Clemson Collaborations in Service-Learning 2010-2011

WIN • WIN • WIN

CLEMSON
SERVICE ALLIANCE
The theme chosen by the Service Alliance Faculty Fellows for Clemson Collaborations in Service-Learning for 2010-2011 was WIN- WIN- WIN. Our Faculty Fellows and the other service-learning faculty at Clemson see service-learning as a win for the students, a win for the community, and a win for the university.

Another theme that you will find running through all of the articles in Collaborations this year is best summed up by a quote in Faculty Fellow Ashley Cowden’s article: “Students want hands-on experiences; they want to do!”

What these students want to do in most cases is make a difference as part of their education experience at Clemson. They want to serve the public good and address challenges that we face as a state, a nation, and as a global community.

Dr. Lance Bell, Faculty Advisor for the award-winning Clemson Engineers for Developing Countries, says in his submission, “As an educator with 40 years of experience in the classroom I have concluded that institutions of higher education can do more that simply educate. We should also strive to give our students life changing experiences if we can.”

Clemson’s 2020 plan calls for “providing an exceptional educational experience grounded in engagement” and “to serve the public good by focusing on emphasis areas that address some of the great challenges of the 21st century — national priorities such as health, energy, transportation and sustainable environment.”

Service-Learning is a framework for student engagement that can provide that life-changing experience Dr. Bell speaks about — experiences that also serve the public good. This life changing experience can happen anywhere — in a small rural village in Haiti or Guatemala, in the town of Pendleton, the Poe Mill Community in Greenville, or in projects with local hospitals and at local elementary schools.

This kind of WIN requires active student engagement with the community, but more than that, WINs require good coaches to help those students succeed and guide them in their efforts of discovery. Ara Parasheghian once said, “A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are.”

We want to express our sincere gratitude to our service-learning faculty across Clemson’s campus for their time and dedication to their students, to their profession, and to the community. Thank you for creating a WIN- WIN- WIN.

3,195 Clemson students participated in Service-Learning courses in 2010-2011.
Service Alliance Faculty Fellows

The Fellows Program is for faculty interested in exploring issues related to service-learning and community-based research. Fellows receive a $1200 stipend, conduct faculty workshops on service-learning and community-based research through the Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation, and serve as a resource for other faculty members interested in utilizing service-learning in their classroom or developing a community-based research design. Representation comes from four of Clemson’s five colleges.

Win-Win-Win

The Pendleton Health and Heritage Project

Dr. Sarah Griffin, Associate Professor, Public Health Sciences

The Department of Public Health Sciences Community Health Promotion Class (HLTH 480) and Pendleton Pride in Motion (PPIM) just completed our fourth year of our collaboration “Health and Heritage” project. The goals of our project are to: (1) promote walking in Pendleton through community-driven strategies and (2) provide a hands-on opportunity for students to apply classroom acquired knowledge and skills. Specifically, the project promotes walking by identifying, marking and promoting three walking routes in Pendleton, SC. To date, all three routes have been mapped and two of the three routes have been marked with permanent signage and promoted through student developed brochures, four walking events, two walking tour podcasts, and the Pendleton Pride in Motion webpage.

This collaborative project emphases using proven community development strategies and theories, critical thinking, civic responsibility, and identifying and building on community strengths to address community needs. Each year students have a wealth of opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom. However, 2011 presented some of the most unique challenges for this project. The original plan for 2011 was to focus on marking and promoting the third mapped walking route. However, in the early stages of the project year, it became clear to PPIM leaders and me that the planned sidewalks and necessary road improvements for a significant portion of the walking trail would not be completed in time for the 2011 service-learning project. Additionally, it was clear to us that the section of the walking route in question would not be safe for pedestrian traffic without those improvements. Thus, we did not want to do anything to promote or encourage walking on that section of road.

We had to adjust our 2011 plan. PPIM leaders, students and I decided to focus our efforts on: (1) continuing to promote walking in Pendleton and the two existing marked walking routes; (2) make improvements to the two existing walking routes; (3) assist PPIM with assessment
WIN - WIN - WIN

and planning regarding other related health issues; (4) conducting a follow-up evaluation to our earlier collaborative efforts and (5) assisting PPIM with the first annual “Grits and Gospel” fundraiser which promoted the Health and Heritage walking routes and raised money for an official South Carolina Historical Marker at a key African American site along one of the routes.

While this year we took departure from our 2011 plans, it allowed the students to become even more involved in multiple facets of community development and community organizing. Students frequently commented that the service-learning work was more difficult and time consuming than they anticipated but they also learned more from it than just classroom based courses and it was also some of their most rewarding academic work. Additionally, this year’s products and efforts may have had the broadest impact on PPIM efforts and the community yet. Powell Hickman, the chairman of the PPIM Health Committee and Randy Hayes, Mayor of Pendleton, have both spoken with me about how they look forward to working with these students every year because their energy and enthusiasm is infectious. I have to agree with both the students and the community members. Service-learning courses do require more effort but the students’ and community members’ energy and enthusiasm are infectious. And, if you document all the efforts and include a comprehensive evaluation, a faculty member can get the work published. See my recently published article in the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice (1).


156 faculty reported teaching at least one service-learning course in 2010-2011.
Service-Learning: A win for the student, a win for the faculty member, and a win for the community.

Dr. Kathryn Boys, Assistant Professor, Agriculture and Applied Economics

There is a unique and potentially very important role for student engagement in agriculture-related Service-Learning projects. It is the responsibility of university extension services to disseminate (or 'extend') and apply the findings of academic and government research to a state's citizenry. In the case of South Carolina, there is a long history of offering successful extension services through Clemson University's Public Service Activities (PSA). In recent years, however, provision of these services have been increasingly challenged by steady reductions in state and federal-level funding. These reductions have markedly reduced the extension workforce in South Carolina. Arguably, levels of service have been diminished and in at least some cases stakeholders needs have been, at best, underserviced.

At the same moment that state public service budgets are being depleted, S.C. resident needs in the areas of agriculture and economic development are multiplying. Due to current economic challenges, and an explosive interest in local food systems, new and inexperienced individuals are being drawn into the agricultural production activities who, unlike producers of the past, have no previous personal or family history in this sector. At the same time, existing and new government regulations and programs concerning food safety and use of the environment offer both new hurdles and new opportunities. Similar challenges are being felt at the community level; while there is an increased need and desire to offer programming that supports local economic development, the resources (tax base) available to do so has been significantly diminished.

How then can these increased needs be even partially met by an organization who, itself, has been diminished in its resources? One solution is to adjust the model of extension service provision - fill the gaps left by insufficient extension support with faculty-led student initiatives.

For students, such initiatives offer unique professional development opportunities; they apply previous classroom learning to a ‘real world’ problem, develop professional skills, and build networks of potential employers and colleagues from among project stakeholders. Participating communities make progress on a project they have deemed important but which would otherwise go unaddressed. And faculty and staff members get a needed inflow of time and energy from students.

Such an approach has the potential to offer rich rewards for participating students, communities and faculty members. For students, such initiatives offer unique professional development opportunities; they apply previous classroom learning to a ‘real world’ problem, develop professional skills, and build networks of potential employers and colleagues from among project stakeholders. Participating communities make progress on a project they have deemed important but which would otherwise go unaddressed. And faculty and staff members get a needed inflow of time and energy from students.
Over the past two years we have been engaged in such a project. A multidisciplinary group of students have been working on a USDA-supported initiative to improve understanding of the barriers which limit the ability of Southeastern specialty crops producers to serve as suppliers to institutional food services (schools, hospitals, correctional faculties etc.). Eleven focus group meetings were held to identify and explore barriers in this marketing channel. Two regional workshops were subsequently conducted to find and examine solutions these identified barriers. This project afforded the community and S.C. specialty crops producers an opportunity to identify and to bring attention to their infrastructure and resource needs. Already several projects and pilot studies that seek to address these needs, such as farmer’s markets at new locations and a feasibility study for a kitchen incubator, have been initiated. Students contributed to developing the research methodology and, after training, were made responsible for leading many of the meetings. Importantly, through this process, they connected with NGOs and producers, and gained much fodder for later job interviews. (Indeed, some students noted that discussing this project during interviews clinched them their first post-graduation jobs). Finally, involved faculty and staff gained needed assistance for this ambitious project. Certainly a “win-win-win” for all involved!

Extraordinary Students Execute Networkbash

Professor Ashley Cowden, Senior Lecturer, English

“Are you sure we can do this? How are we going to get people to attend? You mean we have a budget and can help determine how to spend the funds? Is it really up to us to organize this event?”

These were just some of the statements my students made when they learned that Networkbash was their semester service-learning project. Networkbash is a three-part annual university event designed to bring students, industry professionals, and alumni together to ignite, to excite, and to engage. This event partners with two sections of business writing (taught by me and Bobby Rettew), the Michelin Career Center, and the Alumni Center. The mission of Networkbash is to get students engaged in networking, not just talking about it, but actually doing it. In order to host the student-driven Networkbash every fall semester, students develop individual sessions, determine event logistics, secure sponsorship, market event, and collect survey information.
Networkbash’s three parts are Ignite, Excite, and Engage.

**Networkbash Ignite** - Ignite teaches students how to network at a Career Fair or other face-to-face event. Informational sessions teach students how to pitch themselves in five minutes and approach someone for the first time in a professional setting. Students can take these skills and apply them at the fall semester Career Fair, a business conference, or at the remaining two Networkbash events.

**Networkbash Excite** - Excite is either delivered through a paneled discussion or through a guest speaker, depending on what the classes decide. In Fall 2010 Robyn Phillips, from Brains on Fire, talked to students about the best practices of using social networking in the job search. This session was interactive and Robyn took questions from the audience. Students didn’t just sit there and listen, but they actually participated in the discussion.

**Networkbash Engage** - Engage brings Clemson alumni and students together and gives them the opportunity to network. The event is set-up like “speed dating,” where students rotate tables and meet many different alumni. Table topics are generated by students, and the topics range from favorite Clemson experience to job advice. Students enjoy this session the most because they could apply everything they learned from the Ignite and Excite events.

Networkbash is the largest service learning project I have managed. Students got an opportunity to not only work in a real-world setting but also experience working with students in different sections. To date the students have produced many different deliverables ranging from proposals, marketing material, surveys, recommendation reports, and presentations. In order to market the events, students created a facebook page, posters, flyers, Youtube videos, and five minute face-to-face pitches. The 50 pitches, delivered to classes and campus organizations, proved to be the most successful contributing to 80% of the attendance. Students also created, distributed, and analyzed surveys after each event to determine the events’ success. After analyzing survey data, students wrote recommendation reports outlining what changes were needed to make the next Networkbash even better. Students also learned how to communicate across sections. Students made use of social media through the Networkbash official blog, facebook page, and google docs. The Fall 2010 event was a huge success raising about $5,000 in sponsorship and serving over 500 students.

Students can do extraordinary things if you help them believe it and inspire them. This is my service learning philosophy. By the end of the semester, I heard, “I am glad I can put this on my resume; This was the most fun project I have ever worked on at Clemson; I wish we could have done more.” Students want hands-on experiences; they want to do! It is amazing what students can do if you motivate them. For the Fall 2011 event, we have new partnerships with the Spiro Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership, as well as the Robert J. Rutland Institute for Ethics. Our new partners as well as The Career Center, Alumni Center, and English department are looking forward to the Fall 2011 event.
Medication Compliance Adherence for Palliative Care Patients- A Service-Learning Project for Graduate Students

Dr. Tracy Fasolino, PhD, FNP-BC, RN, School of Nursing

Patient compliance with prescriptive and over the counter medications are not well understood by healthcare providers. Noncompliance and poor compliance result in exacerbations of chronic diseases, patient safety issues, and injury. There are many factors that contribute to noncompliance and may include any of the following: (1) Lack of understanding of the medication action, (2) Inability to access the medication from pharmacy, (3) Financial restrictions to purchase medications, (4) Poor organization of prescriptive medications, (5) Use of over the counter medications that may interfere with prescriptive medications. In addition, medications are prescribed by a variety of physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. The prescriber may not have full access to the medications list for the patient results in potential drug-drug reactions. The objective of this service learning activity was to introduce Advanced Practice Nursing Students to the complexities of medication compliance within a specific patient population. Through a collaborative effort by Bon Secours St. Francis Health System and Clemson University Graduate Nursing Students, valuable knowledge was gained on the current issues involved with medication compliance by Palliative Care patients.

Each pair of students was assigned to a Bon Secours St. Francis Outpatient Palliative Care healthcare provider to coordinate a home visit with a particular patient. These patients were selected for the home visit based upon multiple healthcare conditions and lengthy medication needs. The student pairs conducted a medication compliance interview with the patient and caregivers within the home setting during the routine visit from the Palliative Care team. The student pairs were instructed to gather information related to the factors that many contribute to noncompliance. In addition, national disease organizations have established specific standards for management of chronic diseases. The student pairs were advised to review these standards and compare to the medication list of the Palliative Care patient. Lastly, the students were to complete a recommendation list and reflection of the project. The projects were returned to the Palliative Care team in hopes of assisting with enhanced medication compliance and quality of health related illnesses.

The project was embraced by the Graduate Nursing Students with many of the students expressing enlightenment regarding the complexities of medication compliance issues. Here is a few examples of reflective comments:

“Our patient seemed to have a relaxed, almost passive attitude about his condition and was
comfortable letting his wife take responsibility for his meds. He did know some about them but could not identify them.”

“Team MedAssist now has a new perspective on medication compliance issues that go beyond simple patient understanding and willingness to comply to treatment.”

“The Minis thoroughly enjoyed this experience. Our patient was a delight and she loved talking and sharing with us. We could have sat there all day and talked with her. It was also a great experience to meet an Advanced Practice Nurse and learn what she does and that there is life after graduate school. The Palliative care program is amazing and it is great that our patient had that resource to keep her medical care organized.”

WIN! WIN! WIN!
Landscape architecture students partner with a community to reinvigorate their neighborhood

Professor Mary Beth McCubbin, Lecturer, Planning and Landscape Architecture

Like many communities, the Poe Mill village is struggling in the aftermath of losing its economic engine. What had once been 11 acres of energy at the heart of the neighborhood is now piles of rubble covered with weeds and garbage—a blight that makes it difficult to maintain pride in one’s community but also creates issues related to safety and security. However, the village has many of the components that make for great places to live. It has a network of streets and sidewalks that promote walking and neighborly interaction. It is close to downtown Greenville, has access to public transportation, has charming houses, and is only a short hop to the Swamp Rabbit Trail. Issues the community deals with are a lack of access to open space, abandoned and deteriorating structures, crime, and lack of easy access to daily services like grocery stores. Students in the Community Design Studio were challenged to explore these issues and look for opportunities to revitalize this once proud neighborhood.
Working with the Greenville Redevelopment Authority and the Poe Mill Neighborhood Association, students conducted a door-to-door survey, held a series of public meetings and work sessions to identify a vision for a park that would become the new heartbeat of the community. Each student proposed a design that embodied the community’s priorities—places for active play or a quiet walk in the woods, places for family picnics or community festivals, places to celebrate the rich history of the textile industry. With feedback from the community, graduate students in the a.LINE.ments Studio created a design proposal that will be used as inspiration for the new park.

Students also took a close look at the existing neighborhood and made recommendations to improve walkability and pedestrian experience. Traffic calming devices, street trees, improved parking, sidewalks and crosswalks were suggestions to enhance the streetscape and improve safety. New gateway designs were proposed that would contribute to a sense of community identity. Additionally, students identified opportunities to integrate a variety of new housing types that would improve the fabric of the community.

WIN! Clemson students had the wonderful experience of working with a neighborhood to help them articulate a vision for their community. They explored the complex issues that communities face and learned how design can play a role in solving these issues. They learned about their responsibilities as designers to be good citizens. And how the design process can be a catalyst for community change.

WIN! The Poe Mill community has a vision, a plan, and a renewed sense of community purpose. Efforts are under way to make improvements that will help improve issues related to safety and security; block parties are being held and public art projects are in the works.

WIN! The Greenville County Redevelopment Authority has a plan for the park that embodies the community’s priorities. They will use the master plan to begin the process of garnering partnerships that will bring the community improvements to fruition.

We offer our sincere gratitude to the Greenville Redevelopment Authority for this opportunity.
A Homerun! How Service-Learning Projects for Future Middle School Science Teachers Benefit the Students, the Community, the Faculty Member, the Environment, and Middle School Students

Dr. Cassie Quigley, Assistant Professor, Teacher Education

This fall as a fellow in the Service Learning program, I implemented several service learning projects in the ED SEC 738 Environmental Biology course. This course is a part of the Master's of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program for Middle Level Learners. This program trains and provides licensure for future middle school teachers. My goals as a fellow were: 1. To further foster a community at Clemson that supports public service/outreach through education. 2. To gain insights into how to improve my teaching methods of public service/outreach at Clemson. As a science educator, I view science and public service as extensions of each other. Science is a human endeavor that seeks to gather data using systematic methods. Citizen Science, is one example of how individuals or networks of volunteers perform scientific tasks in order to help scientists collect data more feasibly that otherwise would not be possible. Often, these projects are related to issues that are relevant to the volunteers’ community. Here, science and public service work together to improve situations in our community. In the Environmental Biology course, the projects were connected with two community partners- Upstate Forever (a sustainability action organization) and Paris Mountain State Park. By teaching Citizen Science projects (i.e. water quality testing, plant field guides, creating informational materials on pervious pavements, etc.), I motivate students to take action in their community and learn science. A community forum was created in which the students dialogue with informed citizens about their projects.

These research projects have several outcomes- including benefits for the students, the community partners, and me. The students described that they felt a part of the science community and felt that they were experts in their topic through research and data collection and dialogue with the community, and finally, pointed to the development of the educational outreach materials as a way they could integrate service learning in their future classrooms. This type of relevant instruction is critical to mobilize students to become active community members. The community partners (including Upstate Forever and Paris Mountain State Park) de-

A student demonstrates how pervious pavers work- the water travels immediately through the pavers instead of running off cement.
scribed the usefulness of having students help them create necessary materials and conduct research projects, and teaching the future teachers about issues in their community and therefore indirectly informing middle school students. For me, as I had just moved to Greenville, understanding the needs of the community was helpful for me to become a part of the community. Additionally, I was able to network with the other service-learning fellows. By talking with the other fellows, I could see how I could expand my service-learning projects and make them more interdisciplinary. Moreover, we presented our projects at the Gulf Summit Service Learning Conference. By teaching Citizen Science in classrooms, we can create a new generation of informed and dedicated students with a commitment to public service and that is a win for everyone involved!

A student lets a salamander crawl into her hand during a visit to Paris Mountain State Park to investigate which species are present in the park.

Of the 8 percent of faculty who taught at least one service-learning course in 2010-2011, 43 percent were tenure-track faculty while 57 percent were non-tenure track faculty.
International Service-Learning

International Service-Learning projects are wonderful opportunities for Clemson students to learn first-hand about everyday life in a culture very different than their own. The Clemson Service Alliance has supported a number of international service-learning projects and international creative inquiry/service-learning courses by funding student foreign travel insurance costs for both the students and faculty participating in the projects.

Teaching Promotoras in Guatemala: An International Service-Learning Project

Dr. Roxanne Amerson, Assistant Professor, Nursing

As part of a short-term medical mission team in 2005, I was introduced to Pixabaj, a rural community in the highlands of Guatemala. Our mission team learned how the community had virtually no access to health care. According to the 2008 health statistics by the World Health Organization, the under the age of 5 child mortality rate in Guatemala is 34 per 1000 live births compared to the United States rate of 7.8 per 1000 live births. Of the under-5 children who die, 20% of those deaths are related to pneumonia and 19% are related to diarrhea. Both conditions are easily treated if recognized early. Prematurity constitutes 19% of the under-5 mortality rate and is strongly influenced by the fact that only 31% of births are attended by skilled health personnel. As a community health nurse, I recognized that providing health education would be one way to empower the people of Pixabaj and perhaps change these mortality rates.

While preparing for an international service-learning project with baccalaureate nursing students in the fall of 2010, a plan for a promotora program emerged. A promotora de salud (Spanish for “promoter of health”) is an indigenous leader within a community, who has been trained to address common health issues within the community. As we prepared for our trip, we gathered health statistics about Guatemala and conducted interviews with other medical professionals who had worked in Guatemala. My students were introduced to concepts of Guatemalan culture and the basics of Spanish language. Based on the health statistics and input from interviews, we established a plan to teach women within the Pixabaj community about basic hygiene, sanitation, vital signs (temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure), first aid for wounds and burns, signs and symptoms of dehydration, directions for making oral rehydration solution, and how to differentiate between signs of pneumonia versus the common cold. According to UNICEF, only 64% of children under-5 with suspected pneumonia are taken to a health care provider and only 22% of children under-5 with diarrhea receive oral rehydration solution in Guatemala. In this rural area where most parents are illiterate, these statistics probably present a best case scenario.
In order for promotoras to be most successful, the community should select the women. Our in-country host met with a local lay midwife, who was well-recognized as an informal health care provider, to recruit 10 women for the initial program prior to our arrival in Guatemala. Based on input from the midwife and members of the community, a total of 11 women attended the program. This pilot group included a local pastor’s wife, the midwife and her daughter, and a local school teacher; all of whom were well respected within the community.

In October of 2010, ten nursing students and I arrived in Guatemala. We conducted home visits, attended the local church service, and visited a local hospital. During these visits, we learned a great deal about the daily lives of people living in Pixabaj and the available resources of the community. The information we learned during our home visits allowed us to adapt our teaching plans to the specific needs of the local community. We saw first-hand the geographical isolation, the poverty, and the lack of transportation which influences decisions to seek treatment of potential health problems.

We began our first day of the promotora classes at the local school. Recognizing that establishing a relationship is of the utmost importance in Guatemalan culture, we introduced ourselves and shared personal information about our lives and own families. Next, we asked the women to introduce themselves and tell us about their lives. Sharing personal details of ourselves and our families is consistent with the Latino value of personalismo, which emphasizes the importance of establishing personal relationships with health care professionals. We encouraged the women to share with us how much school they had attended. Having this knowledge helped us to gauge the literacy levels of the women, so we could adapt our teaching to their specific literacy needs. As the leader of the group, I explained to the participants that we were there to teach them and also to learn about their culture during this week. Acknowledging that they had something to teach us was just one way of demonstrating cultural humility.

Since reciprocity is a key component of service-learning, it was important for us to learn from the people of Pixabaj. On the last day, the local midwife brought her materials and taught us how she examined and cared for expectant mothers during the birthing process. The women of Pixabaj taught us about their local beliefs and use of folk medicine to treat common ailments. During the classes, the students and I were encouraged to practice our Spanish skills. We were learning from them and they were learning from us.

On the last day of class, we held a graduation ceremony for the promotoras. Each promotora was presented with a certificate of participation and a nursing bag with scissors, a watch, bandages, soap, and other equipment they might use to promote health and prevent illness. A picture was taken of each woman as she was presented with her bag and certificate. Afterwards, we held a...
celebration with cake and punch. Ending the program with a celebration provided closure and acknowledged the promotoras’ accomplishment. An unanticipated benefit of the program was the boost to the promotoras’ self-esteem. For some of these women, this was their first time to ever attend school.

There were initial concerns that low literacy levels and the language barriers would prevent us from having an impact. Literacy levels and language were barriers, but we were able to overcome them. Since this was a pilot program, no formal evaluation was conducted. This is not to say that we did not have a positive impact. Our impact was just not measured in a conventional manner. Everyday each woman attended class, even though it meant a 2-hour walk round-trip for many of the women. At least 2 women brought their infants strapped to their backs and cared for their infants as they attended class. Each woman listened intently to the lectures and engaged in discussions. All of the students and the promotoras laughed and talked together about the issues that women face, regardless of their geographical location. During classroom breaks, the students and the promotoras shared snacks and played volleyball. The learning process was not just focused on learning content, but also on establishing personal relationships. The smiles on the faces of the promotoras as they received their certificates and nursing bags can never be measured by a survey. The expressions on their faces spoke volumes about the joy and the self-satisfaction of accomplishing something that would help them and their families. One participant shared with us, “When the floods came and devastated our village, I felt so hopeless to help my neighbors. What could I do? I did not know what to do or have anything to use to help them. Now, I feel that I could help them with what I have learned this week.” Each participant personally thanked each member of my team with words and hugs. They told us they would be waiting for us to return to Pixabaj. They were eager to learn and wanted more.

The promotoras program was a win-win situation for my students, the community of Pixabaj, and me. My students learned about a different culture and practiced promoting health in the community through education. The promotoras gained a sense of self-efficacy and learned how to promote health for their families and within their community. I had the opportunity to participate in a health promotion program which will impact many lives, hopefully for many years to come. The promotoras program did not end that day. Plans are underway now for the fall of 2011 to continue the program. The women of Pixabaj are waiting – we all have a lot to learn!
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education Service-Learning Award

For nine years, the South Commission on Higher Education (CHE) has held a Service Learning Competition to promote and publicize on a statewide scale the service-learning and volunteerism efforts of South Carolina colleges and universities. The competition gives three awards: one for the public universities in the four-year sector, one for the public colleges in the two-year sector, and one for the independent colleges and universities. Their goal is to choose the single most commendable service learning project in each sector.

For the purposes of the competition, CHE defines service-learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is linked in a direct, hands-on fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside the institution. Also, projects may, but need not be, linked to academic credit and may also be collaborative ventures between colleges and universities.

The review panel evaluates nominated projects based on four chief criteria:

1. The ability to resolve community concerns or address community issues.
2. The degree to which the project enhances student learning.
3. The degree to which the project meets the parameters of the Commission’s definition of Service Learning.
4. The project’s impact on campus (e.g., the number of students involved).

Clemson’s nominee for 2011 – and winner of the SC Commission on Higher Education Service-Learning Award was the Clemson Engineers for Developing Countries (CEDC) Haiti Civil Engineering project.

WINNER: S.C. Commission on Higher Education Service-Learning Award for 2011 - Clemson Engineers for Developing Countries

The Mission of Higher Education

Dr. Lansford Bell, Professor, Civil Engineering and Faculty Advisor for Clemson Engineers for Developing Countries (CEDC)

Just what is the mission of Higher Education? Is it simply to produce graduates who are readily employable? Is it to produce graduates who have the ability to think, communicate, lead, and solve the problems of the next generation? There are perhaps as many answers to this question as there are educators and students.
As an educator with 40 years of experience in the classroom I have concluded that institutions of higher education can do more that simply educate. We should also strive to give our students life changing experiences if we can. We have them captive for four years, so why not?

Two years ago a group of Clemson University engineering students approached me and said they wanted to apply what they were learning in the classroom in under developed countries. “OK”, I said, “what exactly is your objective, and how do you plan to accomplish it?” They said they wanted to create their own student organization, make their own decisions, sharpen their communication and leadership skills, gain some appreciation of other cultures, raise their own travel funds, and do something truly important. And they have done just that.

The Clemson University student organization Clemson Engineers for Developing Countries was formed and has, among other initiatives, recently completed the design of a water filtration, purification, and distribution system for the rural village of Cange, Haiti. Physicians volunteering their time in Cange tell us that clean water will simply cut their case load in half. We have sent six delegations of students to Cange with another delegation of eight scheduled to visit in June. Most if not all returning students have told me it was, for them, a life changing experience. This project was recently awarded the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education four year public institution Service Learning Project of the Year.

This recognition perhaps raises a second question. Can the CEDC concept be expanded to other disciplines within Clemson University and/or to the South Carolina higher education community in its entirety? I have no answer to that question but I can only share three key concepts impacting our success. First is student autonomy. I have repeatedly told the students this is their organization, they make the decisions. My role is nothing more than assisting them in implementing their decisions with the view that we need a balance of student resources and participation, travel funding, and available projects. Our second key to success is what I will term community partnerships. We have been fortunate to have teamed with the Episcopal Church Diocese of Upstate South Carolina who has maintained a long presence in Cange. Our partnership consists of us providing water system and other design related documents, they purchase the pumps,
pipe, and other materials. Third is what I will term professional partnerships. Fluor and other entities throughout the state have graciously provided us with engineering professionals who review our designs and perform other valuable forms of assistance.

Has the CEDC experience impacted the lives of those who have participated? Some CEDC students are now considering Peace Corps assignments upon graduation. Others have already participated in similar church supported projects in other under developed countries.