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explore

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JESUIT EDUCATION AT SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

FROM THE CENTER DIRECTOR

In March 2007, the Ignatian Center hosted a national conference, "Callings: Fostering Vocation Through Community-based Learning" while celebrating twenty years of community-based learning at Santa Clara University. This issue of *explore* continues that celebration by presenting selected conference proceedings and two original articles on community-based learning and vocation authored by Center colleagues. So what exactly is community-based learning? This question still challenges me, but less so after listening to many conference participants, both theorists and practitioners, simply tell their stories about an approach to education that now is an integral part of Santa Clara's curriculum.

At its core, community-based learning insists that students and faculty learn with and from community partners, people who are often poor or marginalized. It is a pedagogy of engagement with the world. And, make no mistake, it is very Jesuit. So says Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Jesuits, in delivering his marching orders to those working in Jesuit universities: "Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively."¹ Given this charge, it is appropriate to claim and to celebrate Santa Clara's success in promoting its Catholic identity and Jesuit mission in the new century with a new undergraduate core curriculum that combines community engagement, experiential learning and academic rigor. Jesuit education is alive and well at Santa Clara University!

Equally alive is the memory of Dan Germann, S.J., who died in September after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. How fitting to celebrate his passing into eternal life in this issue of *explore*, for as a founder of the Eastside Project in the 1980s, he was among the first Santa Clara professors to support community-based learning on campus and in East San Jose. The Arupe Partnerships with 50 community partners and 1,280 students participating in community-based learning (2005-06), is one important part of his legacy.

Peace,

KEVIN P. QUINN, S.J.

ENDNOTES

¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education," *Santa Clara University News*, no. 1 (Santa Clara University, 2000), 10. Full text online at: www.scu.edu/news/attachments/kolvenbach_speech.html.

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Callings

Fostering Vocation Through Community-based Learning



BY SHARON DALOZ PARKS

Director, Leadership for the New Commons, an initiative of the Whidbey Institute, Clinton, Washington

AS WE GATHER FOR THIS CONFERENCE,¹ THE CONVERSATION WE SHARE AS BOTH ACADEMICS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS IS AMPLIFIED BY THE FACT THAT THIS IS THE THIRD SIMILARLY THEMED NATIONAL CONFERENCE TAKING PLACE WITHIN A FIVE-WEEK PERIOD—EACH UNDER DIFFERENT AUSPICES. It was at the first of these three conferences that I initially met Paul Locatelli, S.J., president of Santa Clara University. He was invited to provide leadership at a conference in Indianapolis evaluating and celebrating the work of the 88 institutions of higher education (including Santa Clara University) that over the past seven years have received substantial grants from the Lilly Endowment to support the theological exploration of vocation. Listening to President Locatelli, it was clear why this University provides a fitting home-place for rediscovering what it may mean in our time to be “called,” and

the role of higher education in the formation and practice of vocation.

The second conference, convened by the California Institute of Integral Studies and the Fetzer Institute, was titled: “Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education.” There the central question was whether our current pedagogies are adequate for the kind of teaching and learning that is now required in our changing world.

In this, the third conference, “Callings: Fostering Vocation Through Community-based Learning” we take up these same questions but with a particular focus on the relationship between the life of a campus and the extension of the learning environment into the surrounding community—even into the whole inhabited world.

The interrelatedness of these three conferences suggests several things. First, this conference is a part of a larger conversation that is increasingly being recognized as vital to



American higher education and to our wider world.

Second, though in this opening plenary moment we have a sense of “beginning” like all of our beginnings, this is not entirely a beginning. Thus I draw upon and paraphrase an invocation titled “Before Us,” offered by Walter Brueggemann at the opening of one of his classes in the Hebrew scriptures, given at the Christian seminary where he teaches. He prayed, something like this:

Giver of all our years, for this beginning and all beginnings we give you thanks. At this beginning we invoke energy and freedom and courage, proper to a beginning. While we begin, we acknowledge that we are not here, not ever at a beginning.

Before us, were 14 billion years of interstellar history.

Before us, were our ancestors.

Before us, were our mothers and fathers.

Before us, were our teachers and mentors and pastors and priests and rabbis and imams.

Before us, were many scholars who worked hard and saw much.

Before us, were fanatics who have run great risks and have kept the texts for us.

And before all of them, You, the one we know by many names, sacred mystery. You, the one who dwells within us, among us, beneath us, beyond us—and who calls us, who invites us, who makes claims upon us that we may be a part of the ongoing work of Creation.

We make our beginning in the presence of all of these witnesses.

We make our beginning hoping that our work should be as praise and gratitude to them and to You—

You who holds our times and inspirits our aspirations. Amen.²

It is right that we enter a conference with reverence. Considerable energy and resources have been invested in creating this gathering. Thus, the first question before us is simply this:

“Will it matter?” In the light of the reality of today’s world, will it matter enough to justify the collective investment that has been made?

If so, it is because, as we often say at the Whidbey Institute, we have gathered “on behalf.” We are here on behalf of encouraging meaningful transformations in the lives of our students and colleagues. We are here on behalf of strengthening our programs, organizations, and communities. But at this moment in the history of our world, if we have read carefully the texts—the essays—that were prepared for this conference, we know also that we are here on behalf of a yet larger possibility.

That is, we know we are among the generations who are asked to live at one of those great hinge times in history. Every time is a time of dynamic change, but historically we can discern periods when life and culture are profoundly reordered, and there is ample evidence that we live in one of those times. We know this economically, as we are all swept up in global markets irrespective of our participation in local or national markets. We know this ecumenically, as cultures are meeting and colliding on an unprecedented scale. And we know this ecologically, as we are learning again and in new ways that we are an integral part of a vast, seamless tissue of life. We live in a time when much is dying and much is being born. Our social covenants are being recomposed, and our institutions are under review.

In American higher education we are for the second time moving through a revolution at the turning of a century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the German scientific research model of higher education came to our shores. It brought with it departments and divisions—the structure of disciplinary scholarship and administration that we know today.

Now, at the dawn of the 21st century, the boundaries and domains that have defined the architecture of higher education are being dramatically recast. This revolution is catalyzed, in part, by the forces of technology that are redefining what we mean, for example, by a library. Here we are guests on a campus where a new library structure is being built, requiring an imagination of what a library will and will not need to be decades from now. When the

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new library has been completed, I understand that books will be housed in a separate building and if you really need a book—in contrast to an electronic screen—you will request it, and it will be brought to you.

Similarly, the meanings of discipline, campus, community, and teachers/professors are being redefined. Note the growing practice of double majors, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary studies. Note the burgeoning of online degree programs. Note the proliferation of studies that critique privileged discourses and legitimate marginalized perspectives. Note the growing number of study-abroad opportunities. Note the blurring of town-and-gown boundaries catalyzed by “service-learning” which is now morphing into “community-based learning” as increasingly we must ask whether it is possible for anyone to be liberally and usefully educated if learning occurs only within the confines of the campus as we have previously known it. In this shifting context, our understanding of who is teacher and who is learner—and who is serving whom—becomes more fluid.

This new partnership between the classroom and the wider community is fostered, in part, by an emerging technological and ecological consciousness in which we discover that we participate in a profound interconnectivity. In this interdependent, dynamic reality, any “place” can become a laboratory, a powerful teaching/learning environment.

A necessary partnership between the academy and the community is prompted also by the practical and sobering reality that many of our campuses, including some of our most prestigious, sit as privileged enclaves cheek by jowl with communities spiraling into urban or rural decay. The moral claim that arises from this juxtaposition is a potent challenge to the imagination and soul of higher education.

Further, the intimate relationship between higher education and the wider culture is evident in the growing tide of consumerism in American culture, from which higher education is not exempt. A year ago, I was talking with a provost from a university that received one of the Lilly grants for the exploration of vocation. She thoughtfully reflected: “At a very deep level, these grants represent an effort to stem the tide of mere consumerist values swamping higher education.” All of us know that our prevailing economic ideologies would have each of us formed as an isolated, individual consumer. Further, we know that the word *consume* means “to destroy utterly.” We are all vulnerable to the conscience-numbing forces that would form us into unthinking individual consumers, rather than responsive, creative, and committed citizens, living out of a deep sense of “calling”—a sacred awareness of participation in worthy purposes that yield a sense of life and work that has meaning and significance. In today’s cultural climate, our academic institutions are vulnerable

to serving as merely another marketplace, meeting consumer demands for degrees, credentials, programs, upscale dorms, and fitness facilities—pleasing rather than challenging our “customers.” In contrast, in the essay he wrote for this conference, President Locatelli calls for institutions that serve the formation of a “well-educated people, who participate in a well-educated solidarity, living and learning with and from everyone, including those living in the gritty reality of injustice, poverty, and violence.”

Community-based learning can be a response to this call. A few days ago at the Whidbey Institute, for example, I was in conversation with eight seniors from Macalester College. We were reflecting on “calling” and the art of leadership. I suggested that artists allow themselves to be “haunted” by the things they do not yet know how to bring into being or resolve. Then I invited the students to reflect on the question: What haunts you?

One young woman responded: “Early in my college years, I went to Honduras. It has shaped my attitudes and academic life more than anything else.” She continued: “I went up, way

up into the hills, where people have nothing, nothing. When I came home, I hated it that I needed a cell phone. I saw what we have made ‘necessary’ and so unjust.” After a pause, she said, “They used to be known for their textiles, but now the women do not know how to sew a uniform for their child. And if their child does not have a uniform on the opening day of school, that child will not be able to attend school for yet another year. Why?”

I asked, “What have you been studying since you returned from Honduras?” She said, “I came home and I began to study politics and history. When I graduate I hope to be able to live and work in Honduras again, and then I want to come back and do graduate work in Latin American policy.”

This young woman embodies compassion, indignation, a revolution of imagination, a transformation of soul, and the formation of vocation. She has found the place where her heart’s gladness and the world’s deep hungers meet. Her intellect is in high gear. When this kind of learning takes place, whether prompted by a visit to another country or an internship



Photo courtesy of Joy Vongsphanich

Embedded in the work of this conference is a call, not only for high stakes teaching for our students and the formation of their vocations, but also for high stakes leadership in the formation of the vocation of American higher education as an institution.

in the neighborhood next door, we are engaged in what Nadinne Cruz has described as “high stakes teaching.”

Embedded in the work of this conference is a call, not only for high stakes teaching for our students and the formation of their vocations, but also for high stakes leadership in the formation of the vocation of American higher education as an institution. At this hinge time in history, if we drill down into the essence of the questions that have brought us to this conference, we discover a call to a larger discernment—a discernment of the vocation of higher education itself in the life of today’s global commons. This discernment is sacred work, and it requires an effective practice of leadership.

For over two decades, Ronald Heifetz and his colleagues at Harvard’s Kennedy School have been working on the question: “What kind of leadership do we now need, and how do we teach it in ways that change behavior, particularly in times of crisis?” I have had the privilege of describing, assessing and interpreting this work, now published as *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World*.³

Heifetz and his colleagues have made several useful distinctions, and I offer two of them here. First, they distinguish between *authority* and *leadership*. In conventional thought, leadership is equated with authority. We assume that “the leader” is the person with the title—president, CEO, provost, head of the department, chair, boss, or supervisor—the one who holds positional authority.

The functions of authority include providing orientation, direction, norm setting, conflict resolution—and when necessary,

protection. These functions are essential to maintaining a steady state within any social group. In these times, however, familiar patterns that constitute a steady state may increasingly be inadequate to meet the conditions in which we find ourselves. In this view, *leadership is something quite different from the exercise of authority.*

Leadership is manifest in the ability to mobilize a group to engage its most difficult challenges—the challenges that require innovation and learning. Leadership is a practice that enables a group to move from familiar patterns through uncertain terrain to new patterns that are more life-bearing—a more viable steady state.

The second distinction corresponds with the first, distinguishing *technical problems* from *adaptive challenges*. “Technical problems” may be very complicated, but they can be addressed with knowledge already in hand or readily available—such problems are amenable to routine management. In contrast, “adaptive challenges” require innovation and new learning even by those who are attempting to practice leadership. An adaptive challenge is signaled by a gap—a gap between the familiar and what is now needed, or a gap between what we value and what we practice. When addressing adaptive challenges, key questions are: Who will have to learn what? And who will have to lose what? People do not resist change; they resist loss. Thus leadership is the management of a learning process that includes the experience of loss and grief. In other words, as Donald Schon suggested long ago, we may think of technical problems as the “high hard ground” where we can gallop along on knowledge already in place. Adaptive challenges are more usefully described as “swamp issues.” We are learning that swamps

are wetlands, yeasty places full of life, but you navigate them quite differently. Hinge time is marked by a host of swamp issues

Those who have gathered for this conference represent considerable experience in community-based learning. I have deep respect for the wealth of hard-earned knowledge developed over the past several decades that we are here to share to our mutual benefit. I want to suggest, however, that there is a sense in which, for us, community-based learning as presently practiced is “technical” work, as we steward knowledge already in hand. As we continue to distill and refine that collective knowledge, I encourage us to do so, therefore, with an eye to the “adaptive” work that faces us when we look at the academy as a whole.

Not long ago, for example, a person at a regional conference who was leading a workshop on community-based learning programs described a faculty member who was truly an artful genius in the practice of community-based teaching and learning. She asked that professor to lead a workshop for his faculty colleagues on his own campus. He adamantly refused to do so on the grounds that if his colleagues knew he was engaged in community-based learning it would diminish his standing in their eyes. He believed that he would be perceived as less rigorous in his scholarship, less professional in his commitments, less of an academic, and even “soft.” Some of that perception and critique we know has been earned, and those issues are being addressed as the practice of community-based learning matures. But we also know that some of this critique is a defense—a defense against the loss of what is most familiar, though no longer fully adequate in the life of the academy, and the challenge to established assumptions about curricular priorities and ways of teaching and learning. The academy is skilled in the practice of defense in the guise of critique and adept in defining and dismissing “high stakes learning.”

In our increasingly complex, diverse, and morally challenged world, there remains, nevertheless, a profound call for a practice of learning and leadership that is adept in what leadership theorist Barbara Kellerman describes as the “tactics of transcendence.” By this she means an uncommon capacity to work across

boundaries of every kind. She observes that our most vexing chronic challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and global terrorism, will not yield to single-issue politics, to any discrete academic discipline, or to any easy distinction between profit, nonprofit, and governmental sectors. These most vexing and challenging issues—adaptive, swamp issues—call for a formation of citizenship well versed in multicausal analysis and multisector forms of engagement.

Yet our primary patterns of education and leadership, and even our primary patterns of vocational formation, traditionally remain single-discipline-based and sector specific. At the same time, every college and university claims to be preparing the leaders of tomorrow. The adaptive work at hand is to address that gap and deliver on that promise.

The work we have to do is immense, because the efforts that most of us represent are at present marginal in the life of the academy as a whole. Our focus has been primarily on opportunities for students and does not adequately address the formation of faculty, especially the assumptions of doctoral and professional programs and the criteria for appointment and promotion.

In the face of adaptive work, Heifetz says that often one can lead with only good questions in hand. Thus, before I conclude, I invite you to look around this room at the remarkable embodiment of intelligence, dedication, imagination, concern, hard work, talent, courage, commitment, expertise, and leadership—actual and potential—that you collectively represent. Then I invite you to take a look inside yourself, and I ask you this: “What is the deep question, hope, or haunting that has brought *you* to this conference?”

Ten days ago, the delegation coming to this conference from Seattle University offered to meet with me in preparation for this address. I asked them this same question. Glen responded, “How do we now understand the vocation of humankind? Within what economic imagination do we cast the formation of vocation in today’s world?” Michelle reflected: “How do we plant the seeds of vocation in the undergraduate years and at the same time work with faculty so they


In our increasingly complex, diverse, and morally challenged world, there remains, nevertheless, a profound call for a practice of learning and leadership that is adept in what leadership theorist Barbara Kellerman describes as the “tactics of transcendence.”

are asking these questions, too?” Kent asked: “How do we recognize that vocation is linked to justice?” Katie speculated about the necessary processes of “unlearning” relative to vocational discernment. Jeffrey, a member of the faculty and a self-described born-again Unitarian, teaches a course in service-learning. He invites students to explore the relationship between their faith—whatever it may be—and what they are trying to care about in the world. He wonders what he can take from Roman Catholic Jesuit tradition into secular, interfaith contexts that can help to foster deepened commitments. Erin reflected on the need to practice vocational discernment in ways that make it a communal rather than an individual process and extend it into the alumni years.

As we neared the close of our conversation, I asked: “Where, particularly, have you experienced the power of community-based learning?” I will always remember how Mike responded, indicating simply that he “had been in Nigeria for seven weeks.” As we are all beginning to learn, our thirst for oil is dramatically disturbing the ecological and social stability of that oil-rich nation. When I asked Mike to describe his experience there, he responded: “All seven weeks I wanted to go home. I couldn’t connect. I didn’t feel safe.” And then he said, “As I was leaving they asked if I would give a blessing, and I did. And as I did, I realized that I felt profoundly connected to these people.” When I quietly asked, “In what sense did you feel you were connected?” He responded simply, “I felt connected to their yearning.”

In the study that informs our book, *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*,⁴ we found that the most critical

element in the formation of commitment to the common good is a constructive, transformative encounter with “otherness.” This is a particular kind of encounter that establishes an empathic bond, especially with the other’s experience of suffering, yearning, hoping, and loving in ways that we recognize as similar to our own. The prospect of that kind of encounter lies at the core of community-based learning. It is that prospect upon which a liberal education, the formation of citizenship for today’s interdependent world, and a viable future for all of us depends.

As we move into the work of these next two days, we are invited to be blessings to one another. In so being, may we find in yet deeper ways, both individually and together, that place of vocation—where the work of our imaginations and the yearnings of our world meet. To this end, I offer as both benediction and invocation the blessing of the philosopher and playwright Miguel de Unamuno, who wrote, “May God deny us peace, but give us glory.” Or as Jesuits would have it, may we so be together that our work might contribute “to the greater glory of God.” 

ENDNOTES

¹ This is an edited version of Parks’ keynote address from the “Callings” conference held at Santa Clara University, March 15–17, 2007.

² Edwin Searcy, ed., *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 66.

³ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005).

⁴ Laurent A. Parks Daloz et al., *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

Community-based Learning in El Salvador

Casa de la Solidaridad and the Romero Program

BY OTILIA GUARDADO, JULIO PEREZ, GRISELDA REYES,
KEVIN YONKERS-TALZ, AND TRENA YONKERS-TALZ

IN 1982, IGNACIO ELLACURIA, S.J., WHO WAS AT THE TIME PRESIDENT OF THE JESUIT-RUN CENTRAL AMERICAN UNIVERSITY (UCA), GAVE THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY. IN HIS ADDRESS, HE SAID:

“A Christian university must take into account the gospel preference for the poor. This does not mean that only the poor study at the university; it does not mean that the university should abdicate its mission of academic excellence—excellence which is needed in order to solve complex social problems of our time. It does mean that the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for those who have no science; to provide skills for the unskilled; to be a voice for those who have no voice. . . .”¹

In essence, Ellacuria wanted to place UCA at the service of the people of El Salvador in a “university” way. This meant conducting rigorous academic analysis of the social realities in El Salvador and simultaneously sharing the results of their findings with society. These commitments, which often threatened those in power, were factors that eventually led the U.S.-backed Salvadoran military to kill Ellacuria, his



Photo courtesy of Trena Yonkers-Talz

The program directors of the Romero Program and Casa de la Solidaridad (left to right): Otilia Guardado, Trena Yonkers-Talz, Kevin Yonkers-Talz, Griselda Reyes, Julio Perez.

five Jesuit companions, their housekeeper, and her daughter on Nov. 16, 1989, at UCA.

Since these deaths, numerous delegations have passed through El Salvador to learn more about the history and the current realities of Salvadoran citizens. Speaking with these delegations inspired Dean Brackley, S.J., a Jesuit who has been working at UCA since 1990, to begin discussions with other Jesuits about the need to create an academic option for students in the United States to encounter and engage the realities faced by citizens in developing countries. These discussions produced fruit with the creation of the Casa de la Solidaridad, which commemorated the 10th anniversary of the killings at UCA.

The essence of the Casa program is the integration of direct immersion with the poor and rigorous academic study. As part of the curriculum, students visit a marginal Salvadoran community two days a week for the entire semester. These concrete experiences with the realities people face are then intentionally integrated with students' other courses. It is this integration, a fundamental component of the Casa program, that makes the academic experience unique.

The essence of the Casa program is the integration of direct immersion with the poor and rigorous academic study. As part of the curriculum, students visit a marginal Salvadoran community two days a week for the entire semester. These concrete experiences with the realities people face are then intentionally integrated with students' other courses. It is this integration, a fundamental component of the Casa program, that makes the academic experience unique.

Another important but often overlooked aspect of the Casa is the role of the Romero Program. An initiative of the Casa, this program is committed to the formation and development of Salvadoran youth, most of whom come from marginal rural communities. Despite the fact that these students come from families and towns with scarce resources, they have been fortunate enough, with the help of scholarships, to continue studies at the university level. These students are not only academically gifted, but also deeply committed to working to improve the economic situations of their families and communities. Their stories, each unique in its own way, all share an extraordinary commitment to continue studying in spite of great odds. The following is one such story:

Lupita is from Carasque, a small rural community located five hours north of San Salvador. This region of the country was profoundly impacted by the civil war. Since she was young, Lupita has always excelled

academically and has been committed to her community. It has long been her dream to pursue higher education, but her family's economic situation dictated that Lupita would not be able to study at the university level. Her family survives by raising chickens and a few cows and harvesting a small *milpa* (cornfield). Resources are not available to cover the costs of continued studies. Fortunately for Lupita, the Jesuit parish of Arcatao began a scholarship program for youth from the area. She was able to apply and, thanks to her long-standing commitment to working for the betterment of her community, was selected. Lupita received a scholarship to study at UCA.

The challenge for students like Lupita, however, is that the scholarship covers tuition fees only. Costs such as books, food, and lodging are not included. Another challenge is that universities in El Salvador do not provide on-campus housing for students. The Romero Program is able to respond to the needs of such students by providing a home away from home. In addition to covering room, board, and some additional academic costs, students become part of a living and learning community.

The formation component of the program is rooted in a spirituality of the Salvadoran martyrs, especially expressed in the life of Monseñor Romero, whom many Salvadorans consider their saint. The four main components of the formation program are community living praxis, historical context, and spirituality.

The experience of daily community living requires ongoing reflection and dialogue. Students experience both the joys and struggles of community life: sharing household tasks, supporting one another academically, and participating in community conversations. As Fr. Karmelo, a Jesuit who lives and works in El Salvador, has said many times, “This is a small laboratory. What you are here is what you will be outside in society.”

The program’s vision is not only to form women and men academically, but also to foster an awareness of and commitment to social change. It encourages students to continue committing themselves to the service of others. Concretely, they work in their home communities, integrating their academics with their current difficulties and hopes (a process called praxis).

Crucial to this formation is developing an awareness of one’s own historical context. For example, students visit Morazan, home of the El Mozote Massacre, one of the largest and most brutal massacres during the country’s 12-year civil war. There, students have the privilege of

being at the site and talking with community members about their history and current reality. Through such visits, students are able to deepen their knowledge of their country’s history and continue forming their personal and cultural identity.

The Romero Program draws inspiration from the courageous testimonies of people like Monseñor Romero and the many martyrs of El Salvador. This evokes a spirituality of hope in the midst of the tremendous crisis in which they live. In addition, retreats, gatherings, and Eucharistic celebrations are enacted as part of spiritual formation. Students also reflect on and share their testimonies, enabling them to articulate their long personal and family histories.

A fundamental component of both the Romero Program and the Casa is the interchange between the two groups. A shared goal is to foster learning outside of the classroom, enabling students to learn collectively and deepen their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. Students live together in a community, they participate in



Photo courtesy of Trena Yonkers-Talz

Lupita, a Romero Program student, with her parents in Carasque, El Salvador.

Students in the Romero Program play an important role as guides to the students of the Casa, introducing them to the culture and customs of their country. At the same time, Romero Program students are learning about aspects of the U.S., enabling them to develop a more expansive vision of issues and a better understanding of the differing realities of both countries.

various activities, gather in forums, and travel to the homes of Romero Program students

Not only do both groups benefit from the joys and challenges integral to community life, they are also invited to deeper levels of learning and growing by sharing their lives with students from different cultural contexts. Through their daily living, students are encouraged to think critically about cultural differences and sensitivities.

Romero and Casa students participate in many activities, such as the visit to El Mozote previously mentioned. The opportunity to share such events has the potential to add a more profound level of meaning. For Casa students, the experience is no longer simply about a people's history—it becomes personal, as they are living it with Salvadoran students, who often have become their intimate friends. Likewise, Romero Program students are empowered by the ability to share their historical context and current reality with visitors to their country.

Additionally, space is created for both groups to come together and talk about vital issues of mutual interest. Such gatherings are called *convivios*—"coexistence" or "living together." Particular discussions that have developed focus on the problems of gang violence, gender issues, and migration. When these conversations occur, fertile common ground is created for both groups of students to think critically from a cross-cultural perspective.

Romero Program students often invite Casa students to visit their homes. These families tell poignant stories about life during and after

the war. Such testimonies profoundly affect the Casa students because they find themselves in a community that follows a different way of life, one of poverty that is a product of marginalization and social exclusion. However, these families also possess a great deal of joy and hope, inspired by the memory of the many martyrs who have struggled to defend their people. By immersing themselves in this context, Casa students become part of this complex reality. This opportunity to share further contributes to Romero Program students' identity formation.

Students in the Romero Program play an important role as guides to the students of the Casa, introducing them to the culture and customs of their country. At the same time, Romero Program students are learning about aspects of the U.S., enabling them to develop a more expansive vision of issues and a better understanding of the differing realities of both countries.

At the semester's end, each group finds itself impacted by the rich experiences shared during the previous four months. This makes the students' departure difficult, especially because of the friendships that develop. However, hope is born, and even though they are once more separated by distance, these students remain united, working for a more just world. ☐

ENDNOTE

¹Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J., Commencement Address, Santa Clara University, June 12, 1982, Santa Clara University Archives

Everyone Gains

Peer Exchange Between On-site Service-learning Students and On-campus Students



BY ANAS MALIK
*Assistant Professor,
Department of Political Science/
Sociology, Xavier University*

PERHAPS A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION: WHOSE JUSTICE? THIS REQUIRES UNDERSTANDING AND ARTICULATING HOW THE WORLD LOOKS THROUGH DIFFERENT EYES—WHAT RAYMOND COHEN HAS TERMED “ALTERNITY.”¹ BREADTH IN READING AND CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS CAN FACILITATE SUCH UNDERSTANDING. EXTENDED EXPERIENCE WITH DIFFERENT SOCIETIES IS AN EXCELLENT WAY TO BUILD AWARENESS OF ALTERNITY.

Service-learning students are privileged to have such exposure. Service-learning usually involves travel, often to a foreign site. It typically requires work with a social service organization, such as an orphanage. Service-learning exposes students to other societies, communities, and cultures in an intense and deeply immersive way that can generate life-changing mind-broadening results. Yet a minority of students benefit from service-learning opportunities. The rewards can be significantly enhanced and the beneficiaries augmented by directing service-

learning participants to critically engage with their experience in a structured written and verbal form with their on-campus peers. Such “peer exchanges” produce benefits recognized by others who have experimented with collaborative learning.² In working with their peers on a common problem, students tend to increase their ability to articulate their assumptions and thought processes, resulting in sharpened critical thinking. Through peer exchange, students who have not gone on such a journey may nevertheless be substantially enriched by the experiences their peers in service-learning have had. In articulating and analyzing their experience, the service-learning students can increase the quality of their reflections, as well as better connect elements in their experience to the wider university curriculum.

Experiments in peer exchange with service-learning students and on-campus students at Xavier University support this thesis and have generated practical guidelines. Xavier University has service-learning programs at several sites. My experiences were with service-learning students who spent a semester in Nicaragua in spring 2006, a group that spent a semester in India

Through peer exchange, students who have not gone on such a journey may nevertheless be substantially enriched by the experiences their peers in service-learning have had. In articulating and analyzing their experience, the service-learning students can increase the quality of their reflections, as well as better connect elements in their experience to the wider university curriculum.

in the fall of that year; and another Nicaragua group in spring 2007. Both Nicaragua service-learning groups exchanged memos with students taking my course in International Political Economy. The India service-learning group exchanged two memos with students in my on-campus course in Middle East Politics

In each semester, the service-learning students kicked off the peer exchange with write-ups about case studies from their host countries. The case studies from Nicaragua included a doctor's strike and controversial plans to privatize electricity and water supplies from India, we studied a dengue fever outbreak in Delhi and a transport workers' lockdown in Calcutta. The students in my on-campus classes then offered critical responses to the write-ups from the service-learning students. These written exchanges were followed up at the end of the semester with an in-class meeting between students on different sides of the peer exchange, and included breakout groups, role play, and class discussion.

Successful peer exchange requires communicating goals and parameters clearly early on. As the on-campus instructor, I gave students who were about to travel for a service-learning semester a brief (about one hour) introduction to class material the on-campus students would be studying. I also gave some guidelines for picking cases: how to identify an issue as "political," and how to proceed with defining and communicating the case by picking actors, interests, and strategies. To get the process underway, I divided the service-learning students into groups of no more than five

students each (this meant that in each service-learning trip there were two groups; five seems to be about the maximum before there is too much diffusion of responsibility and too little individual contribution to keep each student motivated).

The on-campus students received a different orientation: They were tasked with considering the theoretical tools for analysis developed in the class that they were taking, and then applying them to the material they received from the "case experts" on site in Nicaragua or India. The case studies had "real world" currency, and the on-campus students were eager and willing to thoroughly interrogate the case study memos based on theoretical perspectives they had learned. This compares favorably to how students often react to a more "authoritative text" (such as a scholarly article published by a credentialed expert)—students sometimes submit to such texts without sufficient critical engagement.

Effectively employing appropriate technology is vital. In each semester, I experimented with different tools. E-mail was used in all cases as I, the on-campus instructor, communicated with service-site students by e-mail. The on-campus students submitted their responses to an online discussion board. In the third semester, I hit upon the Wiki page, which turned out to be a particularly appropriate technology. Wikis have become famous (or infamous) because they were used to make Wikipedia.com. They are a wonderful, easily available tool for producing documents collaboratively online, and turned out to be the most efficient and effective

method. Wikis allow live updating as each student contributes, helping students eliminate redundancies; they also allow for collaborative editing. Students took to this process smoothly, eliminating my concern about possible glitches or unforeseen problems. In the future, I would consider live chats or video conferencing after careful reflection on design, to direct and focus student efforts and use the time together efficiently.

When on-campus students and returned service-learning students meet face-to-face, planning helps to keep the interaction focused and productive. In the Xavier University experiences, there was much curiosity and anticipation when the service-learning students returned to campus and visited the on-campus class with which they had the peer exchange. A few students knew each other from before, but most just knew their peers from the electronic exchanges. We started with icebreaker introductions, and then a brief presentation by the service-learning students, reviewing each case study they had submitted. The class was then distributed into breakout groups of three or four students each, usually including at least one service-learning student and one or two on-campus students in each group.

I then experimented with different prompts, the liveliest among which were role plays. I asked each group to pick a particular actor in the case to which they were assigned. Each group's task was to play the role of their actor, by defining the actor's interests and suggesting appropriate strategies to pursue those interests. The breakout groups came up with creative, thoughtful suggestions, considering the realism and possible unintended consequences. The actors, interests, and strategies were then summarized before the whole class by a spokesperson from each group.

One service-learning student commented after this exercise that she did not realize how much more could be gained from examining the issue in this way.

A major concern expressed at Santa Clara University's "Callings Conference" was the perception that community-based learning resides outside "academic" learning. Peer exchanges can break through this psychological boundary by effectively integrating service-learning into traditional on-campus instruction. My on-campus students gained analytical skills and confidence through the peer exchange. The service-learning students gained exposure to additional disciplinary perspectives on their case studies. Both groups learned to articulate their views, a learning experience in itself. A fringe benefit was that the service-learning program was thoroughly advertised to other students on campus, generating additional future participants. There are gains for everyone.

"I would rather not keep feeding hungry children—I would rather that children not go hungry." This quietly passionate statement came from a student who had recently gone through Xavier University's service-learning program. And the sentiment was not his alone—similar dedication in civic purpose and social engagement is common among other program veterans. Service-learning students typically bring a socially conscious energy that can be harnessed and compounded productively on campus through peer exchange with non-service-learning students. This integrates moral inquiry into the university's academic mission in a policy-relevant way; it inspires and motivates all involved students to pursue meaningful engagement with urgent social problems. ☐

ENDNOTES

¹ Raymond Cohen, "Living and Teaching Across Cultures" *International Studies Perspectives* 2, no. 2 (May, 2001): 151-161.

² An example can be found in Craig E. Nelson, "Critical Thinking and Collaborative Learning" *New Directions for Teaching & Learning* 94, no. 59, 45-59.

"Callings" conference final panel (from left): Sharon Daloz Parks, Richard Wood, Hilary Barroga (SCU '99), Luis Calero, S.J., and Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., at the podium.



Photo Credit

Writing in the Community

Lessons From Teaching At-risk Teens



BY JILL GOODMAN GOULD
*Senior Lecturer,
Department of English,
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“Consider how little talk there is that links education to a more decent, thoughtful, open society. There’s not much that raises in us... an appreciation for deliberation and reflection, or for taking intellectual risks and thinking widely—for the sheer power and pleasure of using our minds, alone or in concert with others. What do we hear that inspires young people to think gracefully or that moves young adults to become teachers that foster such development? What do we hear that sparks desire, that remains in memory?”¹

—MIKE ROSE

When I first heard about the mission of Downtown College Preparatory High School—one of our Arrupe community partners—I was inspired and hopeful about the possibilities of such an education. DCP’s goal is to teach and motivate underachieving students so that each one can be admitted to a four-year university and succeed. This mission, based on an egalitarian philosophy of education, was envisioned by cofounders Greg Lippman and Jennifer Andaluz. Since its inception as a San Jose Unified Charter School in 1999, DCP has been driven by those two and many other bright young educators, including the current principal, Alicia Gallegos (who earned a degree in political science from SCU and a master’s degree in education from Harvard).

Just as I have been impressed by the young teachers and the ethos of the school, I am also impressed by the community support for DCP,

from board members to volunteer teachers to architects. I believed this energy would be contagious; it is a school that could inspire our students, I thought, and encourage them to try teaching as a career. And so, I designed a new course and pushed our way into that world.

The following journal reflection written by Jennifer Higareda, a student in the 2006 class, is typical in revealing student engagement and serious thinking about education: *“We know that these students do not ‘need’ the class we are teaching, and they sometimes make that very clear to us. But the fact of the matter is that most of these kids have struggled and worked with us. They have roughed it out. One of the reasons . . . they have done this is because we have a ‘trusting relationship’ with them. We are there with them, sitting in their groups, prompting discussion, taking an interest in their writing and lives, and showing them we are excited about their achievement. I think they realize this. They trust us to read their drafts, and they trust us with their life stories.”* This entry also hints at the liveliness of the conversations in our class and the nature of our endeavor—university undergraduates and a professor teaching their own writing class in a high school for at-risk kids in San Jose.

After participating in the 2002 Arrupe faculty summer workshop, I developed a prototype for the course. In 2003—with three students from SCU—I taught 15 seniors at DCP. In 2004, my colleague, Professor Jeff Zom, taught a similar class with 10 Santa Clara students. By 2006 the idea had taken its current shape: one SCU class, English 196—Writing in the Community, which met twice a week, and a DCP class, Writing for College, which we team-taught three times a week for the fall semester.

I was not surprised that some students who plan to be teachers signed up for the class. I also recruited students who love to read and write, who speak and appreciate Spanish, and/or who come from similar communities or schools. In 2006, 8 students took the class for credit—sophomores to seniors, honors students, English majors, and creative writing minors. And at the time, two seniors were in the process of applying to graduate school in order to become teachers. Five other students worked as volunteers—all first-year Bridge students, all Latina. Together, the college students became a cohesive group of peer educators. We were joined by Gail Gradowski, a Santa Clara librarian, who designed and helped us teach library and information literacy workshops.

Meeting in the Canterbury library at Santa Clara, we discussed texts, including Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary*, Jeannie Oaks’s *Keeping Track*, and Joanne Jacobs’s *Our School*, the story of DCP. Our discussions about education—teaching, tracking, grading, charter schools, learning disabilities, motivation, and ESL—were grounded by the experiences we were having in the high school classroom.

The mood of our SCU class shifted quickly from formal to friendly and intense. Huddled around the conference table, we read student papers, freewrites, and journals, and shared our stories and concerns. It felt like we were a group of faculty friends, working together, sharing successes and worries, planning new strategies. The students moved from frustration to empathy, and also to a deeper understanding of the complexity of our task. Together we asked a lot of questions, and although we saw progress, none of us felt that we had succeeded. We were humbled; we saw how challenging the DCP mission is—indeed how difficult teaching is



Charles Barry

SCU student Michelle Johnson teaches a lesson on audience awareness.

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Charles Barry

caption to come

At DCP, three times a week we worked as a team of writing coaches. As they taught lessons and guided small-group workshops, the college students shared their own joy in learning and writing. They also gave the seniors a taste of college life. We began each class with a Q&A period, in which the high school students asked the college students about classes, teachers, dorms, food, schedules, cars, friendships, major requirements, and much more. They continued these college conversations in individual conferences, small groups, and by e-mail.

I asked each student to create and teach a lesson on one aspect of writing, such as using sources, analyzing voice, and developing vocabulary. One student designed and taught a class on answering hypothetical objections in an argument, and we were delighted to see the students' understanding of the lesson show up in

their essay revisions. Another taught "Grammar B," and within a week, we saw one of the high school boys experimenting with this technique in his essay on snowboarding.

The college students in their final papers explored issues addressed in the texts and experienced in the DCP class, such as problems in teaching ESL, the effects of gender differences in the classroom, the problems and strengths of charter schools, and the effect of the digital divide on disadvantaged children. Some of the essays were examinations of DCP and its philosophy and practices, and one, by Sean McClenahan, was a deep personal reflection on the change he was experiencing in his own calling to teach. Sean examined his long-held assumption that he would become an English teacher in a private Catholic high school, a school like the ones he and his parents, aunts



Charles Barry


Some of the SCU group gathers in the DCP classroom. From left, Krystal Wu, David Backes, Jill Goodman Gould, Kristina Chiapella, Anna Wheatley, and Michelle Johnson.

I am certain that the college students benefited from this service-learning experience. They learned to respect the hard work of teaching. They learned to make a commitment to a larger community. Most significantly, they learned the centrality of relationship in teaching, the importance of knowing the kids and caring for them—they saw that nothing will be learned without a trusting, authentic relationship.

and uncles and grandparents had attended. He concludes with his change of heart, his decision to begin teaching in a public school—not a Catholic school, realizing that the kind of education these kids deserve has for too long been reserved only for the privileged: “I will teach and I will know what it means to teach. I will go where my help is most needed.”

I am certain that the college students benefited from this service-learning experience. They learned to respect the hard work of teaching. They learned to make a commitment to a larger community. Most significantly, they learned the centrality of relationship in teaching, the importance of knowing the kids and caring for them—they saw that nothing will be learned without a trusting, authentic relationship. Indeed, because we didn’t want to lose our connection with the students, we formed a book group when the term ended. Along with some of the DCP and Santa Clara students, we invited several SCU alumnae, including Claudia Vasquez (2000) and Natalie Calderon (2002). Each month we meet around my dining room table, sharing stories, eating, and talking about books by such writers as Khaled Hosseini, Waris Dari, Laura Esquivel, and Gabriel García Márquez.

Downtown College Prep has been generous—it has given us eager students, a room, and a schedule that works for us. With

their help, we have created a special class. It must be added, however, that by its nature, such a class will not fit traditional parameters and will therefore demand a larger than usual commitment from the University. In order to effectively teach 15-20 high school students, the Santa Clara class should ideally consist of 5-8 students. This is below the usual course minimum of 10 students, and therefore the course is constantly threatened. In addition, if we want a genuine relationship with DCP, Santa Clara should admit at least a few of its strongest graduates. A university of our size and stature can certainly afford to give some of these students a chance, honoring our commitment to them and to the mission of DCP. 

ENDNOTE

¹ Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America’s Educationally Underprepared*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 253.

Spirituality as Pedagogy

Theoretical Constructs for Service-learning



BY MARSHALL WELCH

*Director of the Catholic Institute of Lasallian Social Action at St. Mary's College of California;
former Director, Lowell Bennion Community Service Center, University of Utah, (2001-07)*

YOU ARE GOING TO NEED TO FIND A COMFORTABLE PLACE TO SIT AS YOU READ THESE NEXT FEW PASSAGES. ONCE SETTLED, YOU NEED TO SIMPLY TAKE A NORMAL BREATH AND HOLD IT FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN. You don't need to gasp deeply, as if you were about to blow out birthday candles. Simply breathe in deeply through your nose, filling your lungs and feeling your diaphragm in your stomach expand and hold it for a few seconds. Do it now.

Welcome back. Now, take inventory, either mentally or physically on a piece of paper, of what you discovered in those few seconds. Once more, take a few moments and think about this.

I have conducted this exercise a number of times with groups of college students in classrooms and with other adults in diverse settings, including retreats for religious leaders of various denominations. In a group situation, we are able to discuss our discoveries that came from the exercise. Over the years, I have heard and collected typical responses that include statements such as, "I became aware of sounds in the room that I hadn't noticed before," or "I felt my body relax a bit." Conversely, others have reported, "I felt myself tense up because I was

so focused on holding my breath." Finally, one brave and often somewhat reluctant individual eventually states the embarrassingly obvious "I had to exhale."

This simple exercise is typically the first real lesson in *spirituality* for most students and faculty alike. The Latin root, *spirare*, means "breath." One literally cannot sustain oneself by merely being in-*spired* or simply "taking in." Instead, one must also exhale, or literally "give something back" for sustenance. This literal and metaphorical fact is more associated with biology and physiology than religion.

Spirituality is often associated with religion, and while related, the two terms are not synonymous. Spirituality can and does play a critical role in students' personal development. Combining three points from Leona English¹ with three themes articulated by Diane Hamilton and Mary Jackson² creates a basic triadic rubric for spirituality that can be used as an instructional tool and for reflection in service-learning: 1) an awareness of self coupled with 2) an awareness and connection with others to 3) create new meaning and understanding for our civic role in the community (local or global). These basic tenets of spirituality are

Service-learning can, therefore, be a secular form of spiritual pedagogy at a number of levels. Learning through service moves the cognitive experience from transactional learning to and through transformative learning to transcendental learning when students recognize they have something to “give back” to society.

compatible with secular theoretical constructs of service-learning civic engagement, citizenry, and vocation. Students are empowered to discover their callings when we use spirituality as part of the educational experience.

Service-learning can, therefore, be a secular form of spiritual pedagogy at a number of levels. Learning through service moves the cognitive experience from transactional learning to and through transformative learning to transcendental learning when students recognize they have something to “give back” to society.

English³ characterized three dimensions of spirituality in adult learning: 1) strong sense of self, 2) care, concern, and outreach to others, and 3) continuous construction of meaning and knowledge. A strong sense of self evolves by learning from and with others. This creates relationships that provide an opportunity to learn about alternative views and ways of being which in turn, provide insights about our sense of self. Care, concern, and outreach to others are important dimensions for learners to acknowledge a world outside oneself. This represents transcending “self” to be a part of others. Continuous construction of meaning and knowledge is the discovery that life is greater than we are, and that we are bound and related to others. The “continuous construction of meaning and knowledge” is an essential tenet of higher education. In other words, students recognize that they are part of something bigger than themselves. This discovery is a spiritual discovery as well as a civic discovery.

Similarly, Hamilton and Jackson⁴ argued that spirituality has three main themes: 1) the further development of self-awareness, 2) a sense of interconnectedness of all things, and

3) a relationship with a “higher power” or a “higher purpose.” This third theme does not necessarily imply or mean a deity, although it certainly could. That higher purpose could also be to serve a local neighborhood or the global community.

Overall, our current system of higher education has done an exceptional job of teaching students and their parents what constitutes a college education. It can be summarized as the following understanding and tacit transactional agreement:

- 1) Students (or their parents) pay their tuition to *get* (not seek or earn) information from a classroom.
- 2) In exchange for payment, instructors take the proverbial can opener, pry open students’ heads, and deposit information and facts through lecture, often providing PowerPoint handouts, no longer requiring note-taking and further absolving students from any responsibility in the learning process.
- 3) Students are then expected to regurgitate the information in the form of a written paper or exam, to “get” (not earn) their “A” (not a grade per se, but the letter grade they’ve come to expect and paid for), which will help the student get a job or go on to graduate school.

It’s all quite efficient for both students and faculty. The process has been distilled to mere accumulation of facts, often at the expense of knowledge or understanding. The college experience has, in essence, been boiled down to a transaction—the exchange of payment through tuition for facts.

Therefore, the traditional paradigm of “education” has been transactional mediation.

The faculty member literally mediates knowledge, serving as a bridge from his or her respective discipline to the student. In this scenario, the bulk of responsibility for “learning” falls on the instructor, with little or no culpability for the student. Furthermore, the primary beneficiary of this process is the discipline or field, which is detached from the pressing societal issues of the community. There is little (if any) direct application for the “common good” of society at large.

Other deeper change may, however, be in the way students view the world or even their understanding of self. This expanded view of change *through* the educational experience is transformative. Transformation is a synonym for change. Transformation goes beyond merely exchanging facts, with the instructor serving as mediator of the discipline to the empty vessel of the students. However, like the transactional approach, the educational process of transformative learning is limited to “in-spiration” as illustrated in the opening exercise to this essay. The information goes “in” but there is no attempt to facilitate anything coming “out” in the way of giving something back, other than on an exam or written paper. Critics of transformative education point out that while a student may experience change, even at profound levels, there is no guarantee the student will actually do something with their newly acquired knowledge or skills that will benefit others.⁵

When students take and apply their new knowledge and their understanding of that information in a way that not only assists them to obtain a grade or a degree but to benefit others, education has transcended a sense of self. It goes beyond the “what’s in it for me?” preoccupation that dominates our culture and the transactional education paradigm.

Service-learning takes experiential education one step further than traditional practicum and has the potential for facilitating transcendental education. Service-learning has many definitions but can be characterized as an experiential form of education in which a service, tied to instructional objectives, is provided that meets a need identified by those being served. Likewise, those being served have

an opportunity to have input throughout the experience, including evaluating the outcomes. Simply put, service-learning allows a student to learn the “what” (content or skill), coupled with an exploration of “so what?” (why is this important?), and concluding with “now what?” (what are the next steps necessary to address the importance?). This final phase of “now what?” represents transcendence, in which students go above and beyond merely acquiring knowledge or skills, perhaps at the expense of others, to applying their knowledge and skills to making a difference.

Incorporating spirituality into the educational experience is both simple and complex. It provides an opportunity for students to discover deeper dimensions of who they are and their roles in the world. Just as we learned in the opening exercise, students realize they can only sustain themselves by taking something *and* giving something back. This discovery is nothing less than spiritual, as explored here on these pages, while perfectly complementing traditional secular and theoretical tenets of educators such as John Dewey and Ernest Boyer. Service-learning enables us to remove ourselves from the confines of an abstract and theoretical world to become meaningfully engaged within the real world. Perhaps more importantly, the spirituality of service-learning also allows us to become engaged with our sense of self. Service-learning is a form of spirituality that promotes a deeper educational experience, helping us discover who we are and, at the same time, transcend our own needs to meet the needs of others. ☐

ENDNOTES

¹Leona M. English, “Spiritual Dimensions of Informal Learning” in *Addressing the Spiritual Dimensions of Adult Learning: What Educators Can Do*, ed. Leona M. English and Marie A. Gillen, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 29-38.

²Diane M. Hamilton and Mary H. Jackson, “Spiritual Development: Paths and Processes” *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 25 (1998): 262-270.

³English, 30.

⁴Hamilton and Jackson, 262-270.

⁵Susan Collard and Michael Law, “The Limits of Perspective Transformation: A Critique of Mezirow’s Theory,” *Adult Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1989): 99-107.

A Table in the Common Room

Twenty Years of Community-based Learning at Santa Clara University



BY LAURIE LAIRD

Associate Director, Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, Santa Clara University

THIS YEAR MARKED THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE ARRUPPE PARTNERSHIPS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING, FORMERLY THE EASTSIDE PROJECT. OVER THE COURSE OF THIS ANNIVERSARY YEAR, WE ENGAGED IN MANY CONVERSATIONS WITH COLLEAGUES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS THAT HELPED US REFLECT ON WHERE WE'VE BEEN AS WELL AS IMAGINE TOGETHER HOW WE CAN GROW. The conference that we hosted in March 2007—"Callings: Fostering Vocation Through Community-based Learning"—provided an important learning opportunity for us in this regard, as did reviewing our history through reading materials and interviewing longtime partners

In reading an early document written by the founders of the Eastside Project, Sonny Manuel, S.J., Steve Privett, S.J., Dan Germann, S.J., and Peter Miron-Conk, I was struck by the beauty

and simplicity of their vision. Have we stayed true to their vision? Have we become all that they hoped we would be?

In an attempt to help others understand the vision of the Eastside Project, the founders described it by using the metaphor of a bridge. As they explained:

A bridge is the means by which one passes over into an area that is on the opposite side of an otherwise impassable chasm. Bridges allow persons on either side of a divide to interact with each other as well as to return home again. Bridges counter isolation with the possibility of interaction. The Eastside Project is predicated on the understanding that the university is generally cut off from and inaccessible to certain segments of the population. The result is that the experiences, questions, fears, hopes, doubts, frustrations and concerns of these people find it difficult—if not

Over the past 20 years, the Eastside Project/Arrupe Partnerships has endeavored to serve as a bridge. Our program enables hundreds of students to enter the community each quarter to learn with people they might not otherwise have the opportunity to meet, individuals whose life experiences and perspectives may be different from their own.

impossible—to make their way into the academy across a chasm of separation that is broad and deep.¹

Over the past 20 years, the Eastside Project/Arrupe Partnerships has endeavored to serve as this bridge. Our program enables hundreds of students to enter the community each quarter to learn with people they might not otherwise have the opportunity to meet, individuals whose life experiences and perspectives may be different from their own. The stories they hear, the questions that are raised, and the underlying injustices they encounter are brought into the classroom to inform discussions and enhance learning. Faculty, community partners, and students concur that this experiential education contributes to the personal transformation of our students. And as we explored in the “Callings” conference, community-based learning plays an essential role in the vocational discernment of many students. But enhancing student learning was not the only goal of the Eastside Project. As the founders explained: “The Project is rooted in a theory/praxis that views interaction between the university and neglected or overlooked groups of people as an effective means for refocusing and redirecting the energies of the university.”² Has this happened? Has the University changed as a result of responding to the perspectives, ideas, and concerns of our community partners?

The “Callings” conference served as a catalyst for us to engage some of our community partners in exploring this question. We asked a panel of our community partners to answer

the question of what it means to partner with a Jesuit university. Some of our partners were a bit apprehensive to participate on this panel. “How honest can I be?” one asked. We encouraged them to be brutally honest and not hold back or feel they should only paint the rosier of pictures. We sincerely wanted to learn from them. It was humbling to hear our trusted partners talk about our shortfalls, and it was equally inspiring to hear their dreams and creative ideas for how we might work together. It was also heartening to know that we have built enough mutual trust for them to share honestly with us, and in a public venue, no less.

What became clear in listening to this panel is that the bridge has served our students very well, but also that it has been used in a limited way. Students are the primary foot traffic on this bridge, going out into the community and returning with rich experiences to share with our campus. But students are seldom accompanied by faculty. And even more rarely do we see our partners come to campus. While our community partners very much appreciate and value the presence of our students and the role that they play, they would like to be more than a placement and to truly explore what it means to be in partnership. Our partners long for the university to stand with them as they take on critical issues. They share our desire to educate men and women for others and want to be more directly involved in partnering with faculty. They challenged us to imagine how we might create opportunities for them to spend time with us on campus in meaningful ways, including enrolling in the University as students.

Their suggestions challenged us to rethink our current model of weekly engagement. This is our flagship program that places students with one of our 50 community partners as part of an academic course. Faculty select placements from a menu of community partners who will provide appropriate experiential opportunities for their students and connect with the course learning goals. Students then choose a placement that fits their schedule where they engage in predetermined activities for two hours a week for eight weeks during the academic quarter. This model is user-friendly for many faculty, students, and community partners and allows us to place a large number of students in the community where they can interact in mutually beneficial ways. It works especially well in providing a first-time experience for students, allowing them to jump right in and be engaged in the community for the maximum amount of time the quarter system allows. But could this model be limiting the creativity and possibilities for faculty to engage directly with our partners, or for our partners to join us on campus? Is the very structure of our program getting in the

way of the kind of collaboration our partners seek? Are we inhibiting faculty and community partners from using the bridge?

Over the years there have been faculty members who have crossed the bridge themselves and worked creatively with our community partners in developing experiences for our students that did not fit our weekly engagement model. Jill Goodman Gould, senior lecturer in the Department of English, developed a course where she and Santa Clara University students teach a writing class at Downtown College Prep (DCP), a charter high school that is an Arupe community partner (see her essay on page 23). Twice a week, the University classroom and the high school classroom merge, allowing all students to learn from each other: DCP students are mentored by a peer educator as they prepare their essays for college entrance. SCU students gather valuable teaching experience and hone their own writing skills while learning from young people who will likely be the first in their families to attend college.

Lucia Varona, senior lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages and



Photo Credit

Literatures, and students in her beginning and intermediate Spanish classes welcomed the community to campus by organizing a cultural festival in which local artists, teachers, and students shared their music, dance, and culture in a celebration that was open to all.

As I considered ways that we might encourage more creative collaboration of this kind—collaboration that encourages movement across the bridge by all those involved—I wondered whether a new metaphor might help us imagine this way of working together. Sometimes the images that inform our thinking can limit our thinking as well. In a recent study by California Campus Compact, which worked with eight California campuses and 99 community partners to answer the question of whether service-learning is truly benefiting the community, the metaphor of a house was offered as a way to illustrate a healthy partnership.³ As they explained, the house belongs to everyone engaged in successful community-based learning—the community partners, students, faculty, and higher education institutions. Each of these groups has its own room in the house, but all are free to move about. An essential element of the house is a common gathering room where the collective group can come together. This shared space, like the living room in a home, is one where all are welcome, where traditions are honored and celebrated, and where each person's voice is heard. And this room has the important feature of a chimney, which allows for the occasional letting off of steam. The house as a whole is built on a solid foundation of relationships that have mutual trust at their core. What I like about this metaphor is that it brings us all together in one space, under one roof. Although the bridge allows us to cross a divide and meet each other, the university and the community remain separate. The house is a shared enterprise that we build and inhabit together. Might it become more natural for faculty and community partners to collaborate if they think of themselves as gathering together in the common space of a shared house, rather than traveling back and forth across a bridge? And as our work together fosters greater understanding and breaks down the barriers that separate community from university, might there no

longer be a need for a bridge? How then will we talk about our continued collaboration?

We are at an exciting crossroads at SCU, and perhaps it is just the right time to think about community-based learning in terms of this new metaphor. The recently revised core curriculum calls us to expand and deepen experiential learning oriented toward questions of social justice. All undergraduates will now be required to engage in experiential learning through sustained direct contact with communities to foster “a disciplined sensibility toward the causes of human suffering and misery, and a sense of responsibility for addressing them.”⁴ To meet this demand, we could think of more and new ways for our students to cross the bridge, but that won't be enough to meet this goal. Nor would it address the concerns raised by our community partners. As we work to implement the new core curriculum in a way that takes the recommendations of our community partners to heart, I prefer to imagine a table in the common room of the shared house around which faculty, community partners, administrators, and students are seated. Together they are developing projects for meaningful and constructive collaboration that meet our shared and individual needs. The metaphor of a house helps remind me that the University and community are in this endeavor together as equals, as family. And while I still appreciate our founders' image of the bridge that has served us well, perhaps this new metaphor will help us better achieve their original vision. ☐

ENDNOTES

¹ Stephen A. Privett, S.J. et al., “SCU's Eastside Project: Bridging the Chasm” (paper presented to the National Assembly of Jesuits in Higher Education, Georgetown University, June 6, 1989), Santa Clara University Archives

² Ibid.

³ Marie Sandy, *Community Voices: A California Campus Compact Study on Partnerships, Final Report* (San Francisco: CACC Publications 2007), 13

⁴ Juliana Chang et al., “Proposal for the Santa Clara University Core Curriculum” (Santa Clara University, Core Curriculum Revision Committee, 2007), 23

Vocation as Understood by First-generation College Students

BY MICHAEL LOVETTE-COLYER

*Michael Lovette-Colyer, Director, University Ministry, University of San Diego;
Associate Director, Ignatian Center, Santa Clara University (2005–07)*



IS VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT A LUXURY? DOES THE PRACTICE APPLY EXCLUSIVELY TO THOSE WITH THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO INSULATE THE EXPLORATION OF FUTURE CAREER PATHS, LIFESTYLES, AND WAYS OF BEING IN THE WORLD FROM THE PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF EARNINGS POTENTIAL AND EXPECTED EXPENSES?

Santa Clara has organized the work of the DISCOVER Project around Frederick Buechner's classic quotation: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."¹ While Buechner's elegant phrasing perfectly captures what we believe regarding the inescapable interdependence between self and world that characterizes authentic vocational discernment, it nevertheless sets aside and avoids as much as it illuminates

In particular, a pressing question remains untouched: Can such a calling as Buechner imagines be heard and heeded by everyone? More incisively: Does it apply to students from

families with limited resources who are in the process of painfully assuming immeasurable student loan debt in order to risk the reward that a Santa Clara education might provide?

These questions arose almost simultaneously with the arrival of the good news that Santa Clara had been awarded a grant from the Lilly Endowment to foster the theological exploration of vocation. For our community these questions arose with a particular vigor: Taking Buechner seriously—and building on the challenge of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Jesuits, to make the education of women and men of well-educated solidarity our goal—DISCOVER included immersion experiences as one of the project's foundational elements. Kolvenbach's call added an additional, complicating layer to the questions: Were we using the poverty and marginalization of the communities visited through immersion experiences to foster the vocational discernment of our students? Were we engineering profound experiences that shed light on the lives our students are called to live yet leave our friends in the San Francisco Tenderloin, Tijuana, or

El Salvador no better off? Any arrangement which added, even unintentionally, to the exploitation of the poor and powerless would be unacceptable, if not immoral. In this way the question evolved: Are the gates between our community of privilege and the reality of the world so high that the opportunity we received to make vocational exploration a central component of our community is irrelevant outside of the Santa Clara University bubble?

Such weighty questions rightly trouble us. While the impact of our immersion experiences on the communities we visited is difficult to assess, my five-plus years of accompanying students on these trips have convinced me that when we allow the lives of the people we visit into our own, and when we permit the immersion experience to shape our vocational discernment, the relationship becomes mutually beneficial. When we recognize both the assets and the liabilities in the communities we visit, solidarity begins to take shape. Watching our students grow into competent, conscientious, and compassionate young adults has convinced me that this nascent solidarity can and will blossom in ways that benefit our friends across town, across the border, and around the globe.

Beyond this issue, however, lies the question of vocational discernment for students without substantial financial assets. The conventional wisdom would suggest that students from families without great resources are seriously constrained in their vocational discernment. In order to examine this question, my DISCOVER Project colleague Elizabeth Thompson and I developed an assessment process. The study was designed to better grasp how our students understand and experience vocational discernment, with a particular focus on the degree to which family resources influence the discernment process. The study relied upon personal interviews of 30 students lasting approximately 45 minutes each. Roughly half of those students came from families of relative privilege and half from families with fewer material resources.

Since we lacked direct access to information regarding the resources of our students' families, and with the intention to be as sensitive as possible around such a personal topic, we relied

upon two proxies for measuring students' financial resources: the ability to pay for immersion trips, and a family history of higher education. Each participating student is asked to pay approximately half of the cost of an immersion experience (with the Lilly funding covering the other half). Not surprisingly, students vary in their ability to make these payments. Some students write a check or submit a check from their parents on the day they are selected to participate; other students require a payment plan of small, monthly payments over the course of many months. While an imperfect measure, this information provided a meaningful clue regarding the resources to which different students have access. Similarly, the second proxy was whether students participated in the University's Bridge program—designed specifically to assist first-generation college students with a successful transition to Santa Clara. The theory was that a family's history, or lack thereof, with higher education may dramatically influence the experience of the student. Relying on these two proxies, I was able to choose interviewees who might approximate representative students from families of relative privilege and from families with limited resources.

Each of the 30 students was asked a series of 13 questions related to their knowledge of and experience with vocational discernment. The questions assessed their understanding of vocation, the manner in which that understanding has changed during their Santa Clara experience, and the self-reported and perceived limits to their vocational discernment. The three most revealing questions were:

- Is there anything that gets in the way of your thinking about vocation?
- Are there any limits to you following your vocation?
- How has your family influenced your vocational reflection?

The results of the study were surprising. Most significantly, the interviews revealed that the freedom to discern vocation is approximately equal among first-generation and non-first-generation college students. In fact, some first-

When we allow the lives of the people we visit into our own, and when we permit the immersion experience to shape our vocational discernment, the relationship becomes mutually beneficial. When we recognize both the assets and the liabilities in the communities we visit, solidarity begins to take shape. Watching our students grow into competent, conscientious, and compassionate young adults has convinced me that this nascent solidarity can and will blossom in ways that benefit our friends across town, across the border, and around the globe.

generation students reported greater freedom than their cohorts from more established and resourced families

This freedom was evident in the comments of one first-generation student: "Sometimes what people want to do doesn't pay a lot. I don't let that get in my way. Money comes and goes. It's much more important to enjoy what you're doing and to make a contribution." And how do her family's migration from Mexico to the United States and her parents' financial struggles impact her thinking? "My parents tell me to do what I want to do, because that's what will make me happy."

In contrast, a non-first-generation student reported: "My desire is to be a teacher, but my dad pushed me in the opposite direction. He always thought I should be a doctor . . . that I'd be able to support myself better and earn a higher salary if I went into health care." This student described direct as well as indirect influence from her parents: "My dad always asks me, 'Why don't you become a pediatrician?'" Interestingly, this student still plans to pursue a career in elementary education. Her parents' overt pressure, while significant, does not seem to have determined her vocational choices.

A second non-first-generation student described a similar dynamic. "My parents tell me that I have to be realistic, that I have to be practical. When I told them I wasn't sure what to major in, they all but forced me to choose

business. It's not what I want, but I don't know what else to do."

Those comments contrast with the experience of a first-generation junior who recounts the influence of his family with these words: "My parents always told me, 'Do what you want.' They also said, '*hechele ganas*,' which means give it your all, your best effort. They have emphasized that as long as I give it my all, they will be happy. They both worked for years in the fields. Anything I do, which I have freely chosen, will be a success in their eyes."

A final example of the surprising freedom for vocational discernment among first-generation students comes from the daughter of immigrants to the United States who left behind the violence of Nicaragua's civil war. This student told me, "Both my parents have inspired me to work hard, but they never give me direct advice. They never pressure me. They say, 'Do what you want.' They support me but don't tell me what to do. Sometimes I wish they would just say what I should do! But they never do."

While these three representative examples challenge the conventional wisdom, other first-generation students did describe a heightened sense of responsibility to family and an intense need to consider the financial implications of vocational decisions. These pressures come into sharpest relief around the choice of a major. It should be emphasized that while the results of the interviews challenged the presumption that

the lack of financial resources places pressure—if not constraints—on vocational discernment, a small proportion of the first-generation students did report feeling such pressure, sometimes acutely.

One first-generation junior described her sense of duty to her family in these words: “My mom is a single mom. I want to do things for her. I’m the oldest and I want to take care of my family. I feel it’s my responsibility to take care of her.” Complementing this student’s sense of familial obligation is a strong desire to make a contribution to those in need. Her decision to declare a combined sciences major, embarking on the rigorous pre-health professional course of study, reflects the intersection of her desire to support her family as well as to help others. Due to the pressure she feels to provide financially for her family, her vocational discernment may be thought of as constrained. While she may in fact have less freedom than some others, she nevertheless has sought and found a major and a career path about which she is passionate and which allow her to connect with her deep gladness. It’s important to note that this student’s sense of responsibility did not result from her mother’s demands; her mother did not tell her what to study or suggest future

careers. Instead, the student herself has carefully considered her family’s financial situation and has begun to respond to what she understands to be her family’s needs.

In contrast, another first-generation student reported direct pressure from his family. “My family has really high expectations of me—they felt I had to have a major that was really good. They blocked me from choosing a major that I really wanted. They thought college was just about studying and they didn’t understand the other programs and activities that I wanted to be involved with to help me develop as a person.” This student chose accounting as his major, setting aside a long-held desire to teach. While the tension between his parents’ expectations and his own desires continues, he expresses hope that he will eventually become a teacher, either in the short term or sometime in the future.

This student’s experience raises the possibility of differences in the ways that women and men think about vocation. While the current study was not designed to address this question, the results of the interviews seem to indicate that male first-generation college students feel less free to discern vocation. One plausible interpretation is that this difference reflects deeply held assumptions regarding the



Charles Barry

Vocational discernment is a mysterious process that proceeds at a unique pace and rhythm for each individual. The interviews suggested that students frequently wrestle with the task of sorting out the real and the perceived constraints to discernment and that this process may require both time and wise mentors. The surrendering of assumptions provides the mentor with the freedom necessary to walk with the student through the unmapped territory of tuning into his or her unique calling, as well as the initial steps toward crafting a response.

appropriate responsibilities for men and women, with an assumed obligation for men to focus on providing financially for their families. In this regard, there may be a heightened correlation between first-generation male students and male students from families with distinctly greater levels of financial resources than is the case for female students.

This evaluation process provided numerous other insights for how to work more effectively with Santa Clara students, both those from families with substantial assets and those from families without such resources. But the primary lesson that emerges from carefully listening to students as they describe the places and moments where they feel the freedom to discern vocation authentically is that financial realities are significant for *all* students, regardless of their socioeconomic background. While these pressures may manifest themselves idiosyncratically, they are nevertheless present in the lives of both first-generation and non-first-generation students. In order to most effectively address such concerns, it is imperative to set aside our presumptions regarding the freedom a particular student may experience.

This evaluation project also highlighted the fact that vocational discernment is a mysterious process that proceeds at a unique pace and rhythm for each individual. The interviews suggested that students frequently wrestle

with the task of sorting out the real and the perceived constraints to discernment and that this process may require both time and wise mentors. To be most effective, these companions must tune in to the particularities of each student's discernment process and the distinctive dynamics in which they find themselves discerning. The surrendering of assumptions provides the mentor with the freedom necessary to walk with the student through the unmapped territory of tuning into his or her unique calling as well as the initial steps toward crafting a response.

During the interviews of first-generation students, the phrase "Do what you want" emerged as a refrain. A clear majority had received this encouragement from their families. The non-first-generation students, however, rarely mentioned receiving such advice. They were much more likely to have been given direction as to what they should want, usually influenced by financial considerations. In this way, the interviews revealed that first-generation Santa Clara students may enjoy not less but more freedom to seek and to follow a vocation. [e](#)

ENDNOTE

¹ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 119.

coming events

2007 LEADER IN RESIDENCE,
CENTER FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP


Frances Moore Lappé

Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity & Courage
in a World Gone Mad

NOVEMBER 28, 2007

7:00p.m., Recital Hall, Center for Performing Arts

Frances Moore Lappé is the author of 16 books, beginning with *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971), which sold 3 million copies and awakened a whole generation to the causes of hunger and significance of our everyday choices. In her lecture, she will discuss her latest book, *Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity & Courage in a World Gone Mad*, which transcends conventional right versus left thinking about the roots of today's crises, from hunger and poverty to climate change and terrorism.

Co-sponsored with the Center for Student Leadership, et. al 



FACULTY/STAFF RETREAT


Falling in Love and Staying in Love: A Retreat for Married Couples

Retreat Directors: Jim Neafsey and Carmen de la Vega Neafsey

FEBRUARY 29-MARCH 2

Jesuit Retreat House, Los Altos

"Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way." —Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

There is a deep and mysterious connection between loving God and loving one's spouse. Honoring each other's desires, learning to hear with the heart, giving and receiving forgiveness, seeing and celebrating moments of love in daily life—these practices are at the heart of both married life and prayer. On this retreat, we will explore these core practices as a way to deepen intimacy with our spouse as well as with God the Hidden Ground of Love. For more information, contact Nikole Nichols, 408-551-1951. 



Bannan at 25



Dinner & Symposium to Celebrate
the Bannan Institute's 25th Anniversary

MAY 1-2, 2008

This celebration of 25 years of the Bannan Institute will begin on May 1 with Mass in the Mission Church followed by dinner in the Adobe Lodge to honor the Bannan family and its 25 years of generous support to Santa Clara University and the Bannan Institute. On May 2, we will hold a symposium, "Mission & Identity at SCU," featuring a keynote address, "Mission and Identity at Jesuit Universities in 2008," by Charles Currie, S.J., President of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU). The symposium will also feature panel presentations on engaged pedagogy (community-based learning/immersions), faculty and staff development, and Ignatian spirituality on campus. For more information and details on attending please call Nikole Nichols, 408-551-1951. [e](#)

NEXT ISSUE: SPRING 2008

Headline

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IN MEMORIAM:

Daniel V. Gemann, S.J.

(1929—2007)

From the time he arrived at Santa Clara University in 1970, and later through his struggle with Parkinson's disease, Daniel Gemann, S.J., never stopped believing in the power of faith and of social justice. When he died on Sept. 24 at the Jesuit Center in Los Gatos, he left behind a legacy of love and commitment that will serve the University for generations to come.

"Dan Gemann was an extraordinarily kind and pastoral Jesuit who welcomed anyone and everyone into his friendship. His leadership of Campus Ministry at Santa Clara built a liturgical and pastoral program that was recognized as among the best for Catholic universities across the country," said SCU President Paul Locatelli, S.J. "He modeled the Jesuit commitment of faith doing justice, clearly visible in the legacy of his involvement in the creation of both the Eastside Project and the Alumni for Others program."

This is an excerpt from the SCU press release on Gemann's death, posted on 9/27/07 and available at www.scu.edu/news.

Charles Barry



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