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### Service Learning Reflection Paper

At the Adjunct Faculty Conference at SLCC on Saturday, Oct. 27, I attended an service learning session, led by Lisa M. Walz. I appreciated the way Lisa emphasized the difference between 'volunteerism' and actual 'service learning.' She highlighted the need for service learning to give students an opportunity to apply their knowledge or enhance their learning *in a practical way* through *reciprocal* collaboration with a non-profit organization. Often I think we forget that the students really need to know how to apply what they are learning; they wonder, even when they don't verbally ask, 'why does this matter in the 'real' world?' Service learning is probably the best way to answer that question.

Walz also emphasized that the mission of the non-profit should closely align with the course objectives. While this seems so obvious, it was interesting to me the way she put it; she made it seem so simple that a teacher could read the objectives on his/her own syllabus, then read the list of objectives of an organization's mission statement, and very clearly see whether it would be a good fit or not. Walz also included several suggestions of resources to help instructors find partners, so it is not overwhelming to think of where to start with a service learning project. In short, the presentation made it seem very easy to find community partners, and find ones that would be an appropriate and relevant choice for the class.

In my own teaching, I have not done much service learning (although I did it as a *student*). I do think there are more barriers to service learning for adjuncts than full-time faculty, whether real or imagined. Full-time faculty have a lot more freedom to design and conduct their classes as they would like. The problem I run into, at least in my department, is that all of the syllabi I teach from our

standardized, so the assignments, rubrics, etcetera are all pre-made and determined. It allows me less flexibility to do something different – like a service learning project.

Another reservation I have about integrating more service learning into classes is that my students will be so reluctant and complain about doing it. If I tell them they are required to do one more thing out side of class, which requires significant effort on their part (not to mention scheduling and transportation), they will moan and groan or even drop the class, and I need the enrollment because I can't afford to have my classes cancelled or dropped (which is a very real concern for me every single semester). I discussed with my mentor, Tammy Philips, and she said her students *do* often complain at the beginning of the term, but, by the end, they say it was the most valuable part of their course. I just need to brainstorm great ways to convince my students that will be true for them, too, and that they should at least try before they drop the course.

That said, I'm not giving up. I would like to look for more opportunities to incorporate service learning in future classes and in those where I might feel I could have more autonomy over lesson design. I am doing a collaboration right now at Westminster, with a film class, and the other instructor and I were talking about possibly expanding the collaboration from just being with our two classes to really involving a community non-profit partner, which would be exciting. Another idea I have for incorporating service learning is having my students in intermediate modern dance work with children at a community center (YMCA or the like) and teach them dance concepts such as making shapes, exploring negative space, and so forth.