The Service-Learning Program (SLP) is woven into the fabric of several Boise State departments and programs, and adds value to many campus-wide initiatives. This document summarizes the current status of the SLP at Boise State, and its potential to serve as a catalyst for a more civically-engaged campus.

SERVICE-LEARNING AT OUR METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

The Service-Learning Program is an increasingly visible contributor to the institutional mission and reputation of Boise State University as a “metropolitan university of distinction”. According to the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, central tenets of metropolitan universities include:

1. to be responsive to community needs
2. to provide practical learning applications
3. to form alliances with outside organizations to resolve complex metropolitan problems, and
4. to “educate students to become informed and engaged citizens who will play a role in the betterment of society”.

In addition to demonstrating Boise State’s metropolitan university tenets, Service-Learning helps distinguish Boise State in the competitive higher education market. SL appeals to today’s students because it provides what students are looking for: applied learning experiences, job networking, and personal relevance to their coursework.

SERVICE-LEARNING MISSION AND ACTIVITIES

The mission of the Service-Learning Program is to foster active citizenship and enhance learning through academically-based community service. The SLP has three core functions: faculty training, student support, and community partnership maintenance. Staffed by one full-time professional employee and part-time student assistants, SLP currently provides personalized support to 70-80 classes per academic year, equating to over 50 faculty, 100 community agencies, and 1500 students served. In addition, the Program collaborates on various initiatives with over ten campus programs:

COLLABORATIONS

- **Hybrid (H3) Program**: SL enhances several distance learning and hybrid classes. Many faculty note how the SL community experience offers the missing “soft-touch” element.
- **Diversity Requirement**: SLP facilitates active, learning-structured experiences in very diverse communities.
- **Internationalization initiative**: SLP facilitates partnerships with organizations like the Agency for New Americans, where students work alongside refugees in resettlement, ESL, job reentry and micro-enterprise projects. It has also worked with Modern Languages (i.e. Japanese courses) to enhance international students’ experiences at BSU.
• Civic Engagement Steering Committee: SLP provides materials, campus and community networks, coordination support, and enthusiasm to kick-off campus civic initiatives.

• BSU Leadership Program: SLP was requested to help build the curriculum for two core leadership classes, and to serve on the committee to develop a civicly-oriented leadership minor.

• Academic Support: SLP develops and coordinates SL in eleven UNIV 101 courses annually. Two SL staff members have also co-taught UNIV 101.

• The Financial Aid Office: SLP partners with Financial Aid to manage the BSU community-work-study program.

• The Nursing Department: SL Coordinator is requested regularly to consult with Nursing faculty as they integrate SL into the “New Front Door” curriculum.

• Albertson’s Library partnered with SLP to acquire the “Congressional Quarterly Researcher” index to aid students in learning about critical social issues.

• Gender Studies, Family Studies Initiative, Cultural and Ethnic Diversity Board: These advisory groups recruited the SL Coordinator to represent community teaching/learning opportunities on their boards.

ADDED VALUE

SLP adds value to faculty teaching, research, and service efforts:

• SLP fosters inter-disciplinary teaching (Ex: Psychology and Economics classes collaborating to measure the effectiveness of Life’s Kitchen, a community program for “teens on the edge”).

• SLP facilitates faculty opportunities in grants and publishing, both within their disciplines and in new arenas (Ex: two faculty in Bilingual Education and Social Work collaborated on a grant, a publication, and a conference presentation).

• SLP helps faculty connect with community-based research opportunities (Ex: community-based research in Psychology has resulted in publications and student presentations to community leaders.) SLP hosts 4-6 faculty/agency functions each year to promote this partnership.

• SLP plans to collaborate with departments such as Nursing and Mechanical Engineering in their outreach to women and Latinos.

IMPROVED STUDENT LEARNING

• A study by the Higher Education Research Institute (Astin, 2002) found that performing service as part of a course (service learning) adds significantly to academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and promoting racial understanding), choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college."

• Boise State SLP survey data from SL students (n= 766) show that although only one third of student participants regularly participated in community service, over half reported that
  - they will be able to use and recall course information because of service learning
  - service learning helped them understand the basic concepts and theories of the subject
  - service-learning made class discussions more stimulating
  - the class helped them become more interested in helping solve community problems

In addition, 37% reported that they will continue volunteering with their agency after the class ends!
FUTURE POSSIBILITIES (if resources are available)

The SLP can help build Boise State’s capacity and visibility as a civically-engaged campus. Note: All of these potential initiatives are based on successful models from other campuses such as Portland State, University of Utah, Indiana University, Colorado State University, and others.

- Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence: SLP could help coordinate varied civic-oriented faculty development initiatives (SL, ESL, Internationalization, Diversity Requirement, and Civic Engagement) *
- Campus-wide Civic Engagement/SL: SLP could co-coordinate workshops, curriculum, speakers, awards, and press coverage. (cost: $6,000/year) *
- “Engaged Department Program”: SLP could provide discipline-specific trainings, projects, dept. grants, and coordinators. (cost: $10,000 for two department grants per year)
- Senior Capstone Program: SLP could help develop capstone SL projects for each department/major (modeled after thriving program at Portland State University) (cost: full time coordinator position) *
- Campus/community Clearinghouse: SLP could serve as central hub where community non-profits access campus talent and vice versa (cost: $2,000 start up plus $6,000/year) *
- Student Development and Classroom Support: SLP could train and supervise ten peer leaders to be SL teaching assistants to support faculty new to SL. (cost: $10,000)
- Faculty Direction and Mentoring: SLP could provide guidance, role modeling, and follow-up through a Faculty Mentor. (cost: $5,000)

CURRENT STRATEGIES AND OPERATIONS

Every year faculty integrate SL into at least ten new SL classes. Based on new SL courses added in FA ‘05, SLP needs to provide adequate support for a 15% increase in student participants, which translates into the following additional SL administrative demands:

- Logistical support for an additional 260 students per year (on top of current 1500). SL staff will need to help schedule these 260 students for orientations at pre-selected community sites.
- On-going consultation and support for ten new faculty per year. Faculty will be learning SL pedagogy; SL staff will conduct orientations, training institutes, and roundtables for new and continuing faculty. SL is a highly effective teaching technique… only if faculty know how to use it. “Faculty Fellows Seminar (15-hours) will require $6,000/year.
- Coordination of 3-6 new SL teaching assistants per year (to assist new SL faculty). This includes recruitment, training, and support for SL teaching assistants.
- Coordination of twenty+ new agency/faculty partnerships (on top of current 59)*. This includes site visits, agency orientations, and expansion of database infrastructure.
- Troubleshooting Current Partnerships (Agency/Student/Faculty Liaison)*. Excess of twenty hours per week is currently used to respond to cancelled projects, students switching projects, student no-shows, agency staff turn-over and retraining, communication breakdowns, etc. This will continue to increase as participation grows.
- Administering evaluations for students, agencies, and faculty. Evaluations are collected, analyzed and distributed to agency sites and faculty for program improvement.

* These tasks would be functions of a “Community Outreach Coordinator” (requested new staff position)
MANAGEMENT OF ENROLLMENT GROWTH

SL Staff will pursue the following steps:

- **Further advance online systems**, including student project registration, agency project posting, class/agency matching, roster downloading, and student/site evaluation (one-time cost: $4,000 including technical support and staff time).
- **Reduce level of direct support for faculty and their students** (except new faculty, who will need the most support). **This reduction will increase the need for more in-depth faculty development.**
- **Institute moratoriums on growth**, i.e. no new faculty will be accepted after the “first call” (eight months before the semester starts); no new agencies will be oriented unless requested by faculty or needed to meet specific learning objectives.
- **Recruit and retain upper division SL teaching assistants** who can support new and experienced faculty and their students.

\[\textit{i}\] The goals of CUMU that relate to SL coincide with the goals of President Kustra, the Idaho Board of Education, and the current Boise State strategic plan:

- President Kustra’s **President’s Leadership: President’s speeches text** City Club speech (August 23, 2003)
  
  “A metropolitan university also has a responsibility to foster a sense of citizenship and community both on and off campus... I will look for ways that we on campus can be even more effective in contributing to the civic welfare of the Boise community.”

- **Idaho Board of Education “Vision and Mission”** includes the goal of developing a “well-informed citizenry capable of active participation in the processes of a democratic government”

- **Boise State University Strategic Plan (2000-2005)** states:

  That all [students] should be prepared to assume responsibility for personal wellness and for participation in civic, social, and environmental awareness activities of the communities in which they work and live (p. 9)

  That all [students] should be prepared to contribute to the well-being of the communities in which they work and live (p. 9)

- **In addition, the Strategic Plan** strives to “establish links between the general education core curriculum and various applied learning options, such as internships, service learning, or undergraduate research