Defining Success in Service-Learning

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Defining Success in Service-Learning

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Service-Learning
Service-learning affords students the opportunity to interact with and support their local community while advancing necessary skills in their given field. For students, the primary benefit is work experience. The community partners gain as much, if not more, than they would from traditional, non-learning community service. However, these benefits are often incremental. Any large or long-term goals may not be met in the short time students are required to work with community partners. Can success in student learning be defined solely by the gained experience of collaboration and volunteering?

Mosaic Bike Shop
My student group was tasked with writing a grant proposal for the Mosaic Community Bike Shop in Spokane for a service learning class in grant writing. The shop began as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) in the Fall of 2015 with a mission to mentor and create jobs for the homeless and at-risk. By creating jobs, teaching job skills, offering refurbished transportation at reasonable prices, and supporting housing resources, Mosaic has served the community by helping get homeless people on track to be able to pay for housing and basic needs. For their proposal, Mosaic sought $5000 to create additional part-time jobs and purchase a storage unit and sandblasting equipment.

Group Methods
Group collaboration was a significant factor, working both within my student group and with the community partner. All members contributed to the grant proposal through research, writing and revision. The key task for this project was research, which involved both online research to find suitable potential investors in Mosaic, and consulting with our Mosaic representative at the bike shop and via Skype to gain further information about the organization and their needs. Formulating and asking questions about them served to enhance the proposal. Most of my contributions were in the writing of the document.

Conclusions
This is not an unusual experience, as grant proposals, whether from professionals or students, rarely result in successful funding. My group felt accomplished in what we had done, and the community partner was clearly grateful for our participation. I believe the experience itself did outweigh any long-term, idealistic goals. The open collaboration with Mosaic was welcoming, and my group felt appreciated for our contributions and efforts, having gained the firsthand experience of working with a business to craft an important document for them.

Results
We completed and submitted the proposal to Mosaic, and they expressed satisfaction with the final result. However, they ultimately did not secure a grant using our proposal.