

News from the Center

Special Interest Articles:

- Interview with Joanna Saporito, Sociology instructor, on page 2
- Interview with Joanna Saporito on why service learning is an integral part of her courses.
- A sad farewell to Tutors Today, Teachers Tomorrow on page 2.

News from the Center is published 3 times per year in the Fall, Spring, and Summer and special issues covering specific topics in service learning, volunteerism, and community service. If any faculty, student, or community partners wish to write an article for the newsletter, please contact Hoover Zariani at the Service Learning Center.

A publication of the Service Learning Center at Glendale Community College

Learning What? By Hoover Zariani

Regardless of the collective response of academia to the accountability movement going on in education, Student Learning Outcomes (or SLOs) are required by the new accreditation standards spelled out by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

These new standards require that all college activities from student services to classes, programs, departments, and certificates provide data showing that students have gained specific skills, abilities, and knowledge from taking part in those activities.

The SLC implemented its SLO measurement process during the fall 2007 and spring 2008 semesters. This first attempt yielded 378 questionnaires from a total of 1242 students for a response rate of slightly over 30%.

The questionnaire contains 13 items which are connected to the larger GCC Institutional SLOs. Items measure such things as improvement in communication skills, appreciation of diversity by the students, level of impact students had on the lives of others, and the connection of service in the community to classroom instruction.

Some highlights include:

- ❖ When asked if students were able to use problems-solving skills at their service site, the highest percentage of positive responses came from students doing tutoring through GEAR UP and Math 138 classes.
- ❖ The STAR program continued to show amazing results in every

category, with particularly high marks in communication skills, appreciation of diversity, and usable skills gained for future careers and in personal lives.

- ❖ Students in Math 138, Psychology 104, and Sociology 105 expressed the strongest connection between service and coursework.

You can obtain a copy of the data by emailing Hoover Zariani at hzariani@glendale.edu. A special issue focusing on Student Learning Outcomes will be published sometime during the fall 2008 semester.

Tigran's Thoughts on Tutoring By Alex Heiman

Tigran Avakyan, if you don't know him already, is a figure well known for his contributions on and off the GCC campus. Whether working as a student ambassador, being a board member for the Asian Pacific Health Care venture, or serving as a GEAR UP tutor at Marshall High School, Tigran's service record is a testament to his intense drive for serving the community.

Quick thinking and rapid speaking are just two characteristics of an electric personality that Tigran carries into each one of his classrooms at Marshall High. The source of constant motivation, Tigran's personality sparks and fuels a passion for learning in students which may not otherwise exist. *(continued on page 3)*

Joanna Saporito & the Essence of Service Learning By Alex Heiman

For students looking to work in one of the social science disciplines such as social work, youth services, or elder care, it might benefit you to get in touch with Joanna Saporito.

Joanna has been a teacher at GCC for over ten years and teaches courses ranging from the introduction to Sociology to a course on gerontology.

In addition, she has recently introduced Sociology 140 (Introduction to Social Welfare) as a course created specifically by her as a way to get students more involved with social service programs.

A social worker herself, Joanna spends a large portion of her time assisting individuals with their problems on a daily basis. Her social work ranges anywhere from helping "kids in jail, to handling domestic violence cases, and even assisting the homeless."

While some might see this work as disheartening and difficult, Joanna reserves a positive and upbeat attitude for what she does. As she expressed in our interview, she sees things as quite to the contrary: "I like to tell people I have the perfect combination of jobs because as a social worker I have to fix problems, while as a teacher I can help prevent them."

Joanna truly enjoys knowing that both jobs interplay off one another in a way that attempts to comprehensively address and curtail social problems within the community.

By requiring service learning in most of her classes, Joanna feels that she is giving students the same wonderful experiences that her work has afforded her. Additionally, she enjoys "seeing a certain maturity from her

students as they explore themselves" through their own experiences with service learning.

One story she shared during our interview was about a "student who was uncomfortable with sexual issues." By encouraging him to work with the gay population, she noticed how "he allowed himself to be challenged, and as a result, matured into a more complete student and tolerant member of the community."

Similar development is seen in another student who had "negative issues with the homeless population." After this student completed his service learning work, Joanna noticed a change of personal opinion. "At one point in the semester, he became so passionate that he ended up getting into an argument with friends who were putting down homeless people outside of class."

For Joanna such development for students is not uncommon to service learning projects, and in yet another practical application, she mentions how "it is service learning that [often] helps students with career decisions in both directions."

Having had the opportunity to sit down and interview Joanna, I have learned a great deal about what it truly means to be involved with service learning. Whether hearing what personally motivates her or listening to the successful development of certain students, I walked away believing wholeheartedly in service learning

as an essential component to the collegiate curriculum.

This same belief motivates Joanna to be one of only a few faculty members who mandate service learning in most of her courses.

Subsequently, her success with service learning has encouraged other faculty members to take the initiative by integrating service learning into their own coursework.

Joanna is so convinced with the results of service learning projects that when asked if she would recommend it as an essential component to other social science classes, she startled me with a resounding, "absolutely."

Expounding on those beliefs, Joanna mentions, "One reason I would recommend it is that the Center has done an amazing job with organizing all the required information."

Everyone at the Service Learning Center has been incredibly helpful and they even handle all the necessary paperwork. So yes, the way the office is run and the work that they do make it very easy for me to recommend Service Learning to any faculty member."

Alex is an English major preparing to transfer in the fall of 2009, and hopes to eventually obtain a law degree.

Joanna Saporito integrated service learning into her courses over 6 years ago.

A Sad Farewell to Tutors Today, Teachers Tomorrow

Research shows that if a child cannot read at grade level by the third grade, they will most likely fall behind academically in middle school and high school and will probably not graduate. T4 precisely addressed this problem and it is with great sadness that we must bid farewell to a program that has effectively served students for the last eight years.

In closing the chapter on this program, we began to estimate just some of the impact T4 has had on our students, on the children being tutored, and on the community. The Tutors Today, Teachers Tomorrow AmeriCorps program has helped over 240 future teachers in the transfer process to a four-year university as they prepared to become elementary school teachers. These tutors have put in approximately 89,100 hours of tutoring over the eight years and have helped thousands of children to improve their reading and math skills. In addition, AmeriCorps provided over \$259,000 worth of Educational Awards over the years for GCC students.

We are extremely proud of this program and are sad to see it come to its conclusion.

A Conversation with Tigran

A recent graduate of Marshall High himself, his transition from graduating and then immediately returning to tutor students gives him the impression that he "never left." Simultaneously, this transition might also explain his success with Gear Up. While certainly respected and admired as a tutor, Tigran also succeeds in getting these students to see him as a peer and as a role model in the classroom. As such, students feel that they can relate to Tigran and have become more receptive and interactive with the material and lessons that he presents to them.

Nothing else pleases Tigran more than to teach students who are eager to learn. In fact, tutoring high school students is its own reward. When asked what the most enjoyable aspect of his job entails, he remarks, "I really just like the teaching portion. I get really enthusiastic when I have to show something to someone . . . to take an idea from my mind and present it in a way that helps another student understand... That's exciting!"

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As you can probably guess, such a philosophy on teaching necessitates a substantial amount of time for personal interaction with students. Fortunately, Tigran's position as a Gear Up tutor affords him the ability to assist students individually while the teacher continues lecturing to the rest. Tigran makes sure to seize the most of this opportunity, and as a result, has seen a great deal of academic growth from students who might otherwise have been neglected and left behind.

With a certain sense of irony perhaps, it is often Tigran who learns the most as a result of his tutoring work. By "shaping ideas to fit into the minds of others," he has "learned to communicate better, how to adapt to different and challenging situations, and how to better understand people in general." As a result, Tigran has continued to refine the art of teaching, and as such, has seen his fair share of successful student stories.

Success stories that are common to Tigran include, but are not limited to, the transition of

students from Marshall into productive college careers. One student in particular, who Tigran discusses in depth, didn't even consider college as a realistic option.

Upon reflecting on his own experiences, Tigran went on to say, "I just really wanted to let him know that he can go to college." After talking with this student for some length of time, Tigran found the student not only receptive but eager to succeed in school and in his personal life. As he puts it, "from that day on he got really excited and even went to his counselor to discuss future options for college."

When I asked Tigran to explain his motivation for helping this particular person and others like him, he simply responded, "It is the way it makes me feel at the end of the day. If I am able to do something for someone, and all I have to do is put some effort into it, but I know that . . . it is really going to change their lives, then why not? I just like knowing that I have helped someone."

Since then, the aforementioned student went on to graduate from Marshall and decided to attend GCC with aspirations of transferring on to one of California's many UC institutions. While this is only one of many success stories Tigran has been instrumental in, this particular student provides a wonderful example of how individuals like Tigran can and do change lives through serving others.

Volunteer Faire

**Tuesday, September 30, 2008
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

All agencies are invited to participate in our semi-annual volunteer faire.

The faire lasts two hours and there are a limited number of available tables for reservation.

For invitations (if you have not received one), please email us at hzariani@glendale.edu.

Reservations deadline is September 16!

SLC Year-End Summary

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campus in the Sierra Madre
Building, Room 267.

As one academic year comes to an end and another one begins, summertime becomes a valuable time to reflect on the past year's activities, events, and achievements as well as a time to plan for the following year.

During the 2007-2008 academic year, students at GCC participated in large numbers in the various service learning and community service programs offered. Just some of the highlights are listed briefly here.

The service learning activities garnered a total of 15,432.5 hours of service to the community by 1,242 GCC students.

The Students Talk About Race (STAR) program (one of the many service learning activities) attracted 117 students in the past year. These students completed over 2,500 hours of service through this program, serving over 800 middle and high school students in the process.

Our LAUSD GEAR UP partnership produced approximately 6150 hours of tutoring for the students and the GUSD GEAR UP partnership produced approximately 8,103 hours.

Other tutoring partnerships such as the Eagle Rock High School Title I Grant also had amazing results with 694.5 hours of tutoring services. The AVID program produced 956.5 hours of tutoring.

Students who opted to receive credit for service through the Independent Study 101 – Volunteerism course completed over 1669 hours of service to a variety of non-profit organizations. Overall, the numbers of hours increased by approximately 10% over the previous year.

You can obtain a copy of our 2007-2008 Annual Report by emailing hzariani@glendale.edu. This report provides more detailed information about programs and activities.

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