Background

• In 2003, I inherited this first-year, 4-credit, required course for MPH students in the Health Behavior Health Promotion Section.

• Syllabus was heavily theory-based and was comprised of in-class only activities.

• After teaching it 2 years, course evaluation and student feedback indicated that:
  – many students did not like the course
  – few, if any, developed the applied skills necessary to develop a program plan that also included implementation and evaluation

• RESULT: In 2005, I dramatically changed the curriculum to center it within a community-based, service-learning framework.
Goal of Course

Facilitate the work of student teams (4-6) with community agencies to develop a program plan for each agency that includes:

• an assessment of needs and assets
• a theory-based program to meet the needs and capitalize on the assets, including the collaboration of other key community partners
• an implementation plan with budget outline
• a process and outcome evaluation plan
Community-Based Service Learning

• Preceding semester, I contact agencies that may be interested in participating.
• Make sure they understand that service-learning involves a reciprocal relationship of both service and learning between students and agency.
  – Agency & students learn from each other
  – Agency offers service to students as it provides them opportunities for real-world program planning
  – Students provide service to agency in the form of new eyes seeing issues and solutions and final document produced
  – Written in grant proposal format, document can be used by the agency to dedicate or solicit funding for the program.
• A “Process and Timeline for the Planning Project” is developed each year to guide students’ and community agencies’ progress throughout the semester.
Course Evaluation

- Students are graded on attendance, preparation, and participation in both in-class and out-of-class team activities based on:
  - rubric outlined in the course syllabus
  - instructor and peer evaluation through the use of a “Confidential Team Member Feedback Form”

- “Use of Theory to Develop Programs” critical analysis assignment

- Series of reports on their needs assessment, program and implementation plan, and program evaluation

- Final class team presentation and complete report
Course Impact on Students

Student reflections indicate:

- Their work with community agencies brings to life the readings for the course
- Service learning will help them better remember many of the lessons learned during the course
- They feel rewarded because they have provided community agencies with a service that can actually result in improving the health of community residents
Course Impact on Students

• “The applied project was so great – I learned so much about the theories by applying them.”

• “I found myself intensely energized by the service my team was able to provide to the community.”

• On a 5-point scale, 5-year average student rating regarding usefulness of outside assignments is 4.2.
Course Impact on Communities

16 different programs developed to date for 12 different community partner agencies:
- 2 Community and Migrant Health Centers
- Arizona Rural Health Office
- Arizona Smokers’ Helpline
- Carondelet Hospital - Santa Cruz Parish Nursing Program
- University of Arizona College of Medicine - Commitment to Underserved People (C.U.P.) Program
- Tucson Indian Center - Wellness Program
- 2 community-campus partnerships (Project EXPORT & REACH) to reduce health disparities related to diabetes, substance abuse, and cervical cancer in Latino communities
- Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse
- Santa Cruz County Adolescent Wellness Network
- Southern Arizona VA Rural Veterans Health Initiative

Many of the programs have been funded at least in part.
Example Project

- Student team worked with the Sunnyside and Elvira Advocates for Health (SEAH) a community-campus partnership working in underserved, predominantly Latino communities to eliminate health disparities facing residents.
- The SEAH Walkable Communities Subcommittee focuses on environmental and systems change to encourage community members to increase their participation in physical activity.
- Members did not see many kids in their communities riding bicycles and wanted to know why.
- Student team worked with the SEAH subcommittee to do a community needs assessment that identified barriers to bicycle riding including: concern about safety, bikes in disrepair, and children who did not have bicycles.
Program Plan to Address Safety Concerns

- **Objective:** Develop a safe biking guide and community map to identify kid-friendly bike routes and destinations in the community.

- **Action:** In collaboration with the Pima County Department of Transportation and with help from volunteer local high school students, the SEAH Subcommittee developed the map and distributed it to local youth, schools, and agencies.
Program Plan to Address Bikes in Disrepair

- **Objective:** Regularly conduct bike repair workshops for children and parents in different areas of the SEAH communities.

- **Action:** With help from SEAH members, the Greater Arizona Bicycling Association and Bicycle Inter-Community Action & Salvage, SEAH obtained $1500 grant from Pro Neighborhoods and $2000 grant from the Tucson mayor to purchase 2 bike repair trailers that hitch on the back of a bicycle for easy set up in a community and have all tools needed for bike repair.

- **Result:** Since 2006, regular bike repair workshops conducted, and many bikes in need of repair donated by community members to be fixed and given to kids.
Lessons Learned

• Students needed more guided reflection on connection of course content with community-based activities.
  – Initiated use of double-entry journal each week, 1 page about service-learning experience and 1 page about course content with connections drawn between them. The journal content is used to write in a reflective essay after the needs assessment, program plan development, and evaluation plan development.

• While service-learning courses require exceptional time and energy from faculty, community partner agencies, and students, the exceptional learning by all is more than worth the effort.

• Important to follow up with community partners and students regarding results of each service-learning project.
Service-learning courses rely heavily on the students and community partners agencies for their success. Many thanks go to them for showing us the way.
The End

For more information contact: LBergerm@u.arizona.edu