadblocks to Financial Success
- Importance of goals
- Credit Cards
- Payday Loans/Rent to Own
- Frittering your Money Away

Student Assessment

Service Learning Project was 10% of overall course grade.

Grading Rubric included:

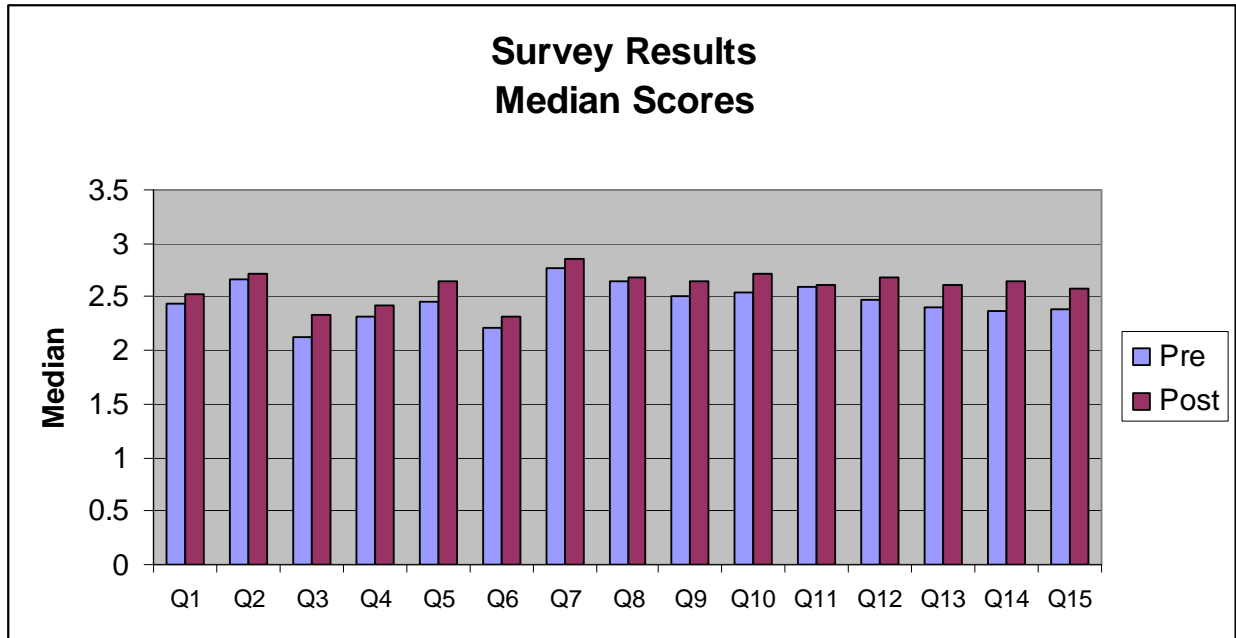
- Brief reflection paper after each site visit
- Attendance at team meetings and on-site visits
- Peer evaluation
- Two-page summary reflection paper at the completion of the project.

Project Assessment

- Pre and Post surveys were administered to help evaluate the effectiveness of the project in improving teamwork, communication, and leadership skills.
- Preliminary results of the surveys indicate the project did improve these skills.
- Student reflection papers also support the enhancement of their learning experience.

Survey Results

- Approximately 39 students completed the surveys.
- Medians scores increased on all questions.
- T tests indicate statistical significance on several questions at $p = .05$.



Challenges

- Outside Classroom
- Finding Interested Service Organizations
- Additional instructor and student time in completing the projects
- Logistics of coordinating project between two different classes.
- Inside the Classroom
- Allocating classroom time to project development
- Give up content coverage in the classroom

Rewards

- Increased student engagement
- Improved communication and teamwork skills
- Students' realization of their potential to give back to the community.

Student Demographics

- Students participating = 39 students
- Gender
 - Males = 23;
 - Females = 16
- Age:
 - 18-19 = 16
 - 20-21 = 21
 - Over 25 = 2
- 1/3 of students had not done service in the last year.
- Participants served = approximately 150

2007 Community Partners

- Bethany Hall
- Interfaith Hospitality Network
- Patrick Henry High School
- Rescue Mission
- Salem High School
- Transitional Living Center
- YWCA

About the Authors

Sharon C. Gibbs, CPA

Sharon Gibbs is an assistant professor in the department of Business Administration and Economics at Roanoke College. She teaches introductory and upper level accounting courses and an occasional leadership course. She has presented at several conferences on active learning. Sharon recently presented a paper with her colleagues at Roanoke College on utilizing service learning in the classroom to enhance communication and teamwork skills. She currently serves as the director of the Faculty-Staff Learning Community on campus.

Prior to joining the faculty at Roanoke College in August 2002, Sharon was employed by Norfolk Southern Corporation in the Internal Audit department. She has her Bachelor of Science in Accounting and her Master of Accountancy from Virginia Tech. She resides in Vinton, Virginia with her husband, William and three daughters, Conner, Madelyn, and Caroline.

Michelle Hagadorn, CPA

Michelle Hagadorn is an assistant professor in the department of Business Administration and Economics at Roanoke College. She teaches introductory and upper level accounting and finance courses. She has presented at several conferences on active learning. Michelle recently presented a paper with her colleagues at Roanoke College on utilizing service learning in the classroom to enhance communication and teamwork skills.

Prior to joining the faculty at Roanoke College in the fall of 2004, Michelle worked for Carilion Health System in various capacities from 1991 to 2004. Michelle's most recent position prior to leaving Carilion was the Director of Finance for Carilion Medical Center where she was responsible for overseeing the financial planning and budgeting activities. She has her Bachelor of Business Administration from Roanoke College and her Master of Accountancy from Virginia Tech. Michelle is also a certified public accountant. Michelle lives in Roanoke, Virginia with her husband David and three children, Brooks, Caleb and Kaylee.