

2017

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Recommended Citation

Baumer, Sarah and Karduss, Alfredo (2017) "Measuring and Disseminating Organizational Leadership Through Impact," *Purdue Journal of Service-Learning and International Engagement*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 24.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5703/1288284316542>

Available at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/pjsl/vol4/iss1/24>

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PURDUE JOURNAL OF SERVICE-LEARNING AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Measuring and Disseminating Organizational Leadership Through Impact

Sarah Baumer, *College of Pharmacy*, and
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Introduction

Our goals were both clear and bold for our teaching assistantships linked to Professor Brett Crawford's course, TLI112: Foundations of Organizational Leadership. We were expected to draft and submit a grant proposal and write about our experience, which would be disseminated through a scholarly submission. Our goals fit within a much larger service-learning initiative that aimed to transform TLI112 into one of the largest service-learning apparatuses on campus. This included 335 undergraduate students representing almost every college across campus, two graduate teaching assistants, two graduate research assistants, five undergraduate teaching assistants, and a host of community connections. The transformation was built on a partnership with the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC), providing Professor Crawford's 335 students during the fall 2016 semester with experiential learning opportunities while contributing 1,340 hours of community engagement support for WREC's events. The project, however, spanned well beyond volunteer hours. Teams of students also developed metrics to qualify impact, which were later used to create an impact report for TLI112. This linked impacts to corporate tools for nonfinancial reporting including the Global Reporting Initiative and the United Nations Global Compact.

Community Partner Description

WREC's mission is "to enhance the quality of life in the Wabash River Corridor by creating sustainable opportunities to improve health, recreation, education, economic

development, and environmental management" (WREC, n.d.). WREC hosts a number of events at which students in TLI112 were able to volunteer for during the fall 2016 semester. These included the Wabash Sampling Blitz, which monitors the water quality of the Wabash River throughout our region, and a number of maintenance events including Cary Home Savannah Maintenance, Oakland Elementary School Rain Garden Maintenance, and Tecumseh Native Planting Maintenance. They also partner with other community organizations to support events such as local river clean-up events, including DeTrash the Wabash, which is a semiannual event organized by WREC in which community members and students come together to remove trash and debris from the river. The organization serves the needs of different neighborhoods, churches, and other community affiliations or groups that, whether directly or indirectly, are clients to the service of this organization. The ultimate beneficiary of WREC's projects are the members of the communities and the families that live along the Wabash River. Since long before our involvement with the class and the partnership, WREC has put in place different initiatives, and it was Dr. Crawford's idea, our mentor, to get us involved with the execution.

Our first deliverable, a submitted grant application, supported the maintenance events hosted by WREC. During the fall semester, maintenance efforts included weeding and removal of invasive species, which would then be replaced with native plants during the spring semester. Our grant, titled "Planting Effort on Areas Weeded by WREC," was funded as part of the Purdue University Office of Engagement Community Service/Service Learning Projects and was provided financial support to purchase the native plants. This was supplemented by a second set of teaching assistants during the spring term who acquired another grant titled, "Positive Community Sustainability impact: A Partnership with WREC," providing similar support. The amount budgeted to cover the

cost of the native plants through both grants came from our efforts in inventorying the weeded areas of the rain gardens.

Our second deliverable included writing about our experience as a means to disseminate the broader impact of TLII12's transformation. This community partner snapshot is one part of that dissemination. In short, the impacts captured through student efforts and measurements seemed revolutionary. Here we detail an example of one event, the fall 2016 DeTrash the Wabash event, hosted on October 22. Throughout this experience, Dr. Crawford encouraged everyone to consider how organizational processes and practices could be improved. Using river clean-up events as one example, this included the introduction of recycling. This innovation was built on the observation that river clean-up events generally move trash from an environmental location valued by society—rivers—to an environmental location devalued by society—landfills. We aimed to improve this process by sorting the plastic, glass, rubber, and paper products collected from the rest of the trash. Table 1 includes data from the metrics developed by students, including how those metrics linked with categories of measurement in the Global Reporting Initiative and the United Nations Global Compact. Both of these institutions (GRI and UNGC) provide an industry-recognized set of standards used to measure environmental and social impact for B-Corps, which are companies certified to meet certain regulations of environmental performance (Certified B Corporations, n.d.). For us, this was a loop that began with critique and service and concluded with tangible and measured impacts. Similar metrics were developed for each event.

Conclusion

Funding, labor, and the challenge of almost exclusively virtual communications were a few barriers we encountered during our partnership with WREC. Through our collaboration, we experienced the value of patience, service, and impact when working with multiple individuals and organizations, and we were able to overcome the challenges mentioned. The quality of collaborative relationships between stakeholders can lead to a robust

and co-created sense of community impact. We obtained grants to fund our projects to support WREC's environmental improvement mission, and we discovered the benefits of service-learning and pursuing higher goals.

Acknowledgments

To Dr. Brett Crawford, our writing mentor, and Mrs. Sara Peel, our point of contact with the organization.

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Author Bio Sketches

Sarah Baumer is a second-year professional student in Purdue University's College of Pharmacy. She is currently an intern at Walmart Pharmacy and has served as a teaching assistant in the Department of Technology Leadership & Innovation. Following graduation, Baumer plans to pursue a career in retail pharmacy. While at Purdue, she has been involved in a number of organizations including Kappa Epsilon, a professional pharmacy fraternity, and Purdue Baking Club, where she served as president for two years. She also volunteers at an Indiana University Arnett outpatient clinic each week, where she works with dietitians to review patient charts and screen patients who may be at risk for malnutrition.

Alfredo Karduss is a junior pursuing a double major in industrial engineering technology and supply chain management technology in the Purdue Polytechnic Institute. He currently works as the senior peer mentor in the Purdue Polytechnic Leadership Academy and has previously served as a teaching assistant in the Department of Technology Leadership & Innovation. Karduss has been involved in a number of social and professional organizations at Purdue, including the Purdue Student Government (senator), TEDxPurdueU, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, the Cavalier Club, and Operations and Supply Chain Organization (OSCO).