

# Case Study Analysis of Efforts at Two Institutions to Expand Work Integrated Learning to Emphasize Service-Learning and Civic Engagement

## Abstract

Colleges and universities are adding/strengthening experiential education activities to meet demands for greater workplace-readiness of graduates. Liberal Arts and Sciences institutions increasingly focus on civic engagement and global learning, along with more traditional work-integrated learning (Hartley, Saltmarsh and Clayton, 2010). We employ the case study method to compare experiences with community-based program implementation at the two schools at which we work: Queens College and Long Island University, both in the New York metropolitan area. We concentrate the case studies on service-learning and civic engagement activities.

## Introduction

Universities begin civic engagement programs (sometimes also called service-learning) for two types of benefits. One benefit is to the student who grows as an individual from the learning that is attached to the civic engagement activity (Swaner, 2011). The second benefit is to the community, including the university itself, (Mitchell, 2008) and it is this benefit that is most often cited (although it may be the former benefit that is most important given the potential to enhance or even change many young lives). At times, these civic engagement programs can extend the reach of the university beyond the local area if coupled with study abroad, but even here, a community may form if the university takes a specific interest in a location or a project that ties its community to that one (Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2013). An example in U.S. universities is the ties to the country of Haiti after the earthquake or even to the city of New Orleans following hurricane Katrina. We will examine all of these factors through the lens of several specific programs at Queens College, City University of New York and at Long Island University where two of the authors (JS and PF) have recently transitioned into administrative roles designed to promote these and related kinds of activities on campus as a complement to a strong classical classroom-based education. In each case, the institutions have taken advantage of existing programs, but in very different ways.

## Method

The method in this case-study paper is to tell each institution's story and compare them for points of overlap and difference. Thus these two sections are combined in this case-study paper. The two case studies selected are Queens College participation in the CUNY Service Corps, and Long Island University's focus on the LIU Global program. Conclusions will be a separate section.

### Case 1: Queens College (QC) and the CUNY Service Corps

**Background:** QC is one of more than 20 institutions belonging to the public City University of New York (CUNY) system. At about 75 years of age and with an enrollment of nearly 20,000 undergraduate and graduate

students, QC is known for its Liberal Arts and Sciences programs that serve one of the most diverse populations in America, with over 140 countries represented on campus, more than 60 languages spoken, and about 40% of its undergraduate students themselves immigrants. It is also characterized by a low tuition but a high quality of faculty and instruction. The Education Trust recognized QC as one of 5 colleges and universities of 1187 with a tuition of under \$5,000 and a graduation rate of over 50%. In 2013 QC was chosen by *The Washington Monthly* as the number two ranked higher education institution in America for “best bang for the buck,” referring to the contrast between tuition price and post graduation student financial success. As is typical for most such institutions, QC maintained the usual array of opportunities for internships, community service, study abroad, and particularly undergraduate research with faculty. In the last year, QC has committed itself to a dramatic enhancement of experiential learning so as to promote student success, improve retention, and answer the question as a liberal arts and sciences college about what students can do with the degree earned. While much recent National attention on higher education has been focused on the better preparing college students for work (Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences. 2013), and while this program will do that, it is also designed to deepen the undergraduate academic experience and support further education in professional and graduate schools.

In October 2012, the school year that included the recent and devastating hurricane (known as Superstorm Sandy) that hit the New York City area, the Chancellor of CUNY unveiled a University-wide Service Corp program remarkable for its scale and scope. In the conception, up to 1,000 students would be paid to work 12-15 hours a week for up to 24 weeks to earn about \$4,000 each during the academic year with New York City Community Service partners chosen by CUNY. Campuses from the system would compete to participate and each would receive a campus coordinator who would manage the local campus process including interfacing with all student concerns including payroll. The total anticipated funding maximum was \$5 million. The request for proposals was released mid-academic year in 2012-13 for selection of the campuses in spring and ongoing recruitment of service site providers.

**Subjects:** QC was chosen as one of seven college campus sites for the CUNY Service Corps, allowing for the hiring of a CUNY Service Corps coordinator and local recruitment of students in the spring and early summer. Once students were selected from a pool of applicants, they were paired with service sites through a process of preference matching following a convention-style meeting between students and service site providers. Student training was completed to allow a CUNY-wide launch in September of 2013. In the meantime, CUNY central prepared a handbook for service providers, training manuals for the students. Systems for tracking and communicating with students were set up locally but within a central framework based on the Symplicity software product.

**Results:** Initially, 115 QC students were selected in the spring from a pool of nearly three times that size for participation in the program. Despite student selection, preparation and the promise of a salary, after placements were made the total number of participants at QC dropped about 10% to 103 students by the end of September. Six students withdrew for reasons of course or other unanticipated conflict, three students were dropped for failing to complete the mandatory training, and three students declined placement in favor of alternate jobs that had developed during the process.

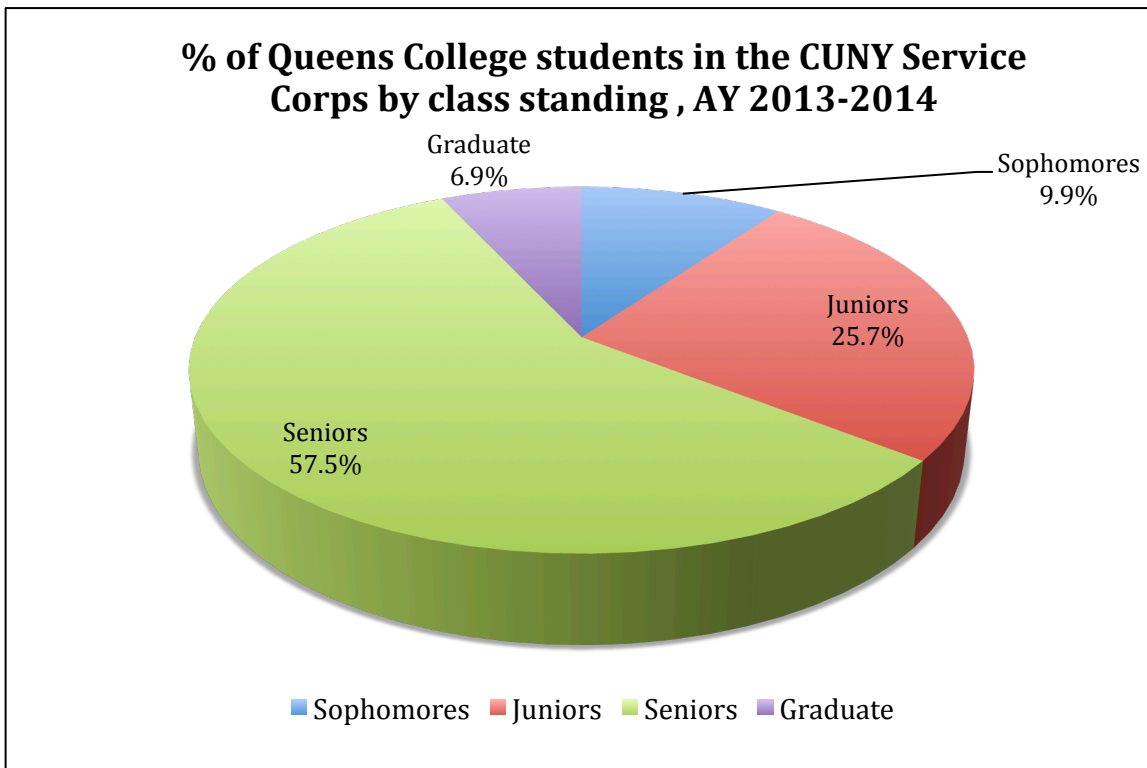
Academic Area of Major* at Queens College declared by students in CUNY Service Corps	Number of students declaring major
Social Sciences	77
Business	15
Education	12
Natural Sciences	8
Health Professions	8
Undeclared	7
Technology	4

Art	3
<i>*Majors are self-reported by students, for 2013-2014 academic year</i>	

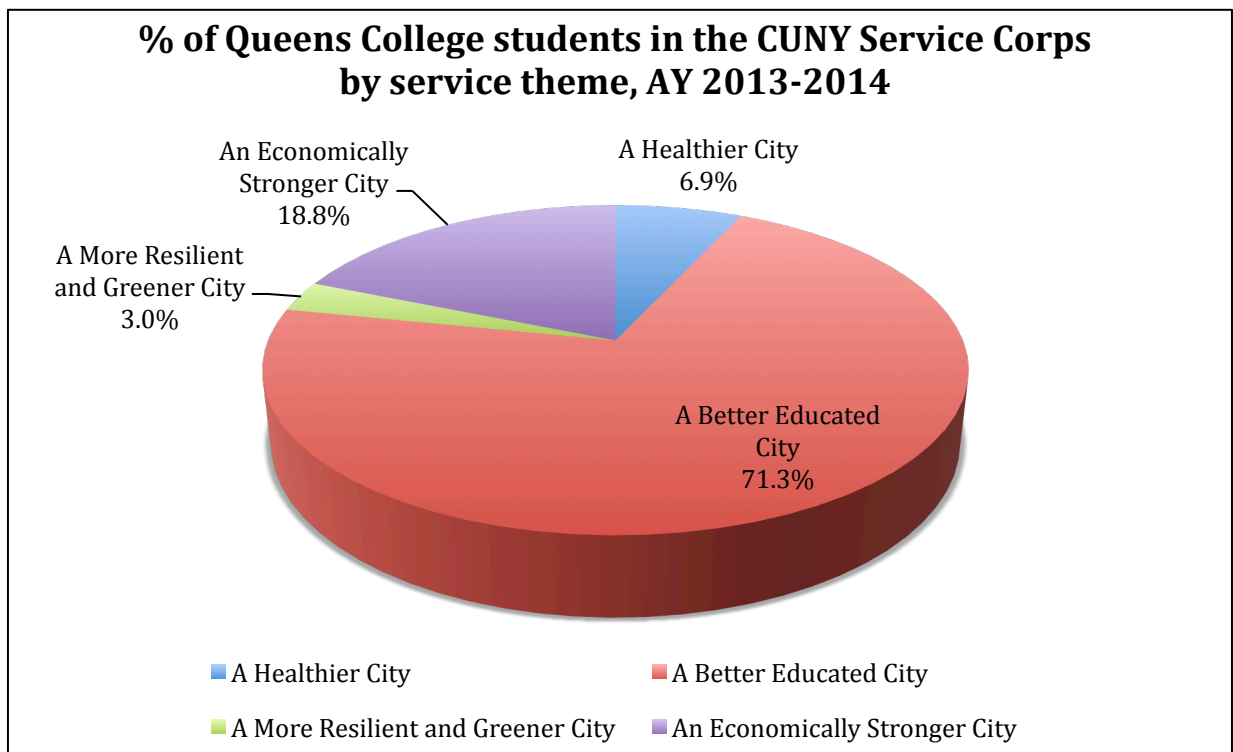
Table One: Distribution of QC students by major in the 2013-14 CUNY Service Corps.

The 2013-2014 QC cohort is represented by 35 different declared majors; with about half of students coming from majors within the social sciences, about a third from majors in Math and Natural Sciences, and the rest split between majors in Humanities and in Education. The three largest majors were psychology, economics and political science, which together represented a 40% of all students. In eight majors only one student participated. Of the 115 QC students in the program, 32 declared being enrolled in two majors.

In terms of year of class standing, no freshman were admitted and upper-class distribution was as follows: 9.9% sophomores, 25.7% juniors, 57.4% seniors and 6.9% graduates.



In terms of assignments students were placed at 45 different sites broken in to four major categories – or “themes” – of service by the following percentages: 1) A Better Educated City – 71.3%, 2) A Healthier City – 6.9%, 3) A More Resilient and Greener City – 3.0%, 4) An Economically Stronger City – 18.8%. These data primarily reflect availability of assignments, as well as student interest.



Of 160 partner sites from New York City’s five boroughs that applied to be part of the CUNY Service Corps, 96 were selected. QC students committed to a year of service at one of 44 different sites from the 96 partner sites available to them. Various factors were considered as part of the vetting process to assess the site’s suitability to be a partner site, including their ability to supervise a minimum of five students. Twenty-three of those placements took only a single QC student, providing students the opportunity to form a site-based intercampus network. The majority of sites received multiple students from QC, including one with 18 students, and two with six student placements among the sites that hosted the most students from QC. Students’ potential for expanding their network is enhanced by the design of the program, in which students will automatically belong to three distinct network spheres based on their campus, their service partner site, and one of the service themes.

**Discussion:** At QC, the CUNY Service Corps campus manager set up a program of regular student contact including monthly individual meetings and via phone calls and e-mails. On-line chat-rooms were developed for each of the four service categories named above. Students were required regularly log into the chat rooms and post short reflection pieces and discuss relevant popular literature articles. Live group sessions were held seminar style and a process is now being developed to recruit faculty in each of the four areas to be virtual “house masters” of the student CUNY Service Corps effort. Aside from monitoring and trouble-shooting problems, the goal of this reflective work is to connect the issues uncovered on the service experience with the student’s academic and personal development (Eyler and Giles, 1999). As this reflection is a work in progress with half of the academic year finished at this point, data collection will continue with a special emphasis on student satisfaction and yearly retention in comparison with matched controls and the general population. Follow-up data will be taken over years to look at issues of graduation rate and employment as well as general satisfaction with their college education and level of civic engagement and volunteerism.

By the midpoint mark of the first year, the program announced the addition of an eighth CUNY campus and an increase in student offers for the second CUNY Service Corps cohort during the 2014-2015 academic year. Building on the interest to enhance learning and integrate the academic experience more closely with the CUNY Service Corps program, faculty from the CUNY system can submit an application to lead a Service-Oriented

Project that falls under the four main themes, and serve as a “partner sites” during the 2014-2015 academic year.

## **Case Study 2: Long Island University (LIU), the LIU Global Program, and Civic Engagement**

**Background:** Long Island University (LIU), among the 10 largest private universities in the United States, is comprised of 2 main residential campuses (in Brooklyn, and Brookville, Long Island), 3 satellite campuses, and a network of international centers on five continents, known as LIU Global. Total student enrollment at LIU is approximately 20,000. Although both residential campuses have been somewhat traditional co-operative education schools for nearly 30 years, a new focus on civic engagement and global learning has emerged and strengthened over the past five years. As a comprehensive liberal arts university, LIU subscribes to the notion that “committing the work of teaching and learning to the enrichment of community and public life (will), in turn, enrich teaching and learning and academic life” (Scobey, 2013). In light of that commitment, LIU has been working over the past five years to find ways to incorporate civic engagement and global learning opportunities within the context of work-integrated learning. It has not been easy, as co-ops and internships have traditionally been local work-place based experiences in which participants align their activities with the mission of the community partner, often a for-profit entity with a corporate focus on profit margin, rather than civic engagement. In addition, it has been challenging to provide international co-ops and internships for students because the former earns no academic credit, while the latter earns a maximum of 4 credits, making it unlikely that students would sacrifice a semester to obtain an international experience that would not allow them to maintain full-time status as a student.

**Subjects:** Students in the LIU Global program pursue a four-year Bachelor of Arts program. They spend the first three years living and learning at a minimum of three international locations selected from LIU Global centers in Costa Rica, China, Australia, and South Africa, or they participate in a traveling program that includes India, Thailand and Turkey. Students engage with a variety of cultures and people through coursework, fieldwork, service-learning projects, internships, independent studies and cultural immersion. Studies begin with a foundation year at the Costa Rica Center, located near the capital city of San José. In the second and third years, students can either participate in the Comparative Religion and Culture Program in Taiwan, India and Thailand; or pursue a program of academic study at the China Center, followed by a semester at the Australia Center or the South Africa Center. The final year of the program includes an independent field research project in a location of the student’s choice, and culminates in a final semester at the Brooklyn campus of LIU, where students complete a series of capstone experiences and a senior thesis. Plans have been announced recently to add an additional new site in Europe, and to expand the Australia program to include placement in Bali.

The Costa Rica Center hosts all freshman students of LIU Global as well as some visiting study-abroad students. The freshman year provides students with an introduction to experiential education and research methods, college writing, Latin American studies, and global studies. In addition to attending regularly scheduled seminars and intensive Spanish language classes, students learn how to plan, evaluate, and document their fieldwork with the support and guidance of faculty. Students develop cross-cultural competency through their interaction with the local population in Costa Rica through homestays, service learning, field trips, and field research. During excursions to different communities in Costa Rica as well as to other countries in the region such as Panama and Nicaragua, students explore concrete examples of the academic content examined in the respective courses, begin to understand how individuals at the local level are affected by global decisions, and gain greater insight on how local communities must inevitably deal with issues that are global in scope.

In each of the fall and spring semesters, all Foundation Year students are required to participate in field trips and individual placements with community partners in business, education and various segments of the non-profit sector. Students live with host families registered with, and approved by, LIU. Community partners each promote

real life experience in work situations related to areas such as environmental sustainability; social entrepreneurship; cultural preservation; global studies; international law, government, and politics; comparative studies; social justice; health services; education. The field excursions and placements are part of two required field courses students must take, one in the spring semester, and one in the fall semester.

The fall course, GCOS 130 (Foundation Year Orientation Seminar) introduces students to the program's theoretical foundations and practices, and provides students with concrete tools and skills to begin their studies in this international, experiential program. The seminar's main goals are to discover and discuss new insights regarding educational approaches to learning; to reflect on cross-cultural adaptation and intercultural understanding in Costa Rica; and to teach students how to stay healthy and safe while in the field. Following weeks of preparation, students develop and carry out a week-long group service learning project to gain first-hand experiences related to the content and issues examined in the seminar.

The spring course, GCOS 146 (Field Work and Methods Seminar and Project) introduces students to qualitative research methodologies, with special emphases on interview-based research, ethnography, and comparative research. The course is intended to prepare students for a two-week field project in which students will be able to apply fieldwork methods, examine theory in practice, explore areas of academic interests and identify new ones, and write a research paper that combines this with academic secondary sources.

In addition to the Foundation Year for regular LIU Global students, the Costa Rica Center has also offered summer programs for college students, supported by external funding (Moore, 2013). Students enrolled at other campuses of LIU can also spend a semester at the Costa Rica Center, which serves as a semester abroad experience that promotes civic engagement and global learning while allowing sufficient academic credit to ensure full time student status.

**Results:** We examined field experience assignments for students in both spring and fall semesters over the past four years, to explore how service learning and civic engagement efforts might be incorporated into what may be viewed as more traditional work-integrated learning placements. Our goal was to look at any developing trends in field placement choices. Such information could inform many disciplines, and be of use to experiential education programs of many types - regionally, nationally, and internationally. In addition, we were interested in determining whether the relatively short periods of field placement (one week in the spring semester, and two weeks in the fall semester) could provide evidence of work-place based learning.

Fall and spring semester placements for 96 Foundation Year students over the past four years were reviewed and summarized as to the nature of the placement, number of students electing each placement type, collective amount of time spent by students in each category. In order to provide a broader sense of student choices, placements were identified as fitting into one of ten categories defined by two of the authors (SM and PF). The ten general categories of placement identified were: Social Justice, Education, Healthcare, Art, Sustainable Living, Indigenous Cultures, Conservation, Land Issues, Corporate Business and Global Issues. It should be noted that, in many cases, project classification was made difficult by the multiple elements that were involved, but in each case an effort was made to recognize the primary focus of the project through its category assignment. In the fall semester of each year, students were given a menu of choices developed by LIU Center faculty according to the availability and identified needs of the community partners. In addition, students were required to participate in a group project, which introduced a social constraint in terms of deciding with which other students to work. In the spring semester, students were required to propose an individual two-week project that fit their own interests.

Following group seminar reflection and assessment of the fall field excursions, first semester freshmen undertook one-week field placements during each fall semester from 2010 – 2013. A total of 22 group projects were undertaken across the four fall semesters. Each category could include more than one group project;

projects of a similar focus were included in the same category. Group size of project teams ranged from 2 to 6, with a mean size of 4.4. The distribution of student selections is shown in Table Two.

FIELD PLACEMENT DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF STUDENTS PLACED				
	FALL 2010	FALL 2011	FALL 2012	FALL 2013	TOTAL (% of all)
Social Justice	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	4	-	13	17 (17.7)
Healthcare	-	-	-	-	-
Art	-	-	-	-	-
Sustainable Living	9	10	10	3	32 (33.3)
Indigenous Cultures	-	-	6	5	11 (11.5)
Conservation	10	11	7	-	28 (29.2)
Land Issues	-	4	4	-	8 (8.3)
Corporate Business	-	-	-	-	-
Global Issues	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>96 (100)</b>

Table Two: Categories of group projects, and number of LIU Global students participating in projects in each category during the fall semester 2010 – 2013.

The placements represent more than 16,000hours of time students spent with community partners combining work integrated learning, civic engagement, and cultural immersion. Note that nearly two thirds (60) of the students participated in projects in two categories: Sustainable Living and Conservation. Seventeen students participated in Education projects. Indigenous Cultures and Land Issues drew the fewest students.

Students in the spring semester were required to propose an individual project that could take place anywhere in Central or South America. The project proposals were reviewed by a faculty advisor, and a determination was made as to the feasibility of the project, a suitable community partner to host the student during the project, and the logistics of project completion and overall safety of the student. A total of 89 two-week student projects were completed during the spring semesters from 2011 – 2014. Note that because of the possibility of visiting students, transfers and attrition, the number of students across all spring terms is seven less than the total number of students across the fall terms. The distribution and number of selections across the ten categories of placement type is shown in Table Three.

FIELD PLACEMENT DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF STUDENTS PLACED				
	SPRING 2011	SPRING 2012	SPRING 2013	SPRING 2014	TOTAL (% of all)
Social Justice	3	5	2	5	15 (16.9)
Education	1	2	-	2	5 (5.5)
Healthcare	2	3	4	3	12 (13.5)
Art	5	-	7	1	13 (14.6)
Sustainable Living	4	5	1	2	12 (13.5)
Indigenous Cultures	2	4	2	2	10 (11.2)

Conservation	1	2	2	2	7 (7.9)
Land Issues	1	-	5	2	8 (9.0)
Corporate Business	-	3	1	-	4 (4.5)
Global Issues	-	-	3	-	3 (3.4)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>89 (100)</b>

Table Three: Categories of Group projects, and number of LIU Global students participating in projects in each category during the spring semester 2011 – 2014.

The two-week individual projects were far more widely distributed across the ten categories than the fall week-long group projects, and demonstrated a shift in focus from the fall placements. While Sustainable Living remained one of the strongest categories, Social Justice, Healthcare and Art all drew equivalent levels of attention. No projects were undertaken in Social Justice, Healthcare or Art during the fall semester. Conservation projects attracted nearly 30% of the students in the fall, but only 8% in the spring. Land issues, Corporate Business and Global Issues together accounted for only 17% of the spring projects. Education appeared to be of less interest to students in the spring (5.5%) than in the fall (17.7%).

**Discussion:** While the data overall do not lend themselves easily to statistical analysis, the differences in category distribution between the fall and spring semesters provide insight into the dynamic nature of civic engagement and global learning. An important aspect of the LIU Global placements, compared with more traditional co-op and internship placements at Long Island University’s two main residential campuses, is that students in most cases were completely immersed in the experience throughout the week or two week duration of the fall or spring placement. Students lived, worked, and socialized with the community partners on a 24/7 basis. The impact of that immersion appears to be that students developed a more global understanding of the connections between work-culture-world than one might expect from a strictly workplace based experience. “As my time in Costa Rica comes to a close I now realize that I have developed a far more comprehensive understanding of the global community and my home country’s role across the world. After learning and witnessing firsthand the effects and far-reaching workings of globalization in both Costa Rica and Nicaragua, I understand the world in a far more articulated - albeit less naive – way” (Langnar, 2014).

The project category selections in the fall semester, as previously noted, are heavily influenced by the availability and needs of the community partners. It also appears that the interests of students when they first arrive in Costa Rica may be influenced by a general perception that Costa Rica is a place of great natural diversity, and generally eco-friendly. The majority of group projects conducted in the fall included protecting nesting sea turtles or working in an animal shelter (Conservation); working on a variety of organic and sustainable farming enterprises (Sustainable Living), and providing reading and tutoring classes for children in a variety of settings (Education).

Following participation in the fall projects, students reflect on their experiences and relate to “bigger picture” issues through the required field course (GCOS 130), as well as through additional courses in language, culture, and global impacts. By the spring semester, students have had the opportunity to get a more evidence-based understanding of the social, economic and political issues in Costa Rica, as well as throughout Central America more generally. Following the fall semester, students have a four-week winter break. During that time some students may return home to visit family, but many travel to various places in Central or South America. By the time the spring semester starts, there is a noticeable increase in levels of awareness, confidence, and cultural competency of the returning students. As they pursue additional course work exploring cultural and political issues, they begin to identify a far broader range of project opportunities that address more challenging situations such as Social Justice and Healthcare. Interestingly, many students also show evidence of integrating their international experiences by exploring the interplay between art and culture.



The opportunity for students to explore social, economic and political issues in international settings in dynamic and integrated ways adds significantly to the traditional models of co-op and internships as primarily highly structured work-based placements. The LIU Global program in Costa Rica has now been presented throughout Long Island University as an excellent study abroad framework that can provide students with access to civic learning opportunities not otherwise available, with the additional ability to incorporate their civic engagement and global learning experiences in a wide variety of formal and informal work environments.

### **Conclusions**

The two case studies represent alternate, innovative ways to find new models for integrating traditional work-integrated learning with service learning opportunities in a wide range of settings. In the first case (QC) an entirely new program developed by CUNY central administration gave more than 100 students the opportunity to be placed in community-based work-place settings, in which they received a salary for engaging in work-place based learning within the context of settings that promote education, health, the environment and the economy. In the second case (LIU) an extant international program is being expanded and made more academically relevant for domestic students to accomplish a level of work-integrated learning and civic engagement that would otherwise not be accessible.

Both cases studies demonstrate that a ready population of students exists on campus that recognizes the importance of expanding work-integrated learning to include civic engagement. However, in both cases the institution had to make it possible for students to pursue the broader agenda while not disrupting their own personal financial needs, or their academic progress. In the case of LIU the key current factor seemed to be academic credit and staying on track for graduation. A paid internship that did not earn credit in the LIU Global program could be destructive. At QC the opposite application but the same principle obtained. Here the part-time concurrent internship that was part of the CUNY Service Corps was seen as competing for the student's need to earn money to support their families, among other things. Thus, it was felt necessary by CUNY to provide compensation for the service internship time so as to allow the students to participate. This does not mean the application of pay to an internship at LIU or the application of credit (but no pay) to a service internship at QC would not work, but that one must be cautious on implementation so that the program goes along the natural lines of the institution and its student's concerns.

A second major point of overlap is the importance of a strong reflection component in those programs that bring together work-integrated learning and civic engagement. In the case of the CUNY Service Corps at QC this involved preparation, encouraged discussion with the supervisors at the service site, an emerging on going discussion between the students grouped by theme using chat-rooms and real-world meetings to create peer discussions, and finally pending mentoring by faculty in the disciplines to help students see how their work relates to their choice of major and ultimate career interests. The belief is that even with quite general experience, students have opportunities to learn about themselves and develop so-called "soft-skills" that will help them do well in an interview and at the work site or in the later graduate program. In future years, QC plans to develop more service sites that lead to even stronger integration and directly involve interested faculty as CUNY Service Corps service site providers if their work lends itself to that. At LIU it was necessary to reframe service-learning opportunities that have been available to students for many years into a more rigorous academic program with a number of "developmental" components built in. In the first semester, an introductory course that included lecture and seminars, field trips, and a required group project, provided the basis for ensuring that preparation, exposure, engagement and reflection were all "hard-wired" into the experience. In the second semester, a more advanced research course provided exposure to greater levels of exploration, analysis, reflection and integration with other studies.

One major point of difference between the two programs is that freshmen were not included in the QC program, whereas the LIU program catered primarily to freshmen. There are a number of considerations involved in determining the most effective point in the undergraduate experience at which various forms of experiential education should occur (DiConti, 2004). On the one hand, without appropriate preparation, the likelihood of significant, high quality reflection and integration of the experience is very low (Eyler and Giles, 1999), and many programs limit opportunities for freshmen to engage in such placements. On the other hand, emphasizing service learning and civic engagement among juniors and seniors limits the possibility of greater integration of experiential learning with coursework taught in more formal, class-room settings. An important future direction of the work described here will be to examine in greater detail how service learning and civic engagement can be directly related to the stage of academic and personal development of the “typical” undergraduate student.

As psychologists by professorial training, the two lead authors are also impressed with how the recent advances in neuroscience (brain activity scanning) and psychological research have revealed a powerful role for unconscious decision-making that has a strong influence on conscious decision-making of which the decider is often unaware. Like the academy, the field of economics has long been based on notions of rational decision-making. But the award of the recent Nobel Prize in Economics to Daniel Kahneman for his work on these unconscious influences (see his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*) shows the growing role of this research on that field. The same should be true for higher education and if so two things are evident. First, learning from experience can play a powerful role in enhancing the classical academic education by touching these processes through direct experience. Second, the role of reflection is particularly important in surfacing this experiential learning and connecting it with conscious decision making about choice of major, pursuit of career path, etc. even when the experience is not directly in the major field of study.

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