

THE ATLANTA SERVICE-LEARNING CONFERENCE

June - December, 1969

Atlanta, Georgia

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The Service-Learning Concept

To serve and to learn; these fundamental goals of our society are ingrained in the American rhetoric.

But how to serve? and how to learn? An institutionalized, bureaucratized 20th Century America has effectively limited the answers to these questions. For "service to country" America legislatively requires military duty only, which many of today's young people find morally questionable. For "learning" we have complex university systems with limited ability to respond to the individual and with oftentimes conservative views of what is education and what is not.

However, considerable attention is currently being given to the role of universities in service to society. At one extreme, arguments are heard that community involvement by an academic institution threatens its integrity and drains its resources. At the other end of the spectrum of opinion is the view of the university as a shaper of society with special social responsibilities because of its objectivity, standards, and resources of knowledge.

These arguments about campus-in-community may obscure fundamental questions of the role of the community as an educational resource. Can the university perform its primary functions of education and the discovery of new knowledge without an involvement in society? Can educational institutions develop the type of manpower needed by a rapidly changing society, both as professionals and as citizens in a democracy, without including the resources of societal experience in the educational process? How might community service, sought by many students, best be designed as a learning experience and integrated with other aspects of a total educational program?

Alternatives to traditional "service" and "learning" do indeed exist, because America is vast and strives for freedom of individual expression. Some universities and colleges, for example, bending to strong and sometimes violent winds of change, support the creation of "free universities" on their campuses. But, heavy course loads and the "success" syndrome of a hurry-up materialistic society, do not do much to encourage the average college student to pursue extra-curricular education that is unnecessary for a degree award.

Existing service programs like Teacher Corps, VISTA, and Peace Corps attract only a tiny percentage of college graduates, partly because the time spent with these agencies is often construed as altruistic "sacrifice."

The fact is that our society's definition of what is "practical," mows down idealist by the hundreds of thousands. The System persuades many that "volunteer" service and educational experimentation is to be undertaken at personal expense and risk, and only rarely at the expense or risk of established institutions.

. . . school administrators (must) wake up to the healthy new needs of student participation and incorporate that activity into the learning process.

President Richard M. Nixon
Radio address of October 17, 1968

A new approach is both necessary and possible. It requires new meaning for "practicality," new openness to change, new commitment to experimentation, new acceptance of the ability of youth, and indeed new social institutions and attitudes. . . to say nothing of competent human beings who are prepared to function in the new society.

It is to search for these new attitudes and processes that the Atlanta Service-Learning Conference is convened.

The Atlanta Service-Learning Conference

On April 30, 1969, at Atlanta University, students, faculty members and agency officials met to discuss the feasibility of a proposal to convene a conference of six-months' duration, whose goal would be a thorough study of the concept of service-learning in local application.

The participants voted to declare themselves the Atlanta Service-Learning Conference (ASLC), and to extend participant status to any agency, organization, or individual whose interests or activities have a bearing on the components of service-learning programs, or who have interests in the successful outcome of a local experiment in service-learning.

To date, students, teachers, administrators, educational institutions, federal, regional, and local government agencies, and diverse other private and public agencies and institutions have indicated an active, working interest in the ASLC.

The voice of youth has served notice that satisfaction can't be measured alone in dollars; that there is a need for service and contribution beyond the attainment of material success. If these goals require an investment in patience, then let us invest; if they require money, then let us spend.

Daniel Evans
Governor of Washington
Keynote Address to 1968 Republican
Convention

Formally stated, the Conference is convened to combine the resources of institutions and agencies concerned with the relationship between service experience and education, to explore and develop a conceptual framework and practical model for service-learning programs for universities

and communities, and to provide a structure for reflection and exchange among various local community and education programs during a six-month period (June-December, 1969.) Careful study combined with actual involvement in service-learning programs should result in a comprehensive picture and plans for service-learning in communities and on campuses. To assist the participants in their study, several methods will be employed:

I. Work Groups

The Conference will function primarily through work groups, each undertaking to explore in depth and to produce a report on one assigned function of the concept of service-learning. Work groups will meet in individual sessions, subject to the Chairman's call. The several components of a service-learning program, as identified by the Conference and assigned as work-group topics, with some questions for their consideration, are:

1. A Service Work Group

What should be the size of the service rendered, in comparison with societal needs?

What criteria defines relevant service?

What service do students perform and wish to perform?

What service can agencies accept?

How long should service last? (summer, one term, full year or longer?)

What kinds of agencies can accept youth in service? (Hospitals, Social Welfare, Educational, Religious, Governmental)

Should service be full-time or part-time?

2. A Learning Work Group

Can learning take place in roles which students consider socially irrelevant?

How can students be helped to grasp the broader implications of what they learn by serving?

What relationship exists between individual student goals and the chose of alternative service opportunities?

How can students be helped to raise the important, relevant questions about their service experiences?

How can interested, knowledgeable, and accessible faculty be identified and enlisted in the service-learning experience?

What implications of experience-based learning are pertinent to higher education in general?

How, in fact, do students learn from experience? How can it be measured?

How can community needs, student interests, and university programs interact to yield significant learning on the part of everyone involved?

What methods and techniques are most effective in preparing students for their job and community roles?

3. A Curriculum and Inter-Institutional Work Group

What courses now exist which are relevant to service-learning programs as training for other forms of service?
What inter-institutional relations now exist which could be utilized and developed for internships and program development?
What effects will the service-learning experience have on student expectations in the curriculum area?
What effect on independent study or directed research?
What will be accredited and how much credit will be given and asked?
Will this require cross-crediting among institutions?

4. A Research Work Group

What is the total need for student manpower in Atlanta?
What is the total student manpower potential in Atlanta?
Under what conditions could this manpower resource be tapped for the benefit of everyone concerned?
What changes in student attitudes occur during a service-learning experience?

5. A Financial Work Group

In funding service-learning programs, what share should be borne by the agency being served? by the student of educational institution? by the government?
How should the Atlanta Urban Corps be financed in the future?
What proportion of Work-Study funds should be spent on off-campus service activities?

6. A Methods and Programs Work Group

What methods are used by other intern agencies in the nation?
What are the relevant programs, proposed and developed, within and without the Atlanta area, that the Conference should know about?
In what ways should the Conference relate to other such programs?

Work groups will marshall available resources, implement ideas and concepts, guide the progress of the Conference, coordinate its operations, study its component concerns, and make recommendations based upon their study and observations toward the creation of a comprehensive model for a continuing service-learning operation in Atlanta.

II. Monthly Meetings of the Conference

Monthly sessions of the entire Conference will be convened, at each of which one or more of the component concerns will be the topic of study. Each work group will have an opportunity to chair a session of the Conference, and guide the discussion as it sees fit to focus the attention of

the entire Conference on its particular component of service-learning. Each work group will organize its assigned session, calling in whatever additional resource people are needed to explore completely the topic of its concern. The schedule for subsequent sessions of the Conference is as follows:

Early August	Service Work Group
Late August	Learning Work Group
September	Curriculum Work Group
October	Finance Work Group
November	Research, Methods and Programs Work Groups
December	Steering Committee

All persons attending the June 30 meeting are invited to select a work group in which to participate. Sign-up sheets are to be available in the June 30 afternoon seminars. The first work group meetings will be held at 11:00 AM on July 1.

III. A Practical Laboratory

Coincident with the launching of the Conference is the creation of the Atlanta Urban Corps, a group of 215 students serving full-time throughout the summer with 16 city and 32 private non-profit organizations in Atlanta. Most Urban Corps members are funded on the basis of 80% from the federal College Work-Study Program and 20% from the employing agency. The Southern Regional Education Board under grants from the Economic Development Administration, Office of Economic Opportunity and Department of Labor is providing support along with Atlanta businessmen and foundations to cover administrative costs and stipends for interns not eligible for the Work-Study Program. VISTA has assigned 25 associate positions to operate under Urban Corps auspices.

"The Urban Corps is the best example I've seen for young intelligent minds to grapple with the problems of the city."

Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.

Sam Williams, director of the Atlanta Urban Corps, points to the relevance of the educational aspect of the program as he describes the educational evaluation team which is a part of his twenty-member staff. Nine staff members make up the evaluation team which is responsible for developing and assuring educational dimension of each intern's summer assignment. Five professors serve as counselors to lend technical and educational assistance to individual interns and groups of interns, and with one professional and three student staff members in the office plan seminars and coordinate other means of helping the interns make their summer work experiences educationally relevant. Each student will be required to present to the Urban Corps a report on his internship at the completion of his service period.

Thus, the Urban Corps, in addition to accomplishing needed tasks in the community and offering both a summer job and a relevant educational experience to its members, provides a practical service-learning laboratory for the Conference. Through observation of the Urban Corps and participation of its members, the Conference is assured the necessary dialogue between theory and practice.

A steering committee, composed of work group chairmen and other conveners of the Conference, has been formed to provide direction for Conference activities and to maintain a balance among the components of the service-learning concept. The motivation for convening the Conference combines an enlightened self-interest with an appreciation of the broader potential of the service-learning idea.

For examples, agencies are interested in competent manpower to do their tasks. They are also searching for potential career employees. Students are seeking experience and financial aid. Educational institutions are seeking to improve the education offered to students, to make it more relevant, and to identify useful career possibilities for students. By means of a service-learning program, it is hoped that these and other objectives can be more fully met than if each were pursued in isolation.

Sponsors of the Conference include the following organizations:

The City of Atlanta

The Atlanta Urban Corps

Economic Opportunity Atlanta

The Colleges and Universities of Atlanta

Department of Health, Education and Welfare

The Southern Regional Education Board

Volunteers in Service to America

The Peace Corps

Further information on the Conference may be obtained from the sponsoring agency officials identified in the program and from work group chairmen. The mailing address of the Conference is:

Atlanta Service-Learning Conference
Peace Corps, Southern Region, Ste. B-70
275 Peachtree Street, N. E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303