

THE COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN

February 2009

Section 1: Description of the Community Service Center.

1.1.1: Mission, Vision, and Goals.

The Community Service Center (CSC) is staffed by one director, one program director, and one administrative assistant to oversee both a robust portfolio of on-going locally-based community service programs and provide support to faculty engaged in academic service-learning. At present, the Center's portfolio encompasses eleven (11) on-going community service programs (many that have won national service awards) and that in '07-'08 engaged more than 1,400 Gustavus students in more than 22,000 hours of service. The Center supports both curricular and co-curricular civic engagement through the development, maintenance and stewardship of numerous campus/community partnerships.

Initially proposed from community partner feedback as a means to provide continuity to what were autonomous student-initiated and led community service programs, the mission of the Community Service Center is to maintain excellence in service and leadership by enhancing students' understanding of issues of public concern, supporting their academic, spiritual, and civic development, and fostering a life-long commitment to citizenship, justice, public contribution, and capacity in local communities. The Center develops and maintains strong campus/community relationships based on mutual goals and needs. In addition, the Center provides leadership in facilitating best practices in service-learning and fostering the development of self-aware individuals.

Sixteen years later, the Community Service Center aspires to be a the premiere center of knowledge in civic leadership and development through the provision of support directed through learning partnerships with faculty, students, and diverse community partners who function as both integrated and self-mentoring communities in theory, pedagogy and practice. The Center looks to nourish transformational thought leadership in civic engagement through a robust administrative infrastructure reflecting a commitment to professionalism, high standards of excellence, and the stewardship of community-based learning that is inclusive, critically-reflective and reciprocal for all involved.

In support of the 2008 Strategic Plan's charge to the Gustavus community to steward an education that is transformative and based on lives of service, community, leadership, reflective practice, civic engagement, faith, and academic excellence, the Community Service Center has developed the following goals:

1. Enhance the rigor, standards, and efficiency by which the Community Service Center promotes, supports, and facilitates meaningful curricular and co-curricular civic engagement among faculty, students, and community partners.
2. Grow the Community Service Center's present stewardship of campus/community collaborations that embody local characteristics and regional diversity into deeper, more reciprocal partnerships that strengthen mutual stakeholders in the learning process and the depth of engagement by which students' civic and academic learning may flourish.

3. Foster excellence in academic programs by more effectively supporting broad-based faculty in service-learning theory, pedagogy, and practice that will enhance undergraduate research in areas of civic engagement and applied learning across the curriculum.
4. Deepen and enhance opportunities for leadership, engaged learning, and critical reflection within the Community Service Center through on-going partnerships with students who function as self-mentoring communities in theory, pedagogy and practice.

1.2: Programs.

The Community Service Center oversees the following portfolio of student-led community service programs that provide volunteer placements for both curricular and co-curricular service and learning opportunities.

1. Big Partner/Little Partner (BP/LP) – provides relational support to local St. Peter youth.
2. Wednesday Friends on Mondays – provides relational support to local St. Peter adults recovering from addiction.
3. Gustie Buddies – provides relational support to local developmentally disabled youth.
4. Study Buddies – provides classroom assistance to teachers and students in the local St. Peter schools.
5. Elders – provides relational support in four St. Peter elderly care facilities.
6. Amigos – provides relational support to local Latino and Somali youth at North Intermediate School.
7. Hoffmann Center – provides faith-based outreach to local juvenile sex offenders.
8. T.A.G. (Trips and Activities) – provides activity and sports-based outreach to local St. Peter youth.
9. Habitat for Humanity – supports local and national housing initiatives, most notably through annual alternative spring break work trips to the southern U.S.
10. Pound Pals – fosters animal rights advocacy through support to local St. Peter shelter.
11. After School Programs- provides supplemental support to St. Peter South Elementary school in youth skills development.

The Community Service Center also supports a broad-based array of academic departments on campus in on-going service-learning programs that include: History, Religion, Theater and Dance, Communication, Geography, Biology, English, Education, Psychology, Philosophy, and Health and Exercise Science, as well as numerous interdisciplinary programs such as LALACS, Peace Studies, Environmental Studies, Curriculum II, and First Term Seminar. In addition, the CSC is currently supporting initiatives sponsored through the Center for Vocational Reflection.

The CSC is currently in conversations with Gender and Women’s Studies towards the formation of an on-going collaboration in service-learning outreach to the local St. Peter community. Additional preliminary conversations have occurred with the Center for International and Cultural Education regarding future possibilities for partnership in more effectively supporting faculty with international service-learning.

1.3: Support Relationships.

In order to effectively carry out its mission, the Community Service Center works closely with numerous campus offices, departments, and programs. Of special note is the Office for Institutional Advancement through which the CSC obtains external funding sources to support various service-learning partnerships. The CSC also works and communicates closely with the CVR and Chaplain's office to identify and collaborate on complimentary service and learning initiatives. As the Community Service Center explores new technologies in database software and web development, GTS remains and will become an ever increasing and important support relationship. At present, the CSC partners with the Education department in the execution of EDU 390 – a complimentary service-learning course to EDU 398: Meeting Individual Student Needs. In Student Affairs, the CSC relies heavily on student interns supported through the Career Center, as well as the Diversity Center who aids and advises in outreach to under-represented groups. The CSC looks to partner more closely with the Kendall Center for Engaged Learning in support of service-learning on campus, as well as outreach to Gustavus alumni through the Alumni Office.

Section 2: Strategic Review.

2.1: Strategic Issues.

The four strategic goals for the Community Service Center are based on and reflective of a comprehensive analysis of a departmental SWOT.

2.1.1: The first strategic goal is derived from the first trend in the departmental SWOT confirming the strength in critical mass and momentum behind service outreach (most notably in community service programs) by which the Center's sixteen year legacy of support and resources have helped flourish. The SWOT illuminates a significant deficiency in creating, maintaining, and communicating an effective and appropriate foundation of departmental policies, procedures, and guidelines by which the Center's mission, vision, and goals could be more readily understood and resources more efficiently accessed. Such guidelines would also assist in establishing clear expectations around student involvement so as to ensure greater consistency and accountability. The SWOT demonstrates the need for departmental investments in technology (such as a client management and volunteer database) that would enhance internal efficiency and appropriate systematization. The SWOT also denotes a compelling need and benefit towards the creation of a conceptual framework for engagement by which both curricular and co-curricular service and learning approaches could be understood and by which the Center's specific approach (as evidenced in its mission and vision) could be more readily recognized and distinguished from other entities. SWOT analysis 2.1.1 and its respective strategic goal are based on and emphasize the internal growth and development of the Community Service Center's conceptual, administrative, and operational infrastructure for the purpose of more efficiently and effectively supporting the Center's diverse constituencies involved in community service and service-learning.

2.1.2: The second strategic goal is derived from the second trend in the departmental SWOT confirming the overall foundational strength of the Center's stewardship of diverse local community and regional relationships that currently underlie the critical mass of faculty and students engaged in community service and service-learning. This trend distinguishes between relationships that tend to be volunteer placement oriented versus service-learning partnerships, with greater overall emphasis currently concentrated on the former among most faculty and students. For service partnerships, the

SWOT highlights the importance and benefit of more direct involvement of community partners in the negotiation, direction, facilitation, and stewardship of community service and service-learning initiatives. Such involvement helps alleviate the risks associated with perpetuating random approaches to service that can be conceived in isolation from a more prominent community counterpart. The SWOT indicates significant opportunities to deepen the current foundation of community, regional, and alumni relationships into more intentional and reciprocal partnerships that would enhance their involvement in the identification of community needs and resources, service-learning opportunities, program evaluation, and foster greater participation as additional stakeholders in students' overall civic leadership and development. SWOT analysis 2.1.2 and its respective strategic goal are based on and reflect the Center's desire to enhance faculty and student engagement through a stronger, more supportive platform of community involvement through partnership.

2.1.3: The third strategic goal is derived from the trend in the departmental SWOT analysis focusing specifically on the Center's charge to support service-learning on campus. While the trend indicates a modest, but strong foundation of involvement with select faculty in service-learning and the support of senior curricular and co-curricular personnel, it more clearly illuminates the significant deficiencies in capacity towards carrying out that charge in an effective and uniform manner. The trend highlights the need for an additional full-time staff member in the Community Service Center devoted solely to faculty support for service-learning through the development of resources, faculty outreach, training, curriculum development, peer mentorship, on-going advising, and assistance with community partner negotiations. With additional staffing, the Center will hold capacity to not only enhance faculty support for service-learning in a more systematized, developed, and uniform manner, but in so doing, also advance possibilities for undergraduate research in civic engagement, the promotion of faculty development through external funding sources, and the deepening of service-learning into public policy work. SWOT analysis 2.1.3 and its respective strategic goal are based on and emphasize the need to support faculty with service-learning in a more systematic and uniform manner that will ensure its long-term growth, evolution, and sustainability.

2.1.4: The fourth strategic goal is derived from the fourth trend in the departmental SWOT analysis confirming the strength in student leadership, learning, knowledge and expertise encompassed within the significant pool of student program coordinators and volunteers. The trend indicates deficiencies in communication and peer mentorship between community service programs and significant threats in loss of program memory, continuity, and quality due to high student turnover, and insufficient physical space to accommodate effective work, planning, and reflective learning within the Center. The SWOT indicates significant opportunities to advance student leadership through enhanced responsibilities in intra-program oversight, peer mentorship, coordinator training, the documentation and dissemination of best practices and the development of minimum standards and expectations that would support greater continuity in program quality and allow for longer-term growth and evolution. In addition, the SWOT indicates additional opportunities for students to take a greater role in outreach and advocacy in service-learning to students on campus, leadership in reflective learning approaches, and recruitment of under-represented groups in community service. Analysis 2.1.4 and its respective strategic goal are based on and emphasize the continued growth of students' civic leadership and development within the Community Service Center.

2.2: Barriers.

The strategic goals encompassed within the Gustavus Adolphus College's 2008 strategic plan represent a significant challenge to the Community Service Center because their realization lies beyond the department's present capacity to fulfill. Two large barriers adversely affect the department's ability to carry out its present mission, strategic goals, and future vision. First, the presence of only two professional staff members is inadequate to support the Center's scope of work in an effective, consistent, and sustainable manner because it encompasses a very large and wide-spread constituency of students, faculty, and community members engaged in on-going service and learning activities with each other. Second, the physical space of the Community Service Center is inadequate to effectively support the work, planning, negotiation, reflective learning, and collection of resources that the ever-increasing number of student coordinators and interns, volunteers, faculty, and community members merit. From necessity, the vast majority of the Center's work already occurs outside of the Community Service Center itself.

Section 3: Strategic Initiatives and Recommendations.

Goal 1: Enhance the rigor, standards, and efficiency by which the Community Service Center promotes, supports, and facilitates meaningful community service and service-learning among faculty, students, and community partners.

Objective 1.1: Develop a framework of theory, pedagogy, and practice upon which the Center's identity, orientation, and activities will be more readily understood, distinguished, and recognized.

- Initiative 1.1.1: Research conceptual frameworks and approaches to campus civic engagement among diverse U.S. colleges and universities.
- Initiative 1.1.2: Construct a conceptual framework for civic engagement relevant to and reflective of the Gustavus mission, vision, core values, and strategic plan.
- Initiative 1.1.3: Consult with relevant Gustavus faculty, administrators, students, and community partners on proposed changes.
- Initiative 1.1.4: Submit proposal, (including Center name change) to academic and administrative councils as appropriate.
- Initiative 1.1.5: Publicize and educate all relevant constituencies on potential change in identity and framework for Center's work.
- Initiative 1.1.6: Design and develop the Community Service Center website to effectively and comprehensively reflect the conceptual framework by which the Center will be recognized, distinguished, and understood.

Objective 1.2: Enhance the operational and administrative efficiency of the Center in order to more effectively support partnerships with faculty, students, and community partners.

- Initiative 1.2.1: Implement a client management and volunteer database (in partnership with the St. Peter Volunteer Center) in order to more efficiently accommodate, streamline, manage, and track Gustavus volunteer efforts.
- Initiative 1.2.2: Develop relevant departmental policies and procedures that more readily outline the operational and functional guidelines by which the Center's work occurs.
- Initiative 1.2.3: Research, develop, and implement additional online procedures that support the Center's work in a paperless fashion (i.e. online forms, sign-ups, calendars, announcements, and evaluations).

Objective 1.3: More effectively communicate, educate, and disseminate the diverse work in civic engagement supported by the Community Service Center.

Initiative 1.3.1: Implement a Community Service Center newsletter on a bi-monthly basis.

Initiative 1.3.2: Establish internal criteria and guidelines by which student community service program web pages will be updated and maintained on an on-going basis.

Objective 1.4: Promote professional development among Community Service Center staff.

Initiative 1.4.1: Document CSC departmental initiatives for the purpose of presentation at professional conferences and potential publication in professional journals.

Initiative 1.4.2: Support on-going professional training at local and regional conferences and professional workshops.

Recommendations for Goal 1:

1. Hire 1 full-time operations coordinator and 1 additional half-time administrative support staff to effectively support the Center's operational and administrative effectiveness, growth, and overall efficiency.
2. Expand the physical space of the Community Service Center to accommodate additional administrative support staff.

Goal 2: Grow the Community Service Center's present stewardship of campus/community collaborations that embody local characteristics and regional diversity into deeper, more reciprocal partnerships that strengthen mutual stakeholders in the learning process and the depth of engagement by which students' civic and academic learning may flourish.

Objective 2.1: Build a foundation of community-based support for on-going community service and service-learning initiatives.

Initiative 2.1.1: Conduct a feasibility study through research and evaluation with various citizens and organizations in the St. Peter community towards the formation of a campus/community partnership in support of locally-based civic engagement.

Initiative 2.1.2: Research diverse campus/community partnership models, and develop a proposal with the input of faculty, students, and St. Peter community members.

Initiative 2.1.3: Partner with the St. Peter Volunteer Center in support of Gustavus outreach through local volunteerism.

Initiative 2.1.4: Form a Partnership Council comprised of Gustavus and St. Peter community members as a body of collective support and direction for Gustavus outreach to the St. Peter community.

Initiative 2.1.5: Obtain funding to support the long-term viability, sustainability, and growth of the Partnership Council.

Objective 2.2: Make the practice of reciprocity a guiding principal of the Center's work so that students' civic learning is recognized and supported broadly.

Initiative 2.2.1: Support education to the Gustavus campus and local St. Peter community on best practices of reciprocity through the efforts of the Partnership Council.

Initiative 2.2.2: Integrate community partners more intentionally into on-going Community Service Center operations and initiatives including bi-annual student coordinator trainings and on-going reflective learning activities.

Objective 2.3: Increase outreach to regional, national and international communities.

Initiative 2.3.1: Identify regional and national partners utilizing current campus networks and alumni.

Initiative 2.3.2: Support the development of international service-learning with an emphasis on those that hold intentional and reciprocal outcomes for the local Saint Peter community (i.e. Sister City initiative).

Recommendations for Goal 2:

1. Ensure institutional validation of a partnership council for support, assistance, and direction of civic engagement outreach to the local St. Peter community.
2. Expand the physical space of the Community Service Center to accommodate increased community partner involvement in service and learning activities (such as a meeting space for the proposed Partnership Council).

Goal 3: Foster excellence in academic programs by more effectively supporting diverse faculty in service-learning theory, pedagogy, and practice that will enhance undergraduate research in areas of civic engagement and applied learning across the curriculum.

Objective 3.1: Enhance the understanding and recognition of meaningful service-learning to Gustavus faculty, students, and community partners.

Initiative 3.1.1: Create and disseminate standards for best practices in service-learning.

Initiative 3.1.2: Conduct trainings and facilitate faculty/student/community peer mentorship in service-learning.

Initiative 3.1.3: Develop and make more readily available service-learning resources, toolkits, and tutorials from multiple stakeholder perspectives (faculty, students, and community partners).

Objective 3.2: Enhance and support service-learning on campus.

Initiative 3.2.1: Assist faculty with curriculum development in service-learning.

Initiative 3.2.2: Assist with and promote effective faculty/community partner negotiations.

Initiative 3.2.3: Research areas for enhanced support and incentives in support of faculty for service-learning (i.e. professional development).

Initiative 3.2.4: Create and employ student service-learning interns in the CSC on an on-going basis to assist faculty with logistics and planning for service-learning in their courses.

Initiative 3.2.5: Recruit new faculty through peer mentorship from current faculty engaged in service-learning.

Initiative 3.2.6: Create a faculty advisory board to help inform, maximize, and enhance the effectiveness of the Center's outreach and support to faculty.

Initiative 3.2.7: Work with Institutional Advancement to identify and secure funding in support of service-learning on campus.

Objective 3.3: Enhance student undergraduate research in civic engagement.

Initiative 3.3.1: Research and identify internal and external support and incentives for student undergraduate research in civic engagement.

Initiative 3.3.2: Recruit students, through faculty recommendations, for national presentations on civic engagement at undergraduate research conferences.

Initiative 3.3.3: Support publications of undergraduate student research in civic engagement.

Recommendation for Goal 3:

1. Hire 1 full-time assistant director for service-learning to support faculty development and the growth and sustainability of meaningful service-learning on campus.
2. Expand the physical space of the Community Service Center to accommodate additional professional staff member, make accessible service-learning resources, and work with broad-based faculty in service-learning.

Goal 4: Deepen and enhance opportunities for leadership, engaged learning, and critical reflection within the Community Service Center through on-going partnerships with students who function as self-mentoring communities in theory, pedagogy and practice.

Objective 4.1: Enhance student participation and responsibility in the oversight of the Center's on-going community service programs.

Initiative 4.1.1: Conduct qualitative study on student perspectives surrounding proposed oversight of community service programs.

Initiative 4.1.2: Form a student Service Leadership Council of advanced student program coordinators based on findings.

Initiative 4.1.3: Develop structure and guidelines for internal student oversight of community service programs.

Objective 4.2: Enhance internal cohesion and accountability within portfolio of community service programs through the development of best practices and minimum standards for program management.

Initiative 4.2.1: Identify and document best practices in program management among current community service programs (i.e. recruitment of diverse and under-represented groups in civic engagement).

Initiative 4.2.2: Create a student program coordinator handbook outlining minimum standards, requirements, and expectations for program management.

Initiative 4.2.3: Facilitate the on-going vetting of minimum program standards geared towards the local community with the Partnership Council.

Objective 4.3: Enhance peer mentorship and training among student service coordinators.

Initiative 4.3.1: Advise and support the Student Leadership Council in conducting the fall and spring community service coordinator trainings.

Initiative 4.3.2: Advise and support the Student Leadership Council in on-going peer mentorship across community service programs.

Objective 4.4: Enhance the depth of students' learning that is critically-reflective.

Initiative 4.4.1: Develop and execute on an on-going basis an IEX course on critical issues in service designed to intentionally problematize the theory, pedagogy, and practice behind students' understandings of civic engagement.

Recommendation for Goal 4:

1. Expand the physical space of the Community Service Center in order to accommodate the work of the student leadership council.

Section 4: Assessment.

Goal 1: Enhance the rigor, standards, and efficiency by which the Community Service Center promotes, supports, and facilitates meaningful community service and service-learning among faculty, students, and community partners.

In order to demonstrate that we have achieved Goal 1, we will assess the understanding of the Center's work and the efficiency by which resources and services are accessed through a series of broad-based surveys, on-going evaluations, observations, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and community partners.

Goal 2: Grow the Community Service Center's present stewardship of campus/community collaborations that embody local characteristics and regional diversity into deeper, more reciprocal partnerships that strengthen mutual stakeholders in the learning process and the depth of engagement by which students' civic and academic learning may flourish.

In order to demonstrate that we have achieved Goal 2, we will develop a series of evaluative and reflective questions that will be implemented and documented through on-going focus group discussions, interviews, and written evaluations with our broad-based community partners. Emphasis will be given to qualitatively assessing the realization of mutual goals and guiding principles of partnership, such as communication, resource sharing, negotiation, inclusion, and reciprocity.

Goal 3: Foster excellence in academic programs by more effectively supporting diverse faculty in service-learning theory, pedagogy, and practice that will enhance undergraduate research in areas of civic engagement and applied learning across the curriculum.

In order to demonstrate that we have achieved Goal 3, we will document qualitative feedback through the implementation of a series of broad-based surveys, interviews, observations, and evaluations with faculty. These tools will be geared towards assessing both their knowledge and understanding of what constitutes meaningful service-learning, as well as the efficacy of the Center's resources and support in course development and execution. This will be supplemented with the compilation of quantitative statistics indicating both the number of service-learning courses being offered on campus and students involved in undergraduate research in civic engagement.

Goal 4: Deepen and enhance opportunities for leadership, engaged learning, and critical reflection within the Community Service Center through on-going partnerships with students who function as self-mentoring communities in theory, pedagogy and practice.

In order to demonstrate that we have achieved Goal 4, we will implement a series of multi-faceted assessment tools. We will document qualitative student feedback on leadership and engaged learning through a series of on-going reflective sessions supplemented with written evaluations. We will also track students' contributions to the development of criteria for internal program oversight, minimum standards, and departmental resources in support of training and reflective learning practices. Finally, we will utilize a combination of external leadership assessment tools such as the EQI and DISC to assess students' leadership skills development as they relate to their enhanced responsibilities.