

THE ATLANTA SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIMENT

A Proposal For A Conference

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What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing.

ARISTOTLE

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The Atlanta area today is alive with the activities of many agencies, institutions, and individuals concerned with the full development of the area's human and economic resources. These activities cut across traditional academic and bureaucratic categories and across traditional social and political organizations and are marked by new alliances including black and white, young and old, powerful and powerless. One of the new alliances with great potential is the combining of community experience with education. "Service-learning" implies an involvement of students, faculty and practitioner in an arrangement which results in both service to the community and learning by all participants.

Recognizing that such an arrangement requires this cooperative action, and raises difficult questions that pertain to both education and community development, it is felt by many that some agent should exist to serve as a link between the various people and organizations concerned, and as a repository of new experiences. But such an agent does not now exist, which merely reflects the fact that the activities mentioned cut across traditional organizations of men and thought.

Therefore, it is proposed to convene a Conference of interested individuals who represent the agencies, institutions, and other organizations that are affected by or involved in the development of both community and human resources.

The Conference will focus on the concept of service-learning for five basic reasons, simply stated:

1. Programs of all kinds are proliferating in response to pressing societal and human needs;
2. Existing development agencies need additional manpower;
3. Students have expressed a desire for more "relevant" educational experiences, and are a large pool of well-trained, oft-unused manpower;
4. Educational institutions are reaching out into the community for ways to become more vitally involved in its affairs; and
5. The human and institutional resources exist side-by-side in Atlanta with progressive attitudes which, properly coordinated, can achieve a broad program of student intern involvement in service-learning opportunities existing in this metropolitan area.

The Conference shall be convened for a nine-month period, extending from April through December, 1969.

Its purpose shall be:

to combine the resources of institutions and agencies concerned with the relationships between service experience and higher education in an exploration and development of a conceptual framework and practical model for service learning programs for universities and communities.

The Conference will provide a structure for reflection and exchange among participants in various community and educational programs over the nine-months period. Careful study combined with actual involvement in programs will result in a comprehensive picture and plan for service-learning in community and on campus.

Participation in the Conference will be extended to any agency or organization whose activities have a bearing on the component concerns of service-learning, or which has a vested interest in the successful outcome of an experimental program in service-learning.

In the Atlanta area, where the Conference will have its focus, it is envisioned that the following groups or institutions will be well-represented in the body of Conference participants:

Students

There are more than 30,000 college or university students in Atlanta area institutions

Educational Institutions

Agnes Scott College, Clark College, Emory University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State College, Morehouse University, Morris Brown College, Spelman College, Oglethorpe College, and the University of Georgia

Governments

The City of Atlanta, Fulton and DeKalb Counties, the State of Georgia, and the Federal Government as represented by regional headquarters of HEW, HUD, CSC, OEO Peace Corps, VISTA, and others

Other Institutions and Organizations

The Atlanta Urban Corps, the Georgia Municipal Association, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Southern Education Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Southern Consortium on International Education, the YWCA, the Concerned Citizens of Atlanta, and many others from the public and private sector

Operation and Function of the Conference on Service-Learning

Any experiment, and especially one dealing with an indistinct, newly-conceived project such as the Atlanta Service-Learning Experiment, comprises many component concerns. The concept of service-learning

involves many functions which are not easily compartmentalized. However, the following are seen as fairly distinct components of the service-learning idea:

1. the service dimension of service-learning
2. the learning dimension of service-learning
3. curriculum design
4. inter-institutional relationships
5. institutional and agency structure, or re-structure, for service-learning
6. financial resources and needs
7. research, of university, community, and agency resources
8. models and programs, existing and foreseen
9. a guiding philosophy for service-learning programs

For the working study of these concerns, it is proposed that the Conference create work groups, each undertaking to explore in depth and produce a report on their assigned area. The collected reports from the work groups would be presented in December 1969 at the summary meeting of the Conference.

To assist the work groups and the conferees in their study, two methods would be employed in addition to work group meetings.

I. A Practical Laboratory: the Atlanta Urban Corps

An on-going practical implementation of the service-learning concept on as wide a basis as possible in the Atlanta area during the summer of 1969 is already begun, under the sponsorship of several groups (joining to form an Atlanta Urban Corps). This operation shall serve as a practical laboratory, whereby the

Conference, through observation and conclusions, shall work towards a continuing service-learning program for the Atlanta area.

Furthermore, the Conference will serve as the repository of information gained through experience with Atlanta area service-learning experiments.

Similarly, the Conference, because of the collective expertise of its participants, will be a major resource to service-learning groups throughout the summer of 1969. The participants pledge to commit as much of their creativity, time, and resources as possible to the successful completion of a summer of experimentation in service-learning.

II. Monthly Conventions 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 needed to explore the topic of concern.

The Work Groups

The Conference will function primarily through its work groups. Their membership will be drawn from the body of Conference participants. Work groups will marshal the available resources, implement the ideas and concepts, guide the progress of the Experiment, coordinate its operations,

study its component concerns, and make recommendations based upon their experiences towards the creation of a comprehensive model and a continuing operation in Atlanta.

Individuals, appointed from the Conference participants, will be designated Chairmen of the work groups. The Chairmen will see his work group's assignment is successfully studied and reported to the Conference. Chairmen will have as co-workers other participants in the Conference who agree to serve on his work group.

It is proposed that the following work groups be formed:

1. A Service Work Group
2. A Learning Work Group
3. A Curriculum and Inter-Institutional Work Group
4. A Research Work Group
5. A Financial Work Group
6. A Models and Programs Work Group
7. A Guidance Work Group (a steering committee)

The membership of the Guidance Work Group shall consist of the Chairmen of the other six work groups, and the Director of the Conference. The membership of the other work groups will be resolved at the April 30, 1969, Conference Convention.

Although the Chairman of a particular work group will inevitably represent one of the participating agencies or institutions of the Conference, this does not imply domination of that work group's study by the viewpoint or vested interests of the Chairman's agency or institution. It is assumed that the membership of any particular work group will consist of individuals from several participating agencies or groups, as their interests and manpower resources allow.

A Timetable

It is envisioned that the Conference be convened on a monthly basis, beginning in April 1969. Following is a suggested timetable for Conference consideration of the components of service-learning:

April 1969: first Conference Convention; orientation, general discussion of the Conference proposal and the agenda; and assignment of work group chairs and membership

May 1969: a general meeting on Service-Learning and the Atlanta Experiment; a national meeting of concerned people with the Atlanta participants, to generate national and community interest and to publicly initiate the Conference

June 1969: a discussion of service and learning

July 1969: a discussion of financial needs and resources

August 1969: a discussion of curricula, and inter-institutional relationships

September 1969: a discussion of research considerations

October 1969: a discussion of models and programs

November 1969: a discussion of the philosophy of service-learning, and preparation for final reports

December 1969: a summary meeting

Conclusion

Although admittedly imperfect, as is the nature of foresightful programs, it is believed that the structure outlined in this paper will at least get the Atlanta Service-Learning Experiment under way in a reasonably workable fashion. It is intended that the reader view all the above as designed for flexibility. Needs will undoubtedly be met on an ad hoc basis as we learn of them.

But this is a start. We commit ourselves as individual and group participants in a large-scale, serious approach to meeting important and immediate needs of society. We, like the students who undertake service-learning, must learn by doing.

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The following information is provided as background to this proposal:

- I. The February 1969 Emory Conference on Service-Learning
- II. The Atlanta Urban Corps
- III. Developments in Curriculum Design at Emory University

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I. The Emory Conference

On February 28, 1969, more than two dozen men and one woman, representing educational institutions, government, and other agencies, met together for one afternoon at Emory University. Under the leadership of William Ramsay of the Southern Regional Education Board, they initiated a discussion of several aspects of service performed by individuals in the public interest, and of the educational dimensions of that service. Models for the service concept were as varied as the SREB intern and the volunteer in Peace Corps or VISTA.

Participants in the Emory Conference agreed that such service both contributes to the community, welfare and the students' education, and that it should be encouraged on a large and institutional scale.

Indeed, many participants felt that it is not only in the general interest to encourage such commitment, but imperative to do so.

They agreed further that programs could and should be created by colleges and universities to encourage the student population to commit itself in greater percentages to national or international service with strong educational support. It was suggested that the agencies and institutions represented at the Emory Conference had the necessary power and resources to create such programs in Atlanta.

As the day's discussion progressed, it became clear that the concerns of the participants were far broader than service-learning alone. According to their individual viewpoint, different participants felt that the concept of service-learning carried the seeds of solution to many modern problems.

Simply stated, some of them are:

student demands for more "relevant" educational experiences during the college years (a concern for the active student)

society's needs for large numbers of concerned people who are willing to give of themselves to solve great problems...and the lack of such numbers (a concern for the passive student)

polarization of the attitudes of racial, ethnic, economic, and national groups, demanding increased inter-cultural, or cross-cultural, experiences both within and between nations (the issue of peace)

the insensitivity of established institutions to pressing needs for change; and the slow pace of institutional change versus the accelerating rate of social change and needs (the "Establishment")

disagreement, especially by the young, with current social ordering of priorities in America (the crisis of values)

It is noteworthy, too, that many modern spokesmen have eloquently addressed themselves to the same concerns. Four significant recent statements follow:

Governor Daniel Evans, in his Keynote Address to the 1968 Republican Convention:

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.

Donald J. Eberly, Executive Director of the National Service

Secretariat:

...organizations should offer young people opportunities to perform needed tasks contributing to the welfare of others; to communicate across racial, social, and economic barriers; to develop a sense of self-worth and civic pride; to get involved; and to learn while serving.

President Richard Nixon, in a radio address on October 17, 1968, during his campaign for the presidency:

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

Mark R. Killingsworth, a Rhodes scholar in economics at Oxford, in the NEW YORK TIMES of February 15, 1969:

...the National Commission on Technology, Automation and Economic Progress has estimated that the country needs some 5.3 million extra workers to bring public services -- medical care, education, welfare and home care, public protection, urban renewal and sanitation -- up to 'acceptable' levels. The energy and moral commitment of a generation which has already won civil rights victories, gotten long-overdue educational reforms and blown a closed political process wide open is still available. When will we decide we want it?

The Emory Conference participants, and others who will join the Atlanta Experiment as it evolves, take heart in the nationwide movement of thought that supports our sense of dedication and commitment.

This sense of dedication and commitment to action was the overriding result of the Emory Conference. The participants called upon Bill Ramsay of SREB to work with an ad hoc committee toward the creation of some

operating framework that would marshall the resources in Atlanta to the ends discussed.

They also felt that the City of Atlanta should be the focus and limit of experimentation at this time, with the idea that what is attempted here will be done in an atmosphere of open experimentation, searching for ideas of value for other cities, states, or regions. We should seek to learn not only what can be done here, but what can be done anywhere. Practicality demands an initial attempt of experimentally manageable scope. Also, it was felt that necessary resources exist in Atlanta, obviating the necessity to search far and wide for distant resources and support.

II. The Atlanta Urban Corps

(From THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION, Saturday, November 30, 1968:)

"Atlanta city government hopes to have an Urban Corps of up to 100 college interns working for and with it by the spring semester.

"Dan Sweat, governmental liaison director at City Hall, said Friday that the city is seeking to employ 100 under the federal College Work Study Program, and already is negotiating with college officials.

"Sam Williams, president of the Georgia Tech student body last year, brought the attention of Sweat and Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr., to the success of the New York intern program last spring."

In the five-month interim since the publication of this article, an Atlanta Urban Corps has come into being. It is under the directorship of Mr. Williams, through a cooperative arrangement between the Atlanta Children and Youth Services Council of the City and the Southern Regional Education Board.

Currently, the Urban Corps, with a strong student participation element, is engaged in the following operations:

1. Recruitment of student interns for summer, 1969, from Atlanta campuses through a student member College Relations Board.
2. Development of internship positions to meet agency manpower needs in the Atlanta area. Interviews are being conducted by students with department and agency heads to establish valid intern positions to be filled this summer. It is expected that up to three hundred positions will be available for placement.
3. A search is underway to locate individuals to fill approximately thirty-three permanent and temporary staff positions needed to manage and operate the Urban Corps.

Of the Urban Corps, Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr., has said:

"Our young people and our cities can no longer afford to be strangers. The Urban Corps offers to students a chance to be in the mainstream of Atlanta's problems and potentials."

Descriptive and publicity materials, and the charter of the Urban Corps will be available at the April 30, 1969, convention of the Conference for examination by the participants.

III. Developments in Curriculum Design at Emory University

Dr. Edward Holmes, Assistant Dean of the General College, Emory University; and Phillip Ruopp, Director of Institutional Relations, Peace Corps, on April 9, 1969, met with department chairmen and faculty members in social sciences and romance languages to survey existing resources at Emory for developing service-learning programs. Beyond the single concern of university resources, they explored the possibility of creating a program of subjects in domestic and international affairs that would encourage and prepare the student for service in Peace Corps, VISTA, or Teacher Corps, or in other related voluntary service.

Conversations on that day between Holmes, Ruopp, and Bill Ramsay of SREB led to a decision to pursue the question of Atlanta area resources relevant to such a program, and to a proposal for a resource survey.

Accordingly, on April 15, 1969, Holmes met with Robert C. Nelson, Director of the Southern Regional Office of Public Affairs, Peace Corps, to discuss in detail what such a survey would involve in terms of personnel for a contract between Peace Corps and the Southern Consortium for International Education, for Peace Corps to provide funds for such a survey.

The following members of the Consortium read and agreed unanimously to the proposed contract: Dean Charles Lester, Emory University; Dr. George Parthemos of the University of Georgia; Dr. Robert Stemke, Georgia Institute of Technology; Dean Richard Barksdale, Atlanta University; and Dr. Ernest Ogrum, Georgia State College. On April 18, 1969, Dr. C. C. Murray, Acting Director of the Consortium, signed the proposal and sent it to Peace Corps in Washington, D. C.

Dr. Sanford Atwood, President of Emory University, has agreed to provide office space for the survey in the Center for Social Research.

Atlanta area educators are presently being contacted for references for a qualified individual to undertake the survey; Peace Corps approval of the contract is expected soon.

Dr. Holmes expresses his hope for the survey in these terms:

"If this proposal is successful, a constellation of interests and resources will converge to make an outstanding improvement in the Consortium schools through the internship program with national and local agencies. By pooling all these resources, we can have a major impact on the awareness of problems and the pursuit of the solution to these problems, and on the discovery and application of manpower resources.

"The human problems of our time must be treated in a serious way with all available resources in order to point toward a future devoid of destructive elements standing in the way of human development."