Enhancing our commitment to serving the community and the needs of our students
WHAT IS THE **COMPANION**?

COMPANION comes from the philosophy of accompaniment which, in humanitarian work, emphasizes solidarity, mutuality, and interdependence. The Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement is about enhancing our commitment to serving the community and the needs of our students. It’s about forging local, national, and global community partnerships. Partnerships that provide experiences for students that allow them to think critically about how unjust social systems harm us all and how faculty and students working together can make us companions for public health, companions for environmental sustainability, and companions for educational access, economic justice, racial reconciliation, gender equity, and human rights.

According to Dr. Camille George, associate professor, School of Engineering, the concept of peace engineering is a simple one: if people could have their basic needs met in terms of food, shelter, water – the world would be a better, more peaceful place. Read her story on page 10.
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For many years, since Father Dease’s 2002 convocation speech describing St. Thomas as an urban university in the city but not of the city, we have been inspired to move forward in our exploration of the world and all that it holds for us as a growing and dynamic university.

Today we look back in wonder at the changes that have come about on our campus – and forward wondering about all that will come about in the months and years ahead.

Looking back and looking forward

Father Dease has changed our world through careful planning and his vision – we have come a long way in the last two decades. Service-learning, civic engagement, international research and international studies have flourished and we move to reinvent ourselves as we intentionally reframe and reimagine who we are in this global environment.

Dr. Julie Sullivan reinforces this vision with the legacy she brings from the University of San Diego where, in 2011, she launched the Changemaker Hub, a place where best practices on how to foster a campus-wide culture of innovative, sustainable, social change was developed. She is a leader who is determined to create change through transformative and respectful risk-taking at the local, national, and global level.

Combining service-learning and international opportunities

Here at St. Thomas we have worked over the years to combine successful service-learning opportunities with pathways to international experiences – both tied to students’ future career goals. International service-learning has increased over the last few years as we see in the work highlighted in this edition.

In this volume you will read about outstanding examples of both graduate and undergraduate international service-learning experiences – ones that have led to disruptive transformation. Students are often quoted as saying they will never be the same because of their international learning and their intercultural development experiences.

This exposure to a wide array of cultures includes practicums in Ukraine where doctoral students experienced international internships as OD consultants; in Singapore where students functioned as practicing therapists in a cross-cultural context; and in Haiti where students grew, built, and created a business with breadfruit. All of these amazing programs are areas where we observe student agency in action. On campus, we held our first OSLCE partner conference with over 30 new community partners. We are excited to work in and with the community consistent with our goal to remain involved and committed to Catholic social teaching, to serve the common good and our dedication to the dignity of the human person.
6,147 students. 443,858 hours of service.

We believe we offer students opportunities to work with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, create experiences that both challenge old stereotypes and expose students to points of view with which they might not be familiar, and finally, we help students attain new perspectives on social issues.

Over the last six years, programs and departments have reported an average of fifty courses officially designated as service-learning courses and 1034 students participating in the courses. If we combine this with community engagement opportunities, we have 6,147 students contributing 443,858 hours of community service.

The ability to recognize social problems and to discover something essential about them adds to our ability to not only work to solve them but it helps us see the world in new arrangements and asks us to act in different ways.

We see the links between transformational and intercultural learning: Jeremiah program, one of our most successful partnerships with a view to the help it has provided women and children; Amanda McNaughton and her commitment to children and educational equity for all; and Erin McCloskey and her ability to extend herself and her learning to another country where education has not been viewed as equally for all.

Honoring the past and sharing the future

Today our students, both undergraduate and graduate, have the opportunity to work with multiple and multidimensional stakeholders who will broaden their vision of the world and of themselves. How do we expand our thinking about service-learning, civic engagement, and higher education and create a course for where we want to go?

Dr. Sullivan asks, “How are we providing a relevant education to all of our students, where we learn how to break down barriers to institutional changes and foster a campus-wide culture of innovation? In order to find resolution to problems, we all have to be change makers and step into empathy and imagination in order to explore solutions.”
Service-learning in Ukraine – Fresh perspectives on both sides

Since its founding in the 13th Century, Lviv (a city in Western Ukraine) has been ruled by Lithuania, Austria-Hungary, Poland, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and attacked and/or conquered by Cossacks, Turks, Swedes, and Tatars. Since 1991, Ukraine has been working to overcome its Soviet heritage and form a working democracy. It is slow work, an uphill battle at times and helpful that resiliency is deep in the Ukrainian culture.

After its independence, three kinds of organizations emerged: Old Soviet style organizations, in which the motto might have been “no service, and without a smile”; multi-nationals which brought in their own organizational cultures; and small, very creative entrepreneurial organizations, which sprouted like mushrooms. The multi-nationals generally are in Kiev, Ukraine’s capital city. We offered our services in Kiev for the first five years; later we realized that outside of Kiev we would be more helpful to those companies who did not have the advantage of being in the capital so we shifted our focus to Lviv. Here, some companies wanted help but could not afford it.

Helping and serving through People’s Help

One example is People’s Help, the only organization in Lviv serving homeless women. These women are both creative and resourceful, running a bakery that helps fund the shelter and social services to help the women. There are no public resources for these women to draw on, no public assistance, nothing. People’s Help is an entrepreneurial non-profit in which the leaders are enthusiastic and hard-working. Its goal is both to help homeless women and to convince the community that it is the moral duty of the community to care for people in need.

Barbara Milon, a doctoral student in OD and Executive Director of a local community center, did her 2013 practicum with People’s Help. The practicum involved meeting the leaders via Skype and email, and learning about the needs of People’s Help. In the beginning of April she flew to Lviv with 10 classmates – the others were involved in 6 other projects. Barbara met with both leaders and the employees and some of their clients. It turned out that two needs involved fund raising and organizational structure. Barbara used her own fundraising experience to show some new ways for People’s Help to raise the monies they need to grow. She also helped the leaders see they needed to revise their thinking about how they worked if they were to meet their goal of growth.
Serving the community comes in different forms. Karen Lange and Pam Peterson worked with techniques for business, a mid-size IT company. They helped the company identify what creates and constitutes employee satisfaction, and areas for employee development. This is critical in Ukraine, since the norm for many companies is to treat employees as disposable. The students helped their company develop an approach in which employees are valued and developed. In this case, serving the community involved helping foster a more humane workplace. Karen and Pam both work in the UST administration, and have been in academia for their entire careers. One of their discoveries was that they could serve an IT company, because OD is about leading a process that fosters organizational learning, not about being an expert in the specialty of the organization.

Students put in an average of 80 hours for each practicum, not including travel. For faculty, each project requires between 20 and 60 hours—finding the right organization; preparing the organization for OD (which is new in Ukraine); coaching students before, during, and after the week in Lviv completing the final report.

New strategies in education and the arts

Another group did a strategic planning project. They spent hours on Skype before they left, and 50 to 60 hours onsite, and even more time after their stay in Lviv completing the final report.

As a result of the work, the university developed some strategic directions that combines serving their students and working with communities and partners. Perhaps the best result, however, was that while we were in Lviv, Ukrainian Catholic University signed an agreement to enter into a formal relationship with UST.

Sometimes the outcomes are surprising. Dave Olson, another UST OD doctoral student who is a faculty member at the North Carolina School of the Arts, has become an expert in OD in art organizations in Ukraine. In 2012 he worked with a small company that specialized in icons and religious art; the relationship has flourished with Dave becoming a mentor to the company’s leaders ever since. In 2013 he worked with a children’s theatre company and the Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra.
**OD practica based on skills and service**

The OD doctoral program is part of the Organization Learning & Development Department in the College of Education, Leadership, and Counseling. The purpose of the program is twofold – to train OD scholar-practitioners, and to provide the OD skill set to leaders. Each year for three years students do a practicum in which they use the skills they are learning about in their coursework. At the same time, the heart of organization development is helping organizations work more effectively and more humanely. This is the OD version of serving the common good.

We began the Ukrainian practica in 2004, and since then about 70 students have given their time to assist over 45 Ukrainian organizations. Some students work individually, others in pairs. Overall, to date, we estimate at least 5,100 hours of consulting have been donated to improve Ukrainian organizations.

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Service-learning involves serving the community and students’ learning through the process. The students return from Lviv with different perspectives on Ukrainian culture, their own culture, and themselves. First they learn to do OD, and find that doing this in a foreign culture makes them think through the OD process with fresh eyes.
Service-learning and fresh perspectives

Service-learning involves serving the community and students’ learning through the process. The students return from Lviv with different perspectives on Ukrainian culture, their own culture, and themselves. First they learn to do OD, and find that doing this in a foreign culture makes them think through the OD process with fresh eyes. They learn to do international consulting, often working through translators.

But the greatest transformation for many is within. Working in a different cultural setting is different than just visiting a foreign country. The students are allowed into people’s lives, they hear of people’s workplace experiences and hopes and fears, and discover how different the Ukrainian culture is from the American culture. Culture shock follows; it is by looking inside a very different culture that we begin to see our own culture through new eyes. At the same time, students realize that Ukrainian workplaces are not that different from American workplaces – with the same challenges, same passion for work, and same desire to make things better.

Serving the community comes in different forms. Karen Lange and Pam Peterson worked with Techniques for Business, a mid-size IT company. They helped the company identify what creates and constitutes employee satisfaction, and areas for employee development. This is critical in Ukraine, since the norm for many companies is to treat employees as disposable.

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Students put in an average of 80 hours for each practicum, not including travel. For faculty, developing each project requires between 20 and 60 hours – finding the right organization; preparing the organization for OD (which is new in Ukraine); coaching students before, during, and after the week in Lviv; and getting feedback from the clients (which is essential since, in the indirect culture of Ukraine, students will not get accurate feedback on what the client did not like).

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PEACE ENGINEERING
A NEW CONCEPT WITH AN OLD TRADITION

Ask Dr. Camille George about Peace Engineering and her eyes light up, almost as much as they do when you ask her about thermodynamics or energy or anything else to do with her studies or interests that are part of her position as Associate Professor in the School of Engineering at the University of St. Thomas.

The concept of peace engineering is a simple one: if people could have their basic needs met in terms of food, shelter, water – the world would be a better, more peaceful place. That’s where engineering and energy come into play, more specifically the School of Engineering.

As Dr. George explains, there has been little intercultural communication between engineers in North America and Europe and people in underdeveloped countries. For decades, engineers have been “helping” people and countries by sending equipment and machines optimized in their own country, only to be surprised by the lack of adoption, maintenance or use of the equipment. The developing world is full of abandoned machines. For years, the thinking was that engineering is strictly an equipment issue. Dr. George believes that engineering is context specific and good design must take into account the cultural norms of the potential users. She believes in participatory design, where the end user is part of the process, informing the engineer of constraints that are often not obvious.

A new engineering lens
Creating a new lens for engineers to look at the world and engineering as more than a quick solution is the School of Engineering’s focus with their international students. Dr. George contends that cultural forces shape and affect the success of technological innovations, and that professional practice requires engineering solutions that function effectively and responsibly in diverse cultural contexts. All senior engineering students complete a two-semester practicum that combines coursework with practical applications. Her vision is to introduce engineering students to the theory and best practices of intercultural development to help adapt their designs and prepare them to work on globally diverse teams.

The exciting aspect of three international service learning efforts for 2013/2014 aimed at creating sustainable engineering programs to aid subsistence farming in underdeveloped countries, according to Dr. George, is that “students are asking for it, not faculty!...Students want to see a world where the distribution of technology and engineering is more uniform...they want to know ‘why do two billion people have no refrigeration or access to the grid?’ They are baffled by this.”
All of this leads to international programs in the School of Engineering. Dr. George says that three current international efforts (and many previous ones) began by listening to the needs of subsistence farmers. Each project has a client (a company or individual they work with as an intermediary) and a customer (the end user, often farmers and often women). Students work with the client and, through the client with the customer, either virtually or in person to design and execute a sustainability-related engineering design project. Each project is advised by a different faculty member.
Project #1 – Haiti breadfruit peeler

According to their Haitian customers, breadfruit has been used in Caribbean cuisine ever since it was introduced in the Caribbean by Captain Bligh at the request of plantation owners who were looking for an inexpensive but filling food source that could be used to feed slaves.

Enter the School of Engineering at St. Thomas. Dr. George has challenged students in the past decade to expand the use of breadfruit by making it into a gluten-free flour. Working with their client, and each other, this year students are designing a market-ready peeler that could be used to peel the breadfruit and make the flour-producing function easier.

According to Dr. George, “a project like this builds professional skill sets that go beyond what they can read about in journals.” And the end result is that Haitian subsistence farmers produced four tons of breadfruit flour and even opened a bakery based on breadfruit products in Port-au-Prince in 2012-2013. The peeler will enable even more flour to be processed. This project has been sponsored by Larry Rauenhorst, a retired Minnesota farmer and the students are being advised by Tony Beck, an adjunct professor and seasoned systems engineer.
Project #2 – Injera bread maker

For Ethiopians, injera is a bread, and an eating utensil, and even a tablecloth! Here is the way it works: Injera, a spongy flatbread is used as a utensil with stews to scoop up the meat and vegetables. It’s also used to line the tray the stews are served on to soak up the juices. And eating the last of the injera bread signals the meal is over.

This year engineering students will design an injera bread maker that takes less energy and is easy to assemble in Ethiopia. Currently, injera ovens are very inefficient, with little to no temperature control and poor thermal insulation. UST students have reached out to the Ethiopian community in the Twin Cities to act as mentors and consultants, and are excited to work on a project that could impact millions of people who cook injera. This project is sponsored by Dr. Greg Mowry and Ame Gelalecha, an engineer working for National Instruments, and advised by Dr. Camille George.

Project #3 – Sorghum times three

You never know how the next project is going to come about. At least that’s the sentiment Dr. George expresses when she talks about an upcoming senior international service-learning project that involves sorghum production in West Africa. She was contacted by a plant scientist in West Africa, someone she had met years ago, about increasing the value of sorghum that grows plentifully in West Africa’s arid climate.

Partnering with their client, ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics), the project that begins in 2013 reinvigorates a long-standing relationship with agricultural research between American universities and local research efforts. The question posed to Dr. George (and by extension seniors who are participating in this project) was “Can we crush these sorghum stalks and increase sugar intake?” The not-so-simple answer is “yes.”

The customer, sorghum farmers in West Africa, need a simple process they could use to make molasses. West Africans use sorghum for grain, and as livestock feed; by adding value in an intermediate step, sorghum stalks can be used to extract sweet molasses as a substitute for expensive refined sugar. The project includes everything from exploring molasses-making processes in Iowa to exploring sustainable sorghum harvesting and usage methods in West Africa.

Peripheral benefits of the project, beyond the practical skills and sense of global responsibility students feel as a result of their efforts, is that students get the opportunity to work with many mentors on the project, from producers in West Africa, to plant breeders and a local company in Mali looking to use sorghum in the production of bio-diesel. The project is sponsored by Dr. George and ICRISAT and advised by Dr. Greg Mowry.
This January, 14 students from the Graduate School of Professional Psychology program participated in a month-long international study course called Diversity Issues in Counseling in Singapore. This course is only one of two graduate-level international study counseling courses in the nation.

The class was intensely experiential and included traveling, living, and learning in the highly diverse, Southeast Asian country of Singapore.

The course consisted of joint experiential learning with Singaporean MA counseling students as well as site visits that illuminated the various ways mental health needs are addressed in Singapore including Traditional Chinese Medicine, shamanism, and Western-based psychotherapy.

Multiple languages, multiple ethnicities

The opportunity to plunge into a highly diverse cultural setting with multiple languages (Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, and English), multiple religions (Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism), and multiple ethnicities (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Euro-Asian, ex-pat) made for an unbelievable backdrop for this course on diversity.

The highlight of the course was the service-learning component in which UST students conducted psycho-educational presentations and group work with abused teen girls living in a residential treatment center called DaySpring.

Infusing service-learning into international study

After two previous international study courses in Singapore, I wanted to find a way that my students could more fully immerse in the local culture and gain exposure to cross-cultural counseling. Fortunately, UST has excellent resources to help their faculty do just that. I attended a workshop designed for UST faculty who want to incorporate service-learning into their classroom. I found the workshop to be instrumental in providing a template for infusing service-learning into my international study course.

For their service-learning project, UST counseling
students conducted weekly psycho-educational training and led discussion groups with the DaySpring girls on topics such as making and keeping friends, handling peer pressure, and overcoming adversity. One of our MA students summed up the experience beautifully by stating:

Our involvement with the DaySpring program especially stood out to me as an important practice in cross-cultural immersion, using multicultural awareness, and building skills in a therapeutic setting. It was very meaningful to complete a service-learning project with DaySpring, because I feel I learn best when I am getting out of the classroom and immersed in an experience. The interaction with DaySpring girls was a direct experience in working cross-culturally, which helped me develop more awareness around what makes up my worldview. In our first meeting with the girls, I felt very culturally unaware since I was unsure of what to ask about that would be relevant for them to their life in Singapore. In those early conversations, I started to understand how “Singaporean” could mean different things to different people, just as “American” can signify different backgrounds, faiths, and beliefs. I also gained cultural awareness through the practice of letting the girls be the expert. By encouraging the girls to use their own experiences to explain their feelings and thoughts in discussion, I once again learned to never assume what a person feels or thinks. The DaySpring experience was also very significant because it was my first foray in working with teenagers with a trauma history. It was an incredible opportunity to develop direct counseling and facilitation skills through our student-developed, psycho-education programs. For example, in co-facilitating our last meeting with the girls through our program, “Inspiring Hope Through Adversity,” I developed confidence in seeing how basic counseling skills, like empathy and genuineness, can go a long way in a therapeutic, supportive relationship.

“My main satisfaction came from observing my students successfully interacting with the Singaporean teens in need. I experienced a profound sense of fulfillment when I watched the two diverse cultural groups meet for the first time and was amazed at the reciprocal cross-cultural learning that took place right in front of my eyes.”

The highlight of the course was the service-learning component in which UST students conducted psycho-educational presentations and group work with abused teen girls living in a residential treatment center called DaySpring.
I first became interested and involved in service-learning while working on my Master’s degree at Hamline University. It was only after I was taught a civic engagement course by the CEO of NYLC (National Youth Leadership Council in St. Paul, MN, a leading K-12 service-learning organization in the US), that I realized that civic engagement is not well perceived among my Saudi population and some work needs to be done in that area.

I started reading more about the topic and attended several conferences and seminars on service-learning in the U.S. I started spreading the word around about the concept of service-learning in my hometown of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (telling people I know or meet about service-learning) because in Saudi Arabia community service is a known topic but service-learning is not. I became so interested in the topic that in 2010 I applied my knowledge about service-learning to my final Master’s Capstone Project at Hamline—“Capacity Building of Volunteering Among Young People in Saudi Arabia: A Look at Service-Learning.”

I carried that interest in service-learning to my doctoral studies in organization development at St. Thomas. With the supervision of my professors, I completed my practicums for my doctoral OD program in the form of service-learning projects; I worked on a communication and merger project for a local Minneapolis nonprofit organization “Project in Pride for Living” (PPL); developed an initial strategic plan for the Lviv Business School (Ukraine Catholic University); and worked with the University of St. Thomas’ International Students’ Services (ISS) on a project: “How to better serve Saudi Students” (the largest international student population in St. Thomas).

When I think about the future of service-learning and the bigger picture of why we need service-learning, I realize I am especially interested in continuing my service-learning in areas that could enhance America Saudi knowledge exchange opportunities. In fact, I am so passionate about that I decided my doctoral dissertation topic will be “how can service-learning impact volunteerism in Saudi Arabia.”
One service-learning engagement included organizing an art event “Beauty Made by the Unseen” sponsored by the Arab-American Cultural Institute (a local Minneapolis nonprofit organization), and The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission in Washington D.C.

Students took time for a group photo during a cultural event to help build bridges between American and Saudi cultures, part of a service-learning engagement with University of St. Thomas’ International Students’ Services (ISS).
Putting Service-Learning Theory into Practice

Erin E. McCloskey

Working with the HAC

I stumbled across the Haitian American Caucus (HAC) during spring semester 2012 and saw that they were looking to host interns who were proficient in a wide array of subjects to develop their community development initiative in Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti.

The Haitian American Caucus (HAC) is an organization seeking to improve the lives of Haitian Americans in Brooklyn and empower this community by strengthening the networks of existing grassroots Haitian-American groups that exist in New York City.

As a primary education intern, I learned about the educational system and saw the disparity of resources between wealthy and poor students. Over the course of the summer, I developed a French-to-English curriculum so volunteers visiting the site would be able to teach students despite not having any French speaking skills.

Making a difference in big—and small—ways

I developed an interest in public health by translating surveys for the public health team from English to French, and yet I didn’t feel like I was making enough of a difference. It didn’t hit me until my final weeks at HAC that I was so focused on making big changes that I didn’t pay attention to the smaller changes I was making by interacting with children on the soccer field, leading a lesson on colors, or attending the women’s small-group meetings.

It’s difficult to credit these minor conversations as development, but as an international leader in a service-learning opportunity, it is important to acknowledge that transformation begins with a holistic view and commitment to engage in the community that needs help sustaining itself. In order to develop critically thinking leaders in a global context, partnerships need to be strengthened to enhance our commitment to serving the communities in which we study or work.

Course content can prepare students to go out into the world before they carry out their service to complement what they will learn, allowing students to use the skills they learn in the classroom to build the competency to understand the challenges of the work field before they enter it. The experience has left an irreplaceable mark on my heart, and I encourage other graduate students to consider participating in a service-learning opportunity.
I enrolled in the M.A. in International Leadership Program because I wanted to make a difference in the world. I wanted to find an internship that would put the theories I had learned over the years in my formal classes into practice.
Service-learning and Jeremiah Program, a leading nonprofit organization where single mothers and their children live in apartments while the moms are completing their college degrees...it’s all about energy and commitment and support.

The four components that comprise Jeremiah Program’s model are safe and affordable housing, early childhood education, life skills and personal empowerment training, and support for career track education.

1,400 volunteers, 22,000 volunteer hours

The foundation of Jeremiah Program is volunteerism which doesn’t sound like a big deal until you find out that last year 1,400 volunteers donated 22,000 volunteer hours! These volunteers do everything from sitting on the board to staffing the hospitality desk to playing with the children (the most preferred activity), facilitating the life skills courses, or cleaning the grounds.

When asked about the service-learning component at Jeremiah Program, one volunteer leader offered “service-learning is a vital component in learning. I think you need to get out of the classroom and apply what you’re learning by doing.” Volunteers have to have the desire to serve and give back. “Service-learning gives students a taste of life outside of academia often in a setting they wouldn’t be exposed to any other way. It [service-learning] informs their careers and gives them the hands-on learning that helps them experience life at a whole other level.”

“The (second) best part of volunteering at Jeremiah Program” according to another volunteer leader, “is being able to interact with people who have so much passion...the volunteers, the people looking for a bit of meaning in their life, and the corporations who generously let employees volunteer on work time.” The best part of volunteering at Jeremiah Program, heard often from volunteers and staff alike? That’s the “moms.” “Our families and our moms are amazing. They are committed to making a better life for themselves, for their children. They work hard in their classes, they meet with coaches to work on their own development and take life skills classes to help them be better parents. They are changing their lives and we support and witness their transformation.”

Faculty support for service-learning in Jeremiah Program

Dr. Sherry Jordon and Dr. Susan Myers, both faculty in the theology program at St. Thomas, have taught courses with a service-learning component that involved Jeremiah Program, with students donating 10-25 hours per course.

Dr. Sherry Jordon is an associate professor, Theology, and a former director of Women’s Studies; she teaches Women in the Christian Tradition.

Dr. Jordon noted that “Service-learning at Jeremiah Program was a very valuable experience for the students in my “Women and the Christian Tradition” course. It provided a contemporary example of obstacles women face and the resources they use to overcome them.”

Dr. Susan Myers’ research has focused on areas of early Christianity that have been lost to history, including areas that celebrated feminine images of the divine.
Dr. Myers connects today’s service-learning to early Christianity. “Community-based learning opportunities provide tangible experiences that emphasize the academic content of a course. In my course “Women in the Early Church,” students work with local women’s organizations while reading about women, and men’s attitudes toward them, in the ancient world. Although the ancient women lived in a very different culture from our own, students often find that similar systems of power and privilege continue to thrive today. Early Christian authors often vilified women in general, while heaping praise upon individual wealthy women. Working with disadvantaged women today highlights this reality from the ancient world and empowers students to advance the common good by striving to change systems of inequity. I am grateful to Ellen Kennedy, former Director of Service-Learning at St. Thomas, for suggesting that my students work with Jeremiah Program, a program for empowering women and their families through post-secondary education, and Women’s Advocates, a domestic violence shelter and educational program. My hope is that we have been able to serve the community while working with these organizations; we have certainly learned more about early Christian women by looking at them through the lens of these modern experiences.”

**Volunteer and service-learning opportunities**

Individuals or corporations interested in volunteering at Jeremiah Program can visit the website at www.jeremiahprogram.org

Faculty looking to include Jeremiah Program in their coursework can contact the Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement at 651-962-6017 or servicelearn@stthomas.edu.

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**What others say about Jeremiah Program**

Jeremiah Program graduates, volunteers, and corporate sponsors show support for the efforts and results of Jeremiah Program. Here are just a few comments:

The Jeremiah quote that guides Jeremiah Program is “Seek the well-being of the city where I have sent you. Pray for it to the Lord. For in seeking its well-being you will be seeking your own.”

~ Jeremiah 29:7

Father Michael O’Connell, a long-time program supporter, says, “Think about your gifts. Apply those gifts in helping these people make their society better. That’s what Jeremiah tells us.”

“Jeremiah Program provided me with all the support I needed to find a job that fit with my degree and with my values. The staff was with me every step of the journey.”

~ Mary Claire, 2012 Graduate

“Every day we have the pleasure of watching the women of Jeremiah and their beautiful children transform before our eyes. Their courage and determination never cease to amaze us.”

~ Gloria Perez, President and CEO

“We are awed by Jeremiah Program’s holistic approach to breaking the cycle of poverty. It encompasses every aspect of a young mom’s life. Life skills are the cornerstone of a good family and post-secondary education is critical.”

~ Genevieve and David, Financial Supporters and Volunteers

“We are proud to support Jeremiah Program in its mission to positively impact the lives of single mothers and their children. We can see the difference Jeremiah Program makes when we see the smiles on the children’s faces and the diplomas in the hands of each graduating class.”

~ Anne, Corporate Sponsor
THREE “OUTSTANDING” SERVICE-LEARNING WINNERS

On May 14th, we honored three outstanding service-learning winners at the Annual Service Award Reception – Dr. Elise Amel (Service-Learning Faculty Award Winner), Mr. Erik Beitzel (Service-Learning Student Award Winner), and Dr. Michael Raimondi (Service-Learning Community Award Winner). Here are their stories.

Dr. Elise Amel, Associate Professor Psychology

DR. ELISE AMEL – SERVICE-LEARNING FACULTY AWARD

Dr. Elise Amel has integrated service into her teaching, research, and service over the last decade.

• She has linked her Psychology and Work course with people experiencing significant barriers to employment, helping them reintegrate through resume design and interview practice.

• In her Research Methods course, her students created a survey for the UST Office of Mission.

• In her Theology and the Environment course her students dug plant beds for the UST Stewardship garden.

In terms of research, she has presented assessments of service at academic conferences and co-authored and published a meta-analysis of service-learning outcomes in psychology in the top tier teaching journal Teaching of Psychology. She has served on the Service-Learning Advisory Board, engaged in searches for service-learning personnel, and included service-learning speakers in all of the Faculty Development seminars she has conducted.

Outstanding Service Award: Dr. Elise Amel, Associate Professor Psychology

City Labs – Combining resources and resourcefulness

Most recently, Dr. Amel has helped to design and initiate the ACTC City Labs program where she now sits on the advisory board overseeing and promoting its growth. City Labs was developed to combine the academic resources of ACTC and the civic resources of the Twin Cities to work for each other—with an eye toward creating a more sustainable and livable future for everyone.

For Fall 2012 semester, her PSYC 342 Psychology and Work course partnered with the City of St. Paul Park and Recreation Department through the ACTC City
Labs program. Her service-learning course project was to assess feasibility and build management tools to support a Volunteer Park Patrol. Currently, the city of St. Paul has 174 city parks, but only 7 paid park patrollers. Thus, a volunteer patroller program is desperately needed to increase the sustainability of St. Paul’s city park system.

Appreciation from the community, the students, and OSLCE

As Andy Rodriguez of the city park’s system says: “Elise Amel and her students demonstrated a strong commitment to the project and a willingness to seek out creative information and ideas to enhance municipal services and increase social responsibility among community members.”

And, as former PSYC 342 student Quinn Wrenholt explains regarding her opportunity to participate in this service-learning project: “I was tired of hypothetical lab experiments and research projects requiring hours of time and effort with often nothing more than a letter grade posted online as a result. Using our class efforts to conduct important and needed work for the city of St. Paul was logical and efficient; producing a feeling of time well spent rather than time wasted. … It feels good to help people and to participate in things that matter—both to the city and to us students actively building resumes.”

Comments from OSLCE at the May 14th Service-Learning Awards Reception

By giving this award, the Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement expresses its appreciation for Dr. Amel who has demonstrated exemplary teaching through service-learning, fostering UST’s mission to educate our “students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely and work skillfully to advance the common good.”

Mr. Erik Beitzel – Service-Learning Student Award

Mr. Erik Beitzel is a law student, nominated for the student service-learning award by his mentor and supervisor at the Community Justice Project, Dr. Artika Tyner, Director of Diversity at the School of Law.

Community Justice Project – Helping communities of color

While in the Community Justice Project, Mr. Beitzel has worked diligently with his case team to organize a local campaign to promote fair hiring practices for those who have a criminal record. Presently, a criminal record is a barrier to becoming gainfully employed, a situation that disproportionately impacts communities of color.

Mr. Beitzel works to address this disparity by conducting legal research on this issue and engaging in policy development initiatives with his community partner. Currently he is the in-house resident expert on employment law and its intersections with criminal law. He is compiling this information into a report to be submitted to our community partner.

Advancing the cause of justice

Through his efforts with the Community Justice Project, Mr. Beitzel has effectively served as a voice for the masses of people who have been excluded from competing in the job market because of their criminal record. Thus, his work will provide this marginalized group with the opportunity to have a second chance and become active contributors in society.

As Dr. Tyner writes of Mr. Beitzel in her nomination letter: “As a result of his hard work, his case team has advanced the cause of justice and reached milestones... It is this type of morally responsible leadership that exemplifies the qualities of service-learning.”

Comments from OSLCE at the May 14th Service-Learning Awards Reception

By giving this award, the Office of Service-Learning and Community Engagement expresses its appreciation for Mr. Erik Beitzel who has demonstrated exemplary leadership initiative and dedication in relation to his work in our community. Mr. Beitzel has embraced our university mission as a morally responsible leader who thinks critically, acts wisely, and works skillfully to advance the common good.
Dr. Michael Raimondi – Service-Learning Community Partner Award

Dr. Michael Raimondi is an instructor in the English Department at the University of St. Thomas and currently serves as the principal at College Prep Elementary, a K-6th grade charter school located in St. Paul. As a Hmong-focused school with a dual language early literacy program in English and Hmong, College Prep Elementary is among the first of its kind in the nation. CPE uses a small school environment to accomplish its mission of preparing every student to succeed in college and career readiness. CPE is proud to provide its students with a strong educational program within a learning community that builds self-confidence and awareness of diverse cultures and ideas.

CPE and UST – Partners in producing “Stone Heart” ...

CPE partners with UST, Concordia University of St. Paul, and the University of Minnesota to ensure that its students receive ongoing support for their college and university preparation. In 2010, CPE welcomed UST students from EN 112, a drama and poetry English class, to partner with 6th grade students on the production of “Stone Heart,” a play written by a local Native American playwright on the Lewis and Clark expedition.

UST students partnered with CPE students on all aspects of the play’s production, including directing, acting, make-up, lighting, costuming, choreography, and sound. Since then, CPE has continued to open its doors to UST students, offering rich opportunities for fostering a greater commitment to social responsibility within our students.

... and partners in documenting oral histories

Over the past few years, CPE students have regularly partnered with sections of EN 121 and EN 202 to document the oral histories of their families’ journeys to Minnesota and to study spiritual writings of the 21st century. CPE has recently learned that one of its 6th grade students, partnering with one of our UST students, won first prize in the 2013 Minnesota Charter School Writing Contest.

Comments from OSLCE at the May 14th Service-Learning Awards Reception

By giving this award, the Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement expresses its appreciation for College Prep Elementary which, by welcoming our faculty and students, has enabled us to participate in meaningful civic engagement and embody our mission to educate “students to be morally responsible leaders, who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good.”
OSLCE INAUGURAL CONFERENCE

On October 8th, 2013, the Office of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement held its inaugural conference, created to serve as a channel for community partners to meet St. Thomas faculty and staff.

OSLCE welcomed over thirty organizations that focus on local and international initiatives ranging from renewable energy to public health programs. Graduate and undergraduate faculty shared the same enthusiasm for the partnership opportunities. Faculty, volunteers, and community attendees welcomed the opportunity to meet and talk about service-learning and engagement opportunities.

Guest speakers included Pat Jensen, J.D., Executive Fellow and Director of Public Policy & Leadership M.A.; Len Jennings, PhD, LP, Professor of Graduate Psychology; Ea McMillan Porter, Enrollment Advisor, College of Leadership, Education & Counseling; Jason Maher, Program Director for CityLabs, Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities; and Christina Larson-Dickson, M.A., Institutional Relations Manager for Global Volunteers. The variety of speakers provided guests with concrete examples of UST’s commitment to serving the community; it also showcased partners’ opportunities to provide students with real world experience through enrollment in a service-learning course.

The Office of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement, led by Dr. Eleni Roulis, expects the university will see an increase in service-learning courses, along with student clubs participating in a variety of short to long term volunteer projects. OSLCE will hold a series of workshops to encourage the UST community to partner with our community partners.

What conference volunteers and attendees said about the conference

Faculty, volunteers, and community attendees welcomed the opportunity to meet and talk about service-learning and engagement opportunities. Here are just a few comments:

“This conference generated a wealth of ideas for service-learning opportunities at St. Thomas. It confirmed for me the many service resources available in the Twin Cities and the important role St. Thomas plays as an urban institution with a clear mission of outreach to the larger community.”

Dr. Mary R. Reichardt
Director of Online Education Programs

“The gathering with community partners was a wonderful opportunity to connect UST faculty with needs that exist in the non-profit world. This includes both services that the IPC can provide to teens in foster care through its counseling services to expertise that can assist agencies in program evaluation!”

George V. Baboila, Co-director of the Interprofessional Center for Counseling and Legal Services

“The OSLCE event I attended was a wonderful opportunity to meet and interact with UST faculty, making big differences inside the classroom and out in the community. Throughout the day, I was able to freely engage faculty members in an open space for collaboration, leading to the creation of many relationships. Already after the event, I’ve been able to be a guest speaker in a public policy class, and begin the necessary dialogues for future pre-med students to interact with our activities abroad.”

Gabriel Schlough, West African Medical Missions

“Attending the Conference was helpful in learning about other service oriented organizations and St. Thomas’ current programs. Food for His Children is excited to partner with St. Thomas for projects in Tanzania or from the US. We hope to develop a multidisciplinary relationship with St. Thomas professors and students for our dairy goat farm and community development center.”

Kerrie Holschbach, Food for His Children based in Karatu, Tanzania
Perspectives from a Phillips Scholar

As UST’s 2011-2013 Phillips Scholar, I was blessed with the opportunity to learn through service outside of the college classroom. The Phillips Scholars Program supports students who intend to dedicate a portion of their lives to community service and provides a summer award to support the development and implementation of a self-designed service project to address unmet needs in Minnesota communities.

I chose to work with Solid Ground (formerly East Metro Women’s Council) in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. My program, Skills for School, involved working with three to five-year-olds and their mothers residing at East Metro Place in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. The participants in the program, most of whom had histories of homelessness, poverty, and in some cases abuse, are what made the program unique. If anyone needed educational programming and one-on-one attention over the summer, it was these kids.

Bugs are Everywhere. Day at the Beach.

My program was simple. I modeled it on my research of successful preschool programming and conversations with Solid Ground’s learning coordinator, a former teacher and school principal. Each program session consisted of learning activities focused on reading readiness, number readiness, fine motor skills, creativity time, story time, following directions, and parental involvement.

The fun twist was that each session was themed. Each week activities were centered around themes such as: Digging in My Garden, Farm Friends, Cars, Trains, and Planes, Day at the Beach, Bugs are Everywhere, and Fun with Food. During the sessions, volunteers guided participants to each learning station and helped them complete the learning activities that I had spent hours creating. There was laughter, learning, and inevitably, the occasional temper tantrum.

Stepping outside your comfort zone

My main piece of advice to those participating in service-learning stems from my realization early on that in order to serve your population effectively, you must be willing to take yourself out of the equation at times. In my experience, the most meaningful learning happens when you are slightly outside of your comfort zone and open to adapting to the needs of the group or community you are working with.

My most precious summer memory is undoubtedly when I observed one of my participants showing off his new potted flower to his mother and sister when they were preparing to take him home for the day after our first program session, “Digging in My Garden.” He was beaming as he told them that his new flower was going to need lots of sunlight and water, and the thought of that flower and my program existing outside of the walls of the community room touched me deeply.
Week after week, I learned from my mistakes and kept altering the program to fit the varying interests of my participants. I had intended for the learning activities to increase in difficulty over the course of the summer, but I soon saw that my participants were drawing the most benefit from becoming familiar with the structure of the sessions and the most basic learning concepts. It was monumental for the participants to learn how to be comfortable when separated from their mothers, to get used to a routine involving activity time, snack time, mom time, and story time, and simply listening to directions.

**Service-learning – learning from achievements and mistakes**

For me, liberal arts is tantamount to interdisciplinary learning aimed at teaching students the value of analysis, critical thinking, research, civil discourse, and diversity, as opposed to solely training students to be sufficiently competent in satisfying the duties of a specific occupation. Service-learning courses are an essential element in a complete liberal arts education.

At no other time in my life have I experienced such immense feelings of achievement or learned more from valuable mistakes. Though service-learning may not be considered necessary to some, I would not trade the knowledge I have gained in my service-learning experience through UST and my Phillips Scholarship for any other kind of education. Once students discover how they can serve their community in a personally meaningful way, there is no limit to what they will learn.

Amanda McNaughton prepares “worms in mud” snack at Solid Ground learning center as part of the weekly learning theme “Digging in My Garden.”

UST’s 2011-2013 Phillips Scholar Amanda McNaughton worked with Skills for School, a program that involved working – and playing – with three to five-year-olds and their mothers residing at East Metro Place in White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

Amanda McNaughton has been developing a Skills for School program for the East Metro Women’s Council, a nonprofit organization that provides resources for the homeless and low-income families.
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