

# Foreword

*David Yarbrough, JSLHE Executive Editor*

What have you been doing during the past year? When I was younger and kept up more with current trends in music, a much anticipated second album was often referred to as the sophomore release. Critics would compare their expectations to the effort, and then try to write a prediction about the likelihood of continuing success. It was a game that my friends and I all enjoyed - and it has continued into our adult, professional lives. But now, instead of music, we critique the work of our colleagues and try to predict our own success against the perceived trends of our academic disciplines.

Welcome to the sophomore release of the Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education [JSLHE]. Over the past year, I had the pleasure to work with dozens of researchers and authors, editorial colleagues, and reviewers. We have all been amazed at the diversity and scope of service work in higher education. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/initiatives/honorroll.asp>), last year was a dynamic service year with over three million college students engaged in over 100 million hours of service. What have you been doing during the past year? Let me guess: Maybe working with students to design cost-effective, energy-efficient homes? Or participating with students in a public reading on U.S. Constitution day? How about joining with thousands of community members on national days of service to clean our parks and other public green-spaces? What have you been doing during the past year - and how do you know that it worked?

In this second volume of JSLHE we are building on the theme of what we do and how we know it works. There are two primary sections, the first with original manuscripts, and the second, an invited paper from the Center for Engaged Democracy at Merrimack College. Our expectation for this issue is to present ideas and examples that can be useful for the novice and for the experienced service-oriented faculty member. Beyond that, let's keep the serious discussion moving along about what it means to design and implement a theoretically sound service-learning experience. What are the key elements? What are the core competencies?

Noted by Neese et al., a primary goal of success in higher education, is to produce students who understand the value of contributing learned expertise back to the community. In their presentation of service-learning through marketing research class projects, they very clearly provide the back-ground and a blue-print for incorporating service-learning projects



across the curricula. So often we are asked by our colleagues, "How can I get this into my class?" In their presentation, Neese et al. provides a useful step-wise process that easily translates to a variety of disciplines.

One of the most widely used models of higher-education service-learning implementation, is the pre-service teacher experiences in many of our colleges and departments of education. In the presentation by Brannon, the focus goes beyond the typical classroom experience to the tertiary issues of working with high-need children and their families. It is a typical practice to provide experiential exercises to increase competent interactions with children, but what about the family outside of the classroom? Brannon's approach was to look at building students' self-efficacy when working with the parents of high-need children. Another unique approach to pre-service teacher service-learning is the "virtual tutoring" presented by Vavasseur et al. The application of synchronous video-conferencing, off-site document sharing, screen-sharing and other forms of distributive education practice, demonstrated how multiple forms of teaching can enhance multiple learning outcomes.

How do we know that it works? One of the most frequent questions that I get from colleagues targets the practical assessment of service-learning. Important to the implementation of that question is the follow-up, "What do I want to know?" Moulton and Moulton, in their presentation on service-learning assessment describes and identifies the basic standards when considering effective assessment in service courses. Following that stream, Crone explores the effects of creating a service-learning component discipline specific to social psychology. Using the tenets of a behavioral science approach, Crone notes (among additional findings) positive change in students' attitudes toward civic participation, helping others, and an increased belief that people should give aid to others. Some of the hallmark outcomes sought through service-learning experiences.

Through these pieces of original research, there are common threads and elements that we seek to identify and replicate in study after study and course upon course. What then are the similarities? In the last section of this volume, Brammer, Dumlao, Falk, Hollander, Knutson, Poehnert, Politano, and Werner present their working paper from the Merrimack College Center for Engaged Democracy: *Core Competencies in Civic Engagement*. This is the conversation in which we are engaged. What is civic engagement? What is service-learning? What are the knowledge, skills and value sets that are needed to create the environment for a successful citizenship experience and how are they used? This presentation is the introduction to a special edition that the Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education will produce in the fall of 2013. In the next few weeks a call for manuscripts will be issued not for a rebuttal to this piece, but rather as a response, a reply, an addition, or a continuation of the conversation - how do we identify and use the core elements for service in higher education?

What happened over the past year? The trend that I have observed is the marriage of the most successful elements of experiential learning and the production of applied research. Through the challenges of changing technology, increases in class size, and reduced funding sources - higher education professionals continue to imagine and create the elements and practices of service-learning pedagogy that will lead our current student citizens toward successful post-graduate engagement. My most heartfelt gratitude to our editors, authors, readers and reviewers - and to all of you who teach the best by being the best.

