Introduction:
Service-Learning and Professional
Communication

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In a recent study of Harvard University students, Richard Light documents that for the over 400 students he interviewed the "most important and memorable academic learning [occurs] . . . outside of classes." His findings are not surprising. Evidence is mounting that courses and activities that link service and learning in some kind of reciprocal relationship with a community partner, allowing students to use their knowledge in service of others, are among the most effective and meaningful learning experiences. These experiences allow students to develop substantive field knowledge, hone their abilities in problem solving, and deepen their sense of social responsibility (Checkoway; Ehrlich; Giles and Eyler; Marcus, Howard, and King; Youniss and Yates). In this volume we invite readers to explore a number of models for such activities through a diverse and exciting conversation about service-learning in professional communication.

Since 1967, when Robert Sigmon coined the term "service-learning," teachers across many disciplines have experimented with this pedagogy, discovering its advantages, which include increasing the relevance of education to students; inculcating positive values, leadership, citizenship, and personal responsibility by inviting students to become involved in community issues; and providing essential job skills, thus preparing students for careers after college (Battistoni; Jacoby; Mendel-Reyes; Rhoads; Rubin). These advantages attracted teachers in our field of professional writing who were seeking to engage their students, teach them about problem solving, and help them make connections between theory and practice. As the result of their efforts over the last decade, our field has begun a conversation in its journals and books about the virtues and

risks of this approach, models for implementing it, and its efficacy (Barton and Evans; Bowdon and Scott; Bush-Bacelis; Dubinsky; Graves, Henson and Sutliff; Huckin; Matthews and Zimmerman; Sapp and Crabtree; Schutz and Gere).

In working on this volume, we set out to add to the conversation about this pedagogical strategy by asking questions about the virtues, risks, transportability and appropriateness of various models for various student and community populations. The response to our call for papers confirmed for us that many of our field's teachers are also interested in these questions. We received many useful submissions that focused on strategies for implementing service-learning in the classroom. Others described programmatic structures and models for institutionalization, interdisciplinary collaboration, and pedagogical reform. Perhaps the most exciting thing that we learned was how many of our colleagues and their students are busy making a difference in their communities and struggling with the complex ethical considerations that service-learning work yields.

The six essays featured in this collection offer a variety of perspectives: undergraduate to graduate, small institutions to large, and neighborhood projects to international collaborations. They also present critical stances on service-learning, propose models for institutional critique, and suggest concrete pedagogical strategies for implementing a range of theoretical concepts. In so doing, these articles push beyond the increasingly accepted claim that service-learning can provide students with much-needed real world experience in writing, instead highlighting the challenges such an undertaking can create and asking readers to reframe their perspectives as they consider the importance of civic engagement in professional communication training.

In "Technical Communication, Participatory Action Research, and Global Civic Engagement," Robbin Crabtree and David Alan Sapp challenge us to take an international perspective on service-learning by connecting our own work and the work of our students with communities on a global scale. Using Crabtree's work with women in rural Kenya as a model, these authors ask us to look beyond common understandings of international technical communication studies as a means to ensure our students' marketability in a global economy and to imagine ways to create opportunities for collaboration and exchange by providing students with international service-learning experi-

ences. Their advocacy of a participatory action research approach emphasizes the importance of avoiding colonizing relationships between American students and faculty and their international collaborators.

Although Virginia Chappell and her students did not travel far from home, they too learned much about collaboration and problems with power relations when they began working with local, inner-city nonprofit organizations. Their experiences help us see that "good intentions aren't enough." Describing her experience teaching a course called Writing for Nonprofit Organizations, Chappell lays out problems that emerged in this service-learning class and explains how she and her students worked together to make sense of those problems. She draws on David Russell's synthesis of activity theory and genre theory to propose a model that may help students negotiate their movement between classroom and workplace spaces. Chappell suggests that this approach may help students see the differences between their previous academic experience and their work with nonprofit organizations. She argues that presenting students with this analytical model can help them understand the power structures, document functions, and quality standards in a given writing context. This exercise can help students to develop realistic expectations and professional performance standards for future work as citizens and technical communicators.

Amy Kimme Hea also writes about the complex nature of the many relationships that exist when teachers enact service-learning pedagogies. Through a pedagogical model that helps students evaluate their roles and expectations, she makes it clear that service-learning projects affect multiple parties in addition to the students, teachers, and community partners. Students and teachers would do well to conceptualize the impact their work has on these other stakeholders, focusing on "their profession's practices and the values those practices imply." To help with that process of conceptualization, Kimme Hea outlines the value of stakeholder theory, which she borrows from the business field. Her discussion of ways to incorporate critical stakeholder practices is worth considering, as are her practical suggestions of such strategies as professional inventories, maps, and other "behind the scenes" project materials.

Amy Rupiper Taggart is also interested in stakeholders, but she considers them from a different perspective. Her article focuses on the need to examine

the service-learning work we do with a macro lens, investigating how it is situated programmatically and institutionally. Arguing for the importance of assessment, she makes a case for the use of Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad as a lens through which service-learning advocates can examine the challenges of sustaining programs within their local institutions. Using her own program and institution as a case study, she demonstrates the value of Burke's pentad, arguing that "without planning, reflection, and assessment, service-learning might do some damage in its community and institutional settings." We believe her cautionary narrative and prescription for preventive maintenance come at a good time in our field's history, as many programs are wrestling with difficult questions about their places in their departments, institutions, and communities.

The last two articles, both collaboratively written, address graduate education, service-learning, and the issues we face in trying to prepare our students for their roles as members of professions, organizations, and communities. Kathy Rentz and Ashley Mattingly's rich narrative of an inaugural version of a capstone course in a Master's program complicates our notions of concepts such as "professionalization" and "ethics." In their two distinct voices (of teacher and student), they consider the question: "Should a graduate or advanced-level undergraduate service-learning course in professional writing significantly foster 'caring for others' and 'civic responsibility?'" Continually asking this question can help us to find the balance among our duties to our various stakeholders, which is critical to the success of a pedagogy, course, or program.

Sean Williams and C. Renee Love also seek a balance in course goals. In their article, "Cultivating Democratic Sensibility by Working for Nonprofit Organizations," they offer a controversial answer to the same question posed by Rentz and Mattingly by examining whether or not a nonprofit setting is fundamental to the experience of service-learning. Working from the assumption that one of service-learning's foundational objectives is encouragement of civic engagement, these authors suggest that students who undertake work in a business environment can develop a strong sense of their roles as citizens. Citing experiential-learning experts such as John Dewey to support their argument, the authors suggest students can achieve the balance that Rentz and Mattingly seek by working "through productive and challenging interactions with the for-profit sector." Examining a case study of a Clemson

University graduate-level course called "Workplace Communication," the authors demonstrate ways in which their students gained the benefits and accomplished many of the objectives of a service-learning course through their work for a local telephone company. The students learned to meet real-world deadlines, work collaboratively, and solve specific, communication-related problems; more important, through reflection and critical analysis, they learned about an organizational, workplace culture, and attempted to make it more democratic. The model Williams and Love outline raises key questions for all teachers who seek to enhance students' marketable skills while molding students as "agents of change."

We conclude this volume with J. Blake Scott's review essay. Scott documents the history of the scholarship of service-learning and professional writing and provides a road map for ongoing work in the field. His essay provides context for the conversation contained within the volume as well as a generative source for additional models and critical perspectives.

The articles in this volume underscore the fact that service-learning in professional communication is evolving in multiple directions. The authors in this collection experiment with a range of approaches and perspectives, some guiding students' work carefully, others relying on students to make choices for themselves. Not all of their projects succeed; not all of their projects make measurable changes in the world. But each project, course, or case study presented here invites us to think about our own pedagogical goals and reminds us of the responsibilities and challenges inherent in work we do and in the work we ask our students to undertake.

We hope this volume's focus on service-learning issues related to professional and technical communication proves useful for *Reflections*' loyal readership. We also hope that this work encourages more members of the professional and technical communication field to join in the robust conversation about service-learning that has been a hallmark of *Reflections* since its beginnings. One of our goals is to bring these communities together to encourage increased interaction. We hope this exchange of ideas will launch action in a wide range of communities, inspire collaboration among teacher/scholars around the country, and promote important research into the questions raised by these articles. We look forward to seeing more research-based articles

about professional coomunication in future volumes of *Reflections* and eagerly await professional conversations about the issues raised here.

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