

**Educational, Personal & Vocational Impacts of
Community Service-Learning:
A Follow Up Study of CSL Student Experiences**

**Community Service-Learning Program, University of Alberta
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INTRODUCTION & FOLLOW UP STUDY OVERVIEW

Those who have been following our annual and evaluation reports know the value that Community Service-Learning (CSL) has had in the academic, personal, and civic aspects of participating students' scholastic careers. Throughout five years of evaluations, we have been reporting short-term impacts in students' learning and application of class subjects through community engagement. What students perceived as the benefits of having participated in a CSL course at the end of the semester is well documented. However, up until the 2009-2010 academic year, we did not know, beyond a number of anecdotes, how any of the described values, learning and benefits had carried forward. That year, we initiated a follow-up study to assess these long-term impacts of service-learning. Five full years of CSL activities at the University of Alberta was both an adequate and timely period about which to inquire into the long-term benefits of service-learning.

Specifically, the Community Service-Learning follow up study endeavored to examine the qualitative impacts of CSL participation on students' academic experiences and choices, personal perspectives, future career and educational plans, and views on community involvement. Seventeen senior and former students who had completed at least two CSL course placements, or one CSL course and the Non-Profit Board Internship, were asked to reflect on their CSL experiences in in-depth interviews.

The interview participants were generous and thoughtful in their comments, providing detailed and qualitatively rich examples of how CSL has both fostered and informed their learning experiences. Overall, our analysis of the long-term impacts of CSL reveals the importance of CSL work in shaping the university education and academic experiences of students at the University of Alberta. This study also contributes to broader understandings of service-learning, as it constitutes one of the few works analyzing long-term impacts; most service-learning programs have focused primarily on short-term evaluative measures. Our examination of personal and vocational impacts alongside the educational outcomes of service-learning experiences also provides a more substantive, well-rounded understanding of the benefits of service-learning for students.

The interviews revealed several areas in which service-learning participation positively impacted students' lives and university experiences. In particular, they suggest that participation in CSL at the University of Alberta:

- Enhanced students' learning significantly, on both academic and personal levels
- Expanded students' understandings of classroom concepts
- Cultivated students' understandings of theoretical materials and pedagogical approaches
- Fostered a wide range of transferable skills, including administrative, managerial, analytic, and research skills
- Improved students' conversance with concepts of experiential knowledge and service-learning practices
- Facilitated students' experience with critical thinking and reflection
- Enhanced students' written and oral communication skills
- Improved students' interpersonal skills, resilience and adaptability
- Provided opportunities for personal growth and transformation

- Increased students' awareness of and conversance with the non-profit sector
- Increased students' awareness of and conversance with concepts of social and cultural diversity and with the realities of marginalization in local communities
- Engaged students more substantively with the concepts and practices of community engagement
- Informed students' academic and career decisions
- Enabled students' development of career and educational goals

STUDY METHODOLOGIES

As our objective was to find out if and what kinds of effects participation in CSL had on the life experiences, perspectives, and choices of students as they completed and moved beyond their university education, we chose a qualitative research methodology for the follow up study. Specifically, we designed an in-depth, primarily open-ended interview approach that allowed us to inquire into the participants' perceptions and interpretations of their experience with CSL (Richards, 2005, p. 36). In consultation with the director of the Community Service-Learning Program, Dr. Sara Dorow, we outlined interview themes to guide our conversations with the participants (Richards, 2005, p. 38), aiming to capture how CSL impacted their university education, their career choices, their perspectives of and participation in civil society, and their lives in general.

For recruiting purposes, we used consent forms signed by participating CSL students at the end of each semester. These forms contained students' contact information, and their written and signed consent to be contacted for CSL follow-up studies. We emailed a recruitment letter to students who met specific criteria: students who had taken at least two CSL courses, or one CSL course and the Non-Profit Board Internship. We believed that students with these characteristics would have a more solid experience from which to reflect on CSL programming and its effects. Our email invitations explained the purpose of the study, and requested that those interested in participating contact us by a set deadline. We received more than twenty replies, and completed two pilot interviews and fifteen full interviews. With the permission of the two pilot-interviewed students, we included their observations as part of the main body of interviews. The inclusion of these two interviews was deemed necessary as the quality of the information obtained through them was of equal value to the full interviews and, as such, would enrich the findings.

Bearing in mind that, in most cases where participants are invited to take part in studies, consent tends to be given by those individuals with a strong, and non-neutral, motivation to participate, we want to point out that the results reported here may be influenced by students with these characteristics. In other words, we are aware that strong positive or negative findings may be the result of participants with such motivations, since they are the ones that tend to self-select into studies. Relatedly, students involved in CSL-intensive courses and programming (such as CSL-designated courses and non-credit opportunities) may have qualitatively different experiences than those completing course-specific CSL placements. CSL-intensive courses and programs seem to enable deeper engagement with the connectivity between theory and practice, and tend to foster more detailed knowledge of the non-profit sector; they appear to be more impactful experiences

for students. Further, due to the potential cumulative impact of multiple CSL experiences, our findings may relate only to those students with more than one service-learning experience and not to those with only a single experience. Understanding these parameters, our primary goal was to gain in-depth understandings of *how* CSL impacted students' experiences and lives in the long-term; the qualitatively detailed interview descriptions provide a nuanced picture of the interconnectivity of such service-learning outcomes.

For our data analysis, we relied primarily on content analysis methodologies. Two members of the team read and coded transcripts of the interviews. We aided our analysis with the use of qualitative research analysis software—NVivo—primarily to code and organize the data (Richards, 2005, p. 86). Thus, our analysis was conducted inductively and deductively: inductively because we extracted dominant themes from the participants' opinions and thoughts during our first reading of the data, and deductively because the general themes of the work were predetermined prior to the interviews when we outlined the themes about which we talked to the participants (Berg, 2001, pp. 244, 251).

Finally, all aspects of the follow up study were conducted in adherence with ethics guidelines set out in the Government of Canada's *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. Prior to recruiting participants, we successfully applied for ethics approval through the University of Alberta's Arts, Science, and Law Research Ethics Board (via the Human Research Ethics On-line [HERO] system), and designed and conducted all aspects of the study to ensure respect for and protection of the participants' rights.

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUNDS

As noted above, seventeen current and former University of Alberta students participated in the study. Sixteen of the participants were female and one male. This gender ratio is more skewed than among CSL participants at the University of Alberta generally, where between approximately 73% and 83% are female.¹

The majority of participants (13) were pursuing Bachelors of Arts at the time of their CSL participation, majoring in a range of disciplines. One student was majoring in Anthropology, one in English and one in Psychology, while four were studying Sociology and three Political Science. Three other students were in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, majoring in French/Spanish, French, and Spanish respectively. Further, of the Bachelor of Arts students, four identified that they were minoring in Women's Studies, while one each was minoring in Creative Writing, International Studies, Linguistics, Sociology, and Spanish.

Of the remaining study participants, two were in the Faculty of Education, one in the undergraduate Elementary Education program (with a minor in Spanish) and the other pursuing a Masters of Education in Policy Studies. One student was in Open Studies, and a

¹ This range is based on the percentage of female participants in the annual CSL evaluations in the past five academic years (from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010).

final student was working on a double Masters in Arts (Humanities Computing) and the Masters of Library and Information Studies program.

At the time of their interviews, some participants were still students, while others had completed their degree programs and moved onto other educational and employment opportunities. Specifically, seven participants were still full- or part-time students, and seven participants were working (one in the private sector, and six in non-profit or educational organizations). One participant had completed her Bachelor of Arts and begun Sociology graduate studies, and another was both still attending school full-time and working for a non-profit organization, while yet another self-identified as a full-time student and new mother.

The diversity of courses and placements recalled by the participants is suggestive of the richness of responses shared in the interviews.² The specific contexts or circumstances of students' service-learning experiences also informed the impacts of these experiences. For example, memorable community supervisors and instructors fostered positive learning outcomes for students, as often did students' previous interest in community issues and volunteerism. Similarly, students' readiness to engage with service-learning environments and pedagogies also shaped their learning outcomes. More than one participant, for instance, suggested that they avoided CSL course components initially, but then pursued them when they felt more comfortable with experiential knowledge or the challenges of CSL placements.

Specifically, the participants' CSL placements and activities were quite diverse, ranging from translation activities and project research to frontline service provision and event organization. With language classes, for instance, students translated pamphlets, documentaries and other materials, interviewed community members, tutored students, and filmed documentaries for community organizations. At organizations such as the Bissell Centre, Our Place and SACRED, placement activities focused on frontline and one-on-one service provision, including food preparation and distribution, the distribution of clothes and personal hygiene supplies, visiting with and assisting clients, and participating in other programming. At organizations such as the Sudanese Children's Association, among others, students tutored children as part of in-school and after school homework programs, while other CSL activities (such as the Non-Profit Board Internship) exposed students to wider advocacy and governance issues within the non-profit sector. Students undertook research for project planning and development, assisted with fundraising and promotional activities, and helped organizations prepare for community meetings. In some placements, students were directly involved in the organization and execution of specific events, such as Take Back the Night for the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton.

The placements that the students participated in were similarly wide-ranging, including university student outreach and research groups, cultural associations and organizations working with immigrants, and healthcare providers and mental health

² To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all interview participants throughout the report, we describe their CSL placements, activities and courses in general terms instead of comprehensively listing their specific placements, activities and courses. We only identify a specific community organization, or describe a specific placement activity or course assignment, in instances in which we are certain that these ethical parameters can be maintained.

advocates. The students also worked with public advocacy organizations (in fields such as politics, environmental awareness, and international aid), and agencies serving particular marginalized populations, such as homeless individuals, at-risk youth, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, women, and indigenous communities.

The university courses in which participants completed CSL placements ranged from Sociology research methods courses to Modern Language and Cultural Studies offerings in cultural studies, translation and Spanish language to Political Science curricula on citizenship and democracy. Participants also completed placements in Human Ecology programs, and in both introductory and senior undergraduate Women's Studies classes.

Many participating students had also completed CSL-designated courses, such as CSL 100 (An Introduction to Community Service-Learning), CSL 300 (Theory and Practice in Community Service-Learning) and the annual 6-credit spring immersion course (CSL 350/360). And, at the time of their interviews, seven (or 41.2%) of the students had completed or intended to apply for the CSL Certificate, and five (or 29.5%) had completed or were currently participating in the Non-Profit Board Internship program.

STUDY FINDINGS: *How did CSL affect their lives as students and beyond?*

As in-depth and generally open-ended interviews, the particular impacts of CSL on the students' learning, personal and social perspectives, vocational and future plans were wide-ranging, as well as being interlinked. For instance, if a student gained a new appreciation for the complexity of experiential learning this was often discussed in conjunction with their understandings of concepts such as praxis or in relation to personal views. Thus, while we separate our discussion of the long-term impacts into three types of outcomes, this separation is only for the purposes of analysis; the students' experiences of these impacts were complexly interwoven.

The students shared detailed, nuanced and extensive reflections about how their CSL experiences affected diverse aspects of their lives as students, ranging from innovative learning opportunities and skill development to moments of personal transformation and renewed commitment to social engagement. They were both generous and critically reflective in their own analyses of their CSL experiences. We specifically address, below, the *educational* and *personal* outcomes of their participation in CSL at the University of Alberta, as well as the impact of these service-learning experiences on their *vocational* or future plans.

Educational Outcomes

Several themes emerged in the impacts of CSL on students' educational or learning experiences: the connection between experiential learning and pedagogical complexity; exposure to new learning opportunities and perspectives; increased knowledge of cultural and social diversity; and, increased knowledge of the non-profit sector and community engagement.

The Connection between Experiential Learning and Pedagogical Complexity

First, all seventeen students noted that their classroom learning experiences were enhanced by their connection to CSL; they described their CSL classes as not just providing formal learning opportunities, but also providing “very meaningful” learning experiences that went beyond the acquisition of knowledge.

Specifically, these experiences were mediated by the unique *synthesis of experiential learning and classroom concepts facilitated by CSL*. As one student stated, CSL enables students to “go outside the traditional learning environment of textbooks and notes, and really see what is going on.” For many, these unique opportunities for experiential learning were directly linked with the quality of their engagement with academic material, enhancing their understandings of new concepts. As one student shared,

you know, you learn a lot of definitions, you learn about a perspective, you read a lot of texts . . . This was a great way to see what *is* ethnocentrism, what *is* social inequality. You kind of know what it is until you are working with people and then it comes to light . . . [CSL] is just a different kind of learning . . . it is kind of fascinating.

Another student highlighted the connection between such experiential learning and her substantive understanding of classroom concepts: “I found that if I actually go out there and connect to something . . . then I actually learn it and it sticks with me. It becomes part of my vocabulary and thought processes.” And, as another stated, “my CSL experiences made the readings come to life.”

The *connection between theory and practice* was central in this process for many students, enabling both greater depth of understanding and engagement with theoretical concepts. Some noted the theoretical depth of CSL classes (both in terms of subject-related theory and CSL pedagogies), as well as identifying the role of experiential learning in facilitating their understanding of theoretical concepts. Reflecting the views shared by many interview participants, one student shared that her CSL experiences “made it easy to connect the theory that we were learning to reality. I remember having very good examples of what these guys [theorists] were talking about . . . it made a lot more sense to me.” Others appreciated the theoretical depth of CSL pedagogical approaches themselves. As one participant stated, “I liked the theory of it . . . It just felt a lot more tangible, it was more hands-on, it gave me more experience in the real world than just going to university.” Another identified that her CSL class was “definitely more theoretical. I didn’t find it more intense, though . . . the social theory . . . was a bit more concrete than regular social theory because it was all organized around a specific topic like community or engaging community and what community means.” Community interaction itself facilitated theoretical understandings as well: “actually going out and engaging in the community in different ways and interacting with people . . . gives you new perspectives, and actually experiencing first-hand challenges is really a different concept than just reading theories in a book.” For one student, this connection of experiential learning and theoretical understandings meant “being able to let loose in the community and . . . being able to decide on my own, you know, like according to whether the theories [studied in class] applied, or whether they were different, and kind of make my own observations and conclusions from those experiences.”

As this observation and others attest, CSL pedagogy empowers students to view themselves and others as co-learners—and co-creators—of knowledge. “What I really care about in CSL,” one participant articulated, “. . . is [being] authors of our own learning . . . This is something I can interact with and understand, and bring my expertise to and have a narrative that is not constricted by imposed structures or traditions.” Another connects this empowerment to learning shared with other students as well:

when you have actual practical experience that you can pull from, it just kind of enriched the class’ understanding of the issue . . . having those experiences to draw upon, you are not only learning from it, but your classmates are learning from it too and it pushes you so much further—you are thinking in a new way.

Moreover, “CSL makes you look at and sort of decide how you are going to learn things and who you are going to listen to and I think I found that the most valuable.” As these examples demonstrate, *service-learning enables students’ critically reflective engagement in knowledge production, as well as in their own learning experiences.*

Certain *CSL teaching approaches, assignments and activities were also identified by students as key mechanisms for the development of critical analysis and critical reflection*, both of which enhanced students’ engagement with complex concepts and theories. For instance, one student identified a daily in-class meditation exercise as “one of the most interesting things that we did,” fostering “mindful social action.” Others highlighted that opportunities to hear about the experiences of their peers enhanced critical reflection: “everybody had different volunteering experiences that would come up and we shared stories . . . it brought to life the stuff that you are learning.” In particular, opportunities for written critical reflection (such as weekly reflection journals, project notebooks or field notes) were identified by nearly all interview participants as a central mechanism through which to integrate their experiential learning with in-class concepts. For example, such assignments provided a forum in which to explore the challenges of community experiences: “you feel strange about things but you are not sure why and you are more able to sort through this by journaling . . .” For others, the process of reflection was most important: “it’s not [just] a journal, it’s a reflection and application of learning.”

However, it should be noted that some students felt the descriptions of and introductions to such assignments were inconsistent from instructor to instructor. One student stated that there must be “a better way to show the utility of journaling.” Another similarly outlined that, if an instructor clearly set up such activities as an exercise in the critical analysis and application of concepts and experiences, students were more likely to understand their overall purpose in their learning. She reflected that she “had no idea how to do the journal entries,” until a professor taught her how to push her critical thinking to “the next level.” These observations suggest that the structure, description and integration of such assignments into broader course curricula and pedagogies are vital to the development of critically reflective analytic skills through CSL.

Exposure to New Learning Opportunities and Perspectives

The interconnectivity of experiential learning and analytic engagement in CSL enabled new learning opportunities, such as experience with new skills and knowledge frameworks, for all interview participants. And, some students sought out CSL specifically for these purposes, associating service-learning with unique learning experiences not accessible in conventional classroom settings. For instance, one participant was looking for “a different [kind] of learning and that is the whole point [of CSL] . . . it gave me an opportunity to participate in activities with the community or a social action group,” while another clearly identified that CSL “gave me extra opportunities to try new things.”

In particular, many students identified *interpersonal interaction in community settings as a key opportunity for substantive learning*. As one student noted, exposure to new groups of people provides multiple opportunities to learn: “I really liked meeting people and hearing about their lives . . . I mean, in the University environment you are very sheltered. And, when you see that side of the world, it is really good.” Another suggested that such interactions were both personally fulfilling and enhanced learning outcomes:

it is a really rewarding experience and it brings a different perspective to your course content . . . it is almost like a nice break. When I have coffee with the ladies [at the community organization], it’s nice – we just sit and relax. I think it is good for people to have a wider range of experiences other than just going to class and studying. It is good to get out there and learn hands-on.

Furthermore, such *experiences provided a constructive framework by which students could self-reflexively analyze the limits of their own knowledge or experience*—an important learning experience for many interview participants. One student observed, for instance,

just how clueless I really was, how little I knew. [After my placement experiences] I could see how easily you can see yourself in their position, right? . . . It was so surprising how diverse the homeless population really was. Without having that experience, I don’t think it would have intrigued me, and it really kind of motivated me into learning more and becoming more involved. That was the thing that stuck out the most, just how different everyone was, the variant reasons and variant inequalities . . . the hardships they face, people were really strong. So far from what you would think homeless people are . . . they are so villainized in the media and stuff, so you are kind of conditioned to think of homeless people as monsters . . . it showed me how homelessness really looks in Edmonton and what homeless people are.

Similarly, another participant shared how her CSL experience challenged her preconceived ideas:

previously, whenever I saw youth just walking on the street, if they had chains or big hair or you know Mohawks or whatever, I would stay away . . . it was kind of intimidating for me. But then starting to work with youth and talking to them, you know they're not all like that . . . there is diversity among them, but you start talking to them and you realize they're just kids, they're just youth. That's just the image they put up. So it definitely changed my perception of people . . . I didn't realize that I was putting stereotypes on them, but then I realized that was the thing.

Service-learning activated this connection between critical self-reflexivity and experiential knowledge. As one student observed of her time with the clients of a homeless shelter:

you can go through your whole university career learning things but not actually connecting them to real life. So it is kind of an ivory tower disconnected to what is going on in the world, and having that chance [to experience the real world] with CSL kind of helps you re-evaluate the other classes that you have taken and things you have learned . . . it makes you more conscientious that it is good to research things, but it is also really good to have a good understanding of what that experience is from the eyes of those who actually experience it. Just because I am a researcher, just because I am a sociologist interested in homelessness, I am not the expert . . . they are the ones with the expert opinion.

This de-centering of "expert," or academic, knowledge also reveals the "co-learner" approach central to much CSL pedagogy.

Alongside such conceptual shifts, interview participants identified a wide *range of practical, transferable skills and experience gained through their CSL placements*. Students noted new project planning and development skills, editing and writing skills, teaching skills, experience with office/administrative tasks, and exposure to media relations, organizational and policy practices. Regarding translation activities, for instance, one student observed, "it was interesting seeing there were lots of colloquial phrases in the documents we were translating, so it was interesting to see how to translate those." For some, their placements exposed them to new concepts or approaches (such as types of activism or management theories) that they had yet to encounter in their studies. And, tangible experience with research methods, in particular, was identified and valued by many of the participants. "I knew it would be tough," one student reflected of her first CSL course, "because it was a research methods course and with a CSL component, [but] I was determined to get some experience under my belt before I applied to grad schools." Further, community experience in itself was an important supplement to both their substantive learning and the value of their university degrees:

When I was taking Women's Studies I was learning all these things about the real world and about the way other people think about things that I didn't really know about . . . I really started needing to experience what I hadn't ever experienced before and really I don't think my degree would have been as, and I know this sounds terrible, 'sellable' [without my CSL experiences] . . . CSL is incredibly important in teaching people skills and giving them knowledge about everything and how to do things.

As with these observations, all of the interview participants framed the skills and experiences gained through CSL in terms of concrete professionalization and employment-related benefits. As one stated,

If you are thinking about grad school or getting a job after [university], there is a lot of potential to give you hands-on, practical experience that can go on your CV or resume, that will help you or will look better than just having a Bachelor's, so there is that kind of pragmatic aspect.

Interview participants also noted *less tangible, though no less important, skills gleaned through service-learning*, such as “being confident in voicing what my needs are,” negotiating diverse—and sometimes competing—expectations of project partners, or developing “a sense of pride” in one’s work. Relatedly, students’ CSL experiences strengthened their confidence in their abilities. “I have a valuable skill set for I’ve dealt with so many people,” one participant reflected, “I have, I guess, emotional, social intelligence where a lot of people may be lacking that. I think those are important qualities and, of course, volunteering has really shaped and influenced what I’ve studied.” Another student’s CSL experiences influenced her decision to pursue new challenges: “If I hadn’t had that experience, I would’ve not been as confident to pursue this as a topic for my thesis. I wouldn’t really even know how to approach it or what is really going on.” While often not the intended learning outcomes of CSL placements, these *enhanced practical and conceptual skills suggest that service-learning participation provides opportunities for students to expand their knowledge frameworks and better prepares students for success in their future plans.*

Increased Knowledge of Cultural and Social Diversity

Not unsurprisingly, all the interview participants felt they learned more about the communities in which they live, work and study through their service-learning experiences. However, *increased knowledge of cultural diversity* in particular was identified by many and, almost exclusively, this knowledge was associated with one-on-one interactions in the community. Coupled with the critical analytic and self-reflexive skills often practiced in CSL classrooms, such interpersonal experiences enabled students’ development of an increased awareness of the complexities of social marginalization.

Paralleling new learning opportunities fostered by exposure to new people and new environments, discussed in the previous section, some students noted how *acknowledging differences between their personal experiences and those of the individuals with whom they were working dislodged their preconceptions of marginalized groups.* For instance, one student shared that, in her CSL placement, there were “a lot of kids from Africa and Asia . . . when I went to elementary school, it was mostly a white Caucasian population, so I found it so interesting [that it is] a really multicultural setting.” Working directly with particular marginalized groups also often challenged social stereotypes; as a student shared of her work with inner-city youth,

Already I had preconceived notions. Not in a snobbish way but I was just surprised how engaged they were . . . I thought they would be more introverted but they were just like you and me, so I am excited to see how I will change from this experience.

Another participant further observed how explorations of diversity provided learning opportunities for the young girls with whom she was working, as well as herself:

Some girls who were there were Muslim and they wore the hijab, the scarf . . . one girl said, 'I am a Christian and I eat meat', and the other said, 'I am Muslim and I don't.' You know they just kind of looked at each other and we just kind of went on with the game. There were many stories like that where they were just very accepting of one another and willing to learn and willing to listen, and just go on and play.

In a final example, differences represented by students themselves also shaped placement experiences and informed learning. As one participant shared,

we were fairly comfortable going into the situation, but [the community members] were very wary of us. We worked really hard to break down the barriers and their preconceived notions . . . I just remember being really stressed out the whole week, really confused about the way I interacted with the world . . . I think I was pretty sheltered until I got into some of these classes and, I hate to say I learned so much, but now I can deal with people of different [backgrounds] . . . I do feel I listen more now and I am more relaxed around people who are not of my ethnic and socio-economic background.

While this acceptance of difference modeled tolerance and diversity within the community, many students encountered individuals who were struggling, especially new immigrant children. One participant, for instance, shared a difficult experience with a boy she was tutoring; in one-on-one interactions, he ran away and hid in the school bathroom. Though distressing to her, she worked with his classroom teacher to find ways to interact with him in group settings. Reflecting on the difficulties faced by a young girl recently arrived from China who had yet to speak to anyone in her class, another participant struggled to help this young girl engage with group and one-on-one activities; she observed: "they're just experiencing this total cultural shock . . . it's so obvious that they're experiencing such a big change." Such examples reveal the *challenges of negotiating difference in new cultural contexts for new immigrants, and for students stepping out of their familiar social and cultural environments*.

For some interview participants, these new perspectives were something they actively pursued or that emerged unexpectedly, often beyond the parameters of their placement activities. One student, initially disappointed with the tasks assigned to her in a placement, asked to supplement her work with independent research, including an interview with her placement supervisor. The student reflected that, "because I did pursue more research and ask her questions, at the end, I think I got a better feel for the culture and the challenges they experienced as a non-profit organization." In the course of her activities, another student had the opportunity to meet many different community

members, opening her eyes to the range of individuals engaged with community volunteerism. “It was really amazing,” she observed, “to go to a lot of different locations to meet different community members . . . it was amazing to just kind of go out there and see the city and see the different activities the people of the association were doing.” And, while specifically improving her oral and written language skills in Spanish, one participant noted how she “learned quite a bit about the history of where these families came from . . . I learned a lot about that language barrier that they have. It was a cultural kind of learning experience.” In these instances, *cultural diversity provided additional learning opportunities for students.*

Across these experiences, many of the interview *participants directly connected their understandings of cultural diversity with an increased awareness of the complexities of social marginalization.* Directly observing the material realities—and interconnectedness—of social, economic and cultural marginalization enhanced their engagement with such in-class concepts, as well as with the lived experience of specific individuals. “We talked a lot about marginalization,” one student recalled, “and these ideas were tied to the small children I was working with and the program I was doing. That one, for me, had a strong connection between what I was doing and what I was learning.” Having interacted with a barefoot woman in a homeless shelter, another student’s reflections reveal how hidden such experiences often are: “I was at the Bissell Centre and a pregnant woman came in. And, I said oh my god, I can’t imagine being homeless and pregnant. You don’t really think about that part of the population. They are just invisible.” Finally, associating these lived experiences of marginalization to broader social phenomena demonstrates students’ abilities to analyze the contexts in which marginalization emerge:

When one of our topics was something to do with structural inequality, you really paused to evaluate . . . that is when you really start to understand the symptoms, you get beyond the surface and you start to understand ‘this is part of a broader phenomenon going on.’ I think it is empowering . . . you can start to look beyond the surface.

Increased Knowledge of the Non-Profit Sector and Community Engagement

CSL participation increased all of the students’ awareness of the non-profit sector on multiple levels; all interview participants felt they were more aware of local non-profit organizations and the issues that were of concern within local communities, as well as gaining a broader understanding of the sector as a whole. Significantly, this learning occurred in concert with more substantive understandings of community engagement and praxis, suggesting that their individual CSL volunteer experiences prompted more complex awareness of concepts such as social marginalization, citizenship, social justice and praxis.

First, while many interview participants were interested in pursuing careers in the non-profit sector or were already working in such organizations, they identified that *CSL facilitated their career aspirations in the non-profit sector and their ongoing connections with the non-profit sector.* Primarily, CSL enabled an understanding of the diversity or breadth of non-profit organizations. For instance, CSL “showed me that there are a lot of

opportunities out there and a lot of people who are in need of service workers.” Another student noted that her CSL participation

expanded my repertoire of organizations . . . CSL really showed me the huge range of possibilities out there for volunteer work. There are so many different organizations . . . [and] I think you can kind of tailor what your interests are to whichever organization you want.

Further, many participants directly linked their placement experiences with their career aspirations in the non-profit sector. As one student stated, CSL

helps you make contacts, it helps you if you do decide to work in the non-profit sector; it is one of the greatest ways to break into it, because you do have that kind of safety net of being a student . . . You have all these people who are going to see that you succeed in this placement without jumping into this intense volunteer position, without having any sort of support network . . . it gives you all these opportunities to try out non-profits, different skills, different tasks, jobs, without having to apply to positions.

CSL voluntary placements, in other words, provide opportunities to not only learn about non-profit organizations, but also to experience the working conditions and expectations of the sector in a supportive context.

Student participation in the Non-Profit Board Internship, in particular, facilitated in-depth knowledge of the non-profit sector, as well as fostering the development of specific skills and knowledge. As one participant shared,

it really helps me learn more about the mechanics of how different groups of people work together . . . the board deals with policy, budgeting issues, and of course bylaws and various other issues, bylaw formation; and, I have been exposed to a very diverse group. It’s really exposed me to how discussions are made in larger groups. How to address governance issues, such as cutbacks for budgets.

Another student noted less tangible outcomes of these experiences:

CSL really taught me more than anything to not be afraid . . . Understanding the conventions of [the non-profit] world . . . understanding those norms helps you understand the politics. So it is easier to put ideas forward and anticipate rejections when you know the world for which you are putting your ideas out there.

An interest in the non-profit sector may initially attract students to CSL; but, for many participants, their *CSL experiences also foster broader understandings of community-based engagement*. For example, many students noted that the challenges faced by non-profit organizations were part of their experiential learning. “One kind of striking thing about my whole experience,” a participant observed,

was that my placement did not turn out at all like it was expected, but of course like learning about CSL and the non-profit sector, you learn that it's not necessarily really always going to be what you expect . . . [Non-profits] have a lot of trouble implementing plans that they have, because they are not really as valued as the profit sector.

Another reflects,

I remember how much I learned about doing something with nothing because the organization has to do so much . . . I learned a little about media, about office management, about stakeholder relations. But all that had to be done with incredibly little . . . That perseverance and understanding of what, I think, a lot of community groups face is what has really stuck with me.

This respect for non-profit organizations is also coupled with an understanding of their unique status within the community. As one student stated, she came to appreciate “the potential pitfalls and wonderful advantages of doing community-based research,” challenging as well traditional academic approaches to research.

Such exposure to the non-profit sector provided a more nuanced, complex framework through which to approach community participation. Synthesizing principles of social justice with lived experience, for instance, one participant asserted that “it is like there is proof that I’m a good citizen. But I really am not doing it for that. So it is probably just all of it that CSL brings.” This renewed perspective on service was shared by other students as well:

what really [drew] me in was the connection between theory and service . . . it taught me that volunteering isn’t just giving up your own time. It is more of a mutual benefit, because even though you are committing a lot of time to the service and the mandate of the organization . . . that organization is giving a lot of stuff back to you . . . now I think it is definitely like you are building up each other . . . I value the process of exchange that goes on more.

And, more specifically, some participants framed their experiences through their commitment to social activism and community involvement. As one student stated, his CSL placements and the Non-Profit Board Internship provided opportunities to “become democratically and significantly engaged with my local community . . . CSL has given me a lot of social and political capital. I’ve been able to network with like-minded socially engaged citizens.” This illustration of praxis suggests that *not only does service-learning provide opportunities for students to learn more about the non-profit sector, it also fosters a substantive engagement with principles of social justice and communities that are committed to these principles.*

Personal Outcomes

As discussed earlier, our efforts to inquire and report about the different areas in which CSL affected students' lives is somewhat problematic as the areas of impact often intersect and are difficult to separate. However, in addition to educational outcomes, we noted the shared impact that CSL has had in students' lives outside of their academic worlds—the “personal outcomes” of CSL participation. These impacts were not primarily delineated by the interviewees themselves, but through our analysis of the interviews. Students' reflections on their service-learning experiences revealed themes such as: personal satisfaction and the applicability of one's work, personal growth, and the ability to draw learning from unexpected situations and assignments.

Personal Satisfaction and the Applicability of One's Work

All seventeen students based their sense of personal satisfaction on seeing, first hand, the usefulness and application of their course assignments in service-learning environments. Even students who did not have direct interaction with the public highlighted that knowing their work was going to be used gave them a sense of pride in what they were doing. For instance, one student who did not meet the people who benefited from her work said, “I didn't see who would have seen the DVD [I worked on], but I can imagine that it was helpful.”

In association with their level of personal satisfaction, students used words such as “intense”, “hard work”, “lots of pressure”, and “big commitment,” giving us a sense of the effort they put into their projects. Similarly, they used words such as “liking”, “fun”, “positive”, “enjoying”, “gratifying”, “worthwhile”, “rewarding” and “valuable” to describe their placement activities, thereby also revealing something of what they got out of their projects. These descriptions suggest that *the combination of hard work with its applicability becomes a key ingredient for a more well-rounded learning experience*, which in turn results in personal satisfaction. One student summarized it thus:

having everything come together after all the planning, because it took such a long time to plan everything . . . [and] was frustrating at times . . . having this huge thing come together in the end and having all these people show up at the [event]—and we were in the newspaper and on the news—it was just great when it all came together.

Caring for the end-user, or the community organization and its clients, also emerged as a primary reason for students' satisfaction in relation to the applicability or usefulness of their projects; this usefulness connected students' efforts to the needs of individuals and communities beyond their university requirements. Some students discussed the difference between projects that only instructors read and projects that have a practical utility by addressing specific needs of community members. As one participant observed, “it was nice to see that the assignments you were turning in were not just going back to you or ending up in a pile, but were going to be used directly by organizations.” Another

student pointed out that “if I do bad on an assignment, no one else has to know, but if I do a bad interview [for my community supervisor], it is going to be in the interview.” These comments highlight that a shift in perspective may be activated when students know that their work will actually be used; tangible or visible results shape both students’ commitment to their own work, as well as their valuing of the work the complete on behalf of others.

Personal Growth

Personal growth, or *modifications* in students’ lives in and beyond their academic worlds, included changes in perspectives, attitudes, skills and choices. While not all students felt they had a “life changing” experience with CSL, most identified ways in which their involvement with CSL reinforced or reaffirmed their ideals and viewpoints; and, some experienced what they described as “transformative” experiences that significantly altered their perceptions of the world around them. In our analysis, five dominant areas of personal growth emerged: volunteerism, life skills, increased awareness of vulnerable populations, personal development, and vocational choices.

The first instance of personal growth was through *volunteerism* itself. While most students were not strangers to volunteerism, they talked about rediscovering its value, “being brought back to volunteering,” their commitment to volunteering being “reinvigorated by CSL,” and rethinking the meanings of volunteering. For example, one student pointed out that CSL “taught me that volunteering isn’t just giving up your own time, it is more a mutual benefit . . . it is definitely like you are building up each other.” Others highlighted their conviction to make volunteering a part of their lives by investing more of themselves in it: “now I am always involved in something. If I am not volunteering or involved in a community organization, I feel really bad about it.” These observations suggest that *service-learning practices and learning frameworks foster deeper understandings of community engagement than do standard volunteer experiences.*

A diverse range of *life skills* were also identified as key aspects of personal growth by many participants. In particular, students identified improved time management skills, confidence, and self-directedness, as well as enhanced adaptability or improvisation. They also reported feeling more confident in dealing with uncertainty, and a greater understanding of institutional politics and conventions. Students explained this wide range of skills in the following ways:

it is a lot easier to put ideas forward and anticipate rejections when you know the world for which you are putting your ideas out there . . . it did help me build confidence and meet people.

[I improved my] time management for sure, because I have a pretty dramatic schedule as it . . . So I had to figure that out on my own, like what I was supposed to be doing at what time and figure that out to make sure I had my hours, but also to make sure I made the deadlines of the group.

When I had to do an interview [with a community member], I found out a couple days before that they were going to be in Edmonton. I had to research them, what they were doing, come up with interview questions and it was so rushed. And, I guess it just helped me really think on the spot and I guess it is not too different from doing an assignment last minute when you are scrambling to get it done.

Increased awareness of vulnerable populations was also a common experience for interview participants. In most placements, students were confronted with their own privileges and positions of power. Working in unfamiliar situations helped students better understand social differences, but also put into question their knowledge of self, and prompted many to analyze their own preconceptions. One student's reflections nicely captured this perceptual shift:

it is kind of dangerous being a student; you have a very protected life. No one I know is homeless or has gone to prison . . . you hear about this in the newspaper, you read about pregnant women being homeless, but it doesn't really affect you. You are kind of separated . . . when you enter that world, it really helps blow your stereotypes away . . . you kind of understand the situation a bit better.

Students also talked about being more sympathetic toward the people with whom they worked and, similarly, less judgmental, afraid, or unaware. Their new perspectives display a sense of respect, truthfulness and empathy for the people they encountered in their placements. The following two students provided clear descriptions of this process:

One guy I talked to said that . . . he had money and wanted to rent a place, but he couldn't find a landlord [who] would throw him a bone, right? So, it's like you have these conceptions, you know, this neoliberal attitude that, if people just work hard, they can get themselves out, and this gentleman had. But, he just couldn't find a landlord that would give him a chance . . . because he had been living on the streets for a year you see how things on the micro-level really relate you start to get a picture of what's really going on.

the way you live and the way you look at the homeless population, and the way you think about them is very different at the Women's Centre. You understand them better, right?

Personal development was also an area of growth for some participants. One student exemplified this by describing how her placement experience shaped her personal choices: "I worked with the nutritionist [at the community organization] and I learnt a lot about food [then] when I was living on my own and had to figure out portion size . . . with that advice and going to the gym I lost 30 pounds, so that changed my life." Another student describes how CSL helped with her professional confidence:

I was really shy when I was in school . . . the thought of going and approaching an organization to volunteer with them – I like the idea of volunteering, but the idea of introducing myself and expressing interest was very overwhelming. I kind of put myself in the next CSL class because I wanted some more experience and I wanted the opportunity, and that I didn't have to go out and find an agency on my own and hope it worked out.

Finally, the interconnections between personal development and *vocational choices* were predominant in the interviews, as numerous participants said that CSL affected what they wanted to study or the focus of the work they wanted to do in their university programs, as summarized in comments such as “what I want to do or concentrate on has been influenced by CSL” and “CSL kind of reinforced where I wanted to go.” In another example, one participant details these interconnections and impacts:

I think I was always interested in this [kind of work], but if I hadn't done CSL I wouldn't have run [for the position]. And I wouldn't have had what I needed certainly to be good, to do the things I want to do in a job like this, certainly not.

And, for some, the impact of CSL on these choices was deeply transformative. As one student shared, “it helped me more with where I wanted to go in life, because now I want to pursue counseling in psychology. So yeah, it was life-changing for me.” Similarly, another stated that CSL “helped shape the person I am now, the job I have taken and the career path I have chosen.” These experiences suggest that *community involvement broadens students' views on numerous issues, thereby enabling students' development of career and educational goals.*

Ability to Draw Learning from Unexpected Situations and Assignments

When students opt for or are required to do community placements, most go with a predetermined work plan carefully designed in collaboration with the CSL office, the placement mentor and the instructor. The intention is to provide them with tangible opportunities to engage with the activities they perform, to create meaning and, then, to integrate this meaning with classroom subjects. As is often the case in practice, these goals become more complex, more basic, or even completely different from what students anticipated. Regardless of the reason for unexpected situations, students' observations revealed an intricate level of reflexivity that highlights their capacity to create meaning out of their experiences. This critical engagement is dependent on various factors and players, including their own intellectual capacity to reflect on their experience, the role of the instructor, the support of the community mentor, and the conditions at the community organization. Three topics emerged in their reflections on unexpected situations: first, *perceiving unexpected situations as acceptable*; second, *interpreting unexpected situations as valuable*; and, third, *developing a deeper understanding of the uncertainty faced by not-for-profits themselves.*

Perceiving unexpected situations as acceptable was reflected in nearly all participants' observations. They associated the complexities of working in different environments and contexts with the recognition that it is impossible to "anticipate everything." As one student shared, "with the CSL class everyone is going through it at the same time and you can all relate your experiences, and it gives you an understanding that all the placements won't necessarily work out and that's okay." Another discussed how CSL enabled her adaptability in this regard:

We can't know everything that is going to happen or all the situations that occur, and CSL really taught me more than anything to not be afraid, to flourish in that . . . there is something to really learn from those experiences, I guess.

For other interview participants, being assigned or coming up with tasks that were different provided informal opportunities to interact and make meaningful connections with the people with whom they worked and, in some cases, to learn about their culture. One participant, for example, discussed what she learned from unexpected circumstances in her CSL project working with young children:

[The students] were preparing for a concert at the end of the year to show to their parents, that is why I choreographed and researched a dance to teach to them. But [the teacher] just said, don't worry about it. So I thought that was a let down because I worked hard. But because I did pursue research and I did have the interview with her, after I found that to be very informative about the culture in itself and about their educational system. So I guess the experience itself was kind of frustrating initially, but because I did pursue more research and ask her questions, at the end I think I got a better feel for the culture and the challenges they experience as a non-profit organization.

Interpreting unexpected situations as valuable was central to this kind of learning for many interview participants. Students described, for instance, that doing activities not requiring standard academic skills (such as serving coffee, serving food, organizing storage rooms and so on) were valuable; they made personal connections that they would have not been able to make otherwise. Similarly, through these informal activities, they were able to observe community interactions, and get to know more about themselves and their preconceptions, as discussed earlier. Other students recognized their role in informal tasks as providing a model for the people they worked with: "I worked in the kitchen and we would go sit down and pray and then we would have meals, and then we talked during the meals . . . we got to know them through the meals and you had to eat everything on your plate so you'd be a good example for them."

Unexpected situations also challenged students' creativity to ensure they had something to share in class; and, in some cases, students were able to show organizations how to better utilize the resources they had to offer. As one student in the Non-Profit Board Internship shared,

The organization didn't really understand that I am a resource for them. They don't seem to know what I am there for. I wanted to learn about the board and what the board does. So I was pushing for that and everything has been self-directed for me.

Similarly, working in unfavorable circumstances taught some participants to be less passive in their learning and to take an active role in the co-creation of this learning:

I don't think [my CSL placement] met my expectations, but I don't think that's a bad thing. I think my expectations were really narrow . . . I thought I was going to have someone who was going to teach me about every area of the board. And then what I found was that I have to learn myself, which has almost been more [important] . . . I've taught myself and I'm teaching the board what they are supposed to be, so I find that I am actually getting more out of it than I was expecting to.

Likewise, students whose work did not go as expected were able to negotiate their service-learning experiences and, at times, to *develop a deeper understanding of the uncertainty faced by not-for-profits* in their everyday operations. Issues such as limited funding, understaffed teams, structural problems, and limited resources stood out:

the feeling I got from it was interesting because for me it wasn't an efficient set up for a school . . . I found it more of a daycare than anything . . . but I think it was a combination of lack of funding and everything.

one kind of striking thing about my whole experience . . . was that my placement did not turn out at all like it was expected, but of course . . . you learn that it is not necessarily always going to be what you expect. [Non-profits] have a lot of problems implementing the plans they have, because they are not really as valued as the profit sector.

While interview participants who worked with unexpected situations discussed their ability to learn from them, it is important to note that, for some students, this may result in frustration. At times, they struggle to create meaning from their placement experiences, as is neatly captured by the following words: "I think that the organization has so many structural problems as it is, that they don't really know what they are doing." *The complexities of non-profit organizations, in other words, may provide unique learning opportunities, but these opportunities can be overshadowed by operational difficulties.*

Vocational Outcomes

One of the questions included in our interview guide inquired about the impact that CSL may have had in the way students viewed or experienced their university education. We also asked students if they thought CSL had influenced their career paths and

vocational interests. While most students highlighted different areas in which CSL had impacted their university education and beyond, the few who did not perceive any type of impact pointed out that service-learning validated the research interests they already had or the career path they had already chosen. For some students, then, CSL sparked their curiosity and prompted their interests in certain fields they may not have considered before, while, for others, it happened the other way around: their interest in specific fields led them to become involved with service-learning activities. *Career paths* and *research interests* arose as key themes in this regard.

Career Paths

Career paths were a dominant theme in students' observations about the impact of CSL, closely connected to both the transferable skills and broadened perspectives students gleaned from their participation. Some students observed that their *service-learning participation significantly influenced their academic decisions, course selection, success in the job market, and even their personal perspectives*. One participant, for instance, observed a direct connection between her CSL experiences and future career plans:

It contributed definitively to making sure, in the future, that I want to be an academic, so that I am definitely going to be grounded in community-based stuff and making sure the link between the university and the community is there.

Another student similarly pointed out how his volunteer experiences informed not only his career direction, but also his personal perspectives:

volunteering has really shaped and influenced what I've studied, right . . . at one point, I would like to do grad studies or law school where I guess it helps marginalized populations, so that is what I want to do. So I think it has really shaped what I've studied . . . and my outlook of life.

In a later stage of our conversation this same student elaborated further, observing that CSL has helped him feel more informed and knowledgeable about issues, subjects and populations of which he had not previously been aware. He summed this up by stating that CSL

really exposed me to people who I otherwise would have never met had I never taken CSL. Now I'm more confident, and now I'm more cognizant and aware, where if I just read about them, I probably wouldn't be doing all these courses or be involved in the job I'm doing right now.

For several students, *CSL influenced their course and degree selection and, eventually, their desire to pursue specific professions*. The following comments, provided by three different students, illustrate these connections:

[CSL] really motivated me to take courses in Sociology, History, Native Studies and Political Science. And it also influenced me to get involved in my current role [at work].

I was kind of waffling. Originally when I went to University, I thought I would do Business. I actually took the courses to get in my first year and, oh my god, I hated them. So I just, on a whim I took Sociology and Women's Studies So I can see how it affected what I want to do, and also how I think now. It was the best decision I have ever made, I got my degree but I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

Just the idea of wanting to help people regardless of what I end up doing—I want that to be part of my career. And I am so fascinated with language and culture, so yeah, it totally affected my career paths.

And, for others, *CSL participation expanded their knowledge of non-profit organizations and their desire to work in the non-profit sector itself*. For example, one student pointed out, “I think that I knew that I wanted to get involved in something like a non-profit organization or something like that, and [my CSL experience] has just cemented that.”

Finally, as noted earlier, CSL fosters students' acquisition of new skills, and such transferable knowledge may directly impact students' future career options. Tangible experience in different areas positively affects students' employability. As one participant shared, her experience with community-based research in a CSL placement became a valuable attribute when she entered the job market:

at the time, they were looking for someone who had community-based research experience and also had a Masters . . . I really didn't get any community-based research experience while I was doing my Masters because the project was more academic based . . . so if I hadn't done CSL stuff, I wouldn't have had any community research . . . [it] would have been harder definitely to get this position.

Research Interests

Related to the influence of CSL on students' course, degree or career selection, many participants highlighted *the impact of service-learning on their research interests*. For example, one student substantively linked her service-learning experience with her ongoing interest in community-based research:

it definitively gave me the experience I was looking for but at the same time, I don't know, it helped my personal development and helped shape the person I am now and the job I have taken and the career path I have chosen. And, even now, I am thinking of going back to school [to] stay engaged in community-based research as much as possible, because I really see the value of it. And, personally, my research interests are all driven by the idea that we lack of evidence-based research or evidence-based policies around substance use. I feel like one of the best ways to translate research knowledge into practice and policy change is by doing community projects that are partnered with stakeholders at the start. So I think that all of that has been influenced by my early experience in CSL and it just developed a lot in my current position and I think it is going to go further.

Other students described *becoming interested in research topics such as homelessness, marginalized populations, language acquisition and culture, as well as community engagement*. For instance, one participant, when asked whether CSL influenced her decision to pursue graduate studies, observed: "I think [CSL] influenced more what I want to focus on, which is something with a social justice component." As these examples demonstrate, student engagement in new learning opportunities and frameworks, as well as their increased awareness of cultural diversity and social marginalization, fosters an expanded worldview which, in turn, prompts students to consider new fields of study and employment as they move beyond their university lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING, PLANNING & RESEARCH

Based on the findings of these interviews, we have identified several areas in which future planning and programming would be beneficial to both students and the sustainability of the Community Service-Learning Program at the University of Alberta.

Service-Learning Research

First, regarding continued documentation of the impacts of and challenges facing CSL, we suggest that CSL plan to undertake longitudinal in-depth interview projects (such as this project) with students, instructors and community partners in alternate years. This research would supplement ongoing term evaluations with students, instructors and community partners, as well as developing a substantive body of knowledge about service-learning. Research themes with each of these stakeholder groups could be readily identified from term evaluations, ensuring their responsiveness and timeliness. Such longitudinal research would enable the CSL Program to demonstrate its effectiveness against institutional benchmarks, document contributions to the university and non-profit communities, support funding applications, and provide detailed feedback about programming. A research program such as this would also enable CSL to contribute to the larger academic body of literature on service-learning, as well as establishing itself as a centre of excellence on the long-term impacts of CSL.

CSL Programming

The interviews also revealed several areas in which CSL program planning could be improved or expanded. Specifically, we have identified the following recommendations in this regard:

- Maintain and expand internal CSL Program offerings (such as CSL-designated courses, CSL immersion courses, the CSL Certificate program, the Non-Profit Board Internship) as these were highlighted as particularly impactful for students.
- Expand CSL course offerings at the graduate level to encourage new student participation and the continued participation of students already experienced in CSL.
- Identify and develop additional CSL course offerings that include practical experience with research methods, as students identified that they both sought out experience with research skills and particularly benefited from such experiences. As many graduate programs require research methods experience but do not offer such courses within their own departments, research methodologies may provide a key opportunity for developing CSL further at the graduate level.
- Provide additional or alternative support and resources for designing effective in-class assignments that develop critical analysis and reflection skills. These skills are vital to students' substantive learning through CSL experiences, but are not consistently provided by instructors.

Supporting and Expanding Student Learning Outcomes

Interview participants identified numerous areas in which CSL positively impacted their educational, personal and vocational experiences, including both expanded conceptual frameworks and transferable professionalization and employment-related skills. Expanded CSL resources and programming would support students' identification and utilization of these skills, such as:

- The continued promotion of employment opportunities in the non-profit sector.
- The participation in or development of student-oriented information sessions on employment in the non-profit sector.
- The development of additional resources that enable students to identify and explain the transferable, employment-related skills gained through CSL participation, such as sample resumes, sample lists of transferable skills acquired through CSL, and sample lists of education programs and employment in which former CSL students are now involved.

CONCLUSION

The insights shared by the seventeen participants in the Community Service-Learning follow up study provide a detailed picture of the long-term outcomes of service-learning involvement, and contribute greatly to in-depth understandings of *how* CSL impacts students' lives. The students' reflections reveal that not only were their classroom experiences significantly enhanced by CSL, their personal, civic and vocational views were challenged and expanded by their community participation as well. This interconnectivity is particularly striking, suggesting that service-learning experiences in the university environment cultivate skills applicable to diverse aspects of students' lives.

In these seventeen students' lives, service-learning participation promoted critically reflective engagement with a wide range of knowledges, communities, and fields. Students acquired new and often transferable skills, discovered new areas of interest and aptitude, and developed more substantive understandings of both theoretical and pedagogical frameworks. Their experiential learning fostered confidence and curiosity, and enabled diverse explorations of their personal and professional lives.

These long-term impacts of CSL at the University of Alberta support and expand our knowledge of short-term outcomes, gathered through the Community Service-Learning Program's first five years of evaluation. We believe this qualitatively rich view of participants' experiences demonstrates the value of experiential knowledge in the academy, and points the way to new areas of program development and student enrichment through Community Service-Learning at the University of Alberta.

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