Service Learning at Gavilan College--a request for full funding of this vital program

By Leah Halper, Community Liaison and Scott Sandler, Faculty Liaison

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Summary: Service Learning is vital to the educational experience at Gavilan, playing an important role in supporting Gavilan’s Accreditation and Student, Institutional, and Program Learning Outcomes. National data clearly establishes the many academic, institutional, and personal growth benefits Service Learning provides; campus data show excellent results for students, including students from groups adversely impacted by socio-economic disadvantage. Gavilan’s growing program has an exciting future as new faculty join at a steady rate; community partners rely on this program to provide key services to clients, and students report a wide variety of benefits. The program is a model to other Community College programs precisely because of its two 20 percent reassigned faculty, who are work hard to make the experience safe, meaningful, and beneficial for all involved. Leaving the program without dedicated staff would create clear risks for the college, and without ongoing faculty support, Instructional and Community relationships would wither. We ask that the college provide general fund support to this excellent program until Title V or other monies can support Service Learning in a stable and reliable manner.
**Service Learning program is a vital part of undergraduate education at Gavilan**

**Accreditation**—Gavilan’s most recent accreditation report cites Service Learning as a new program developed since 2003 to strengthen modes of instruction. It also listed the disciplines involved with Service Learning; a slightly updated list would include sociology, guidance, English, ecology, biology, anthropology, archaeology, English as a Second Language, business, communications, history, political science, and psychology. The report accurately noted that:

“The Service Learning Program works with over 30 nonprofit and public agencies in the communities that the College serves, offering students opportunities to investigate and conduct research within their communities (2A.64). Gavilan College offers 8-12 Service Learning classes each semester, enrolling hundreds of students. Over 25 instructors have been trained to teach service learning in their classes and a broad range of disciplines have integrated service learning in their curriculum…”

In addition, Service Learning was cited at length as one of the college’s principle vehicles for teaching ethics and civic engagement in Standard IIC.

“The Social Science Department offers a number of classes that address what it means to be an ethical human being. They also offer an AA with an Emphasis on Global Studies. Communication Studies, with new certificates of achievement in Communication Studies and Interpersonal Communication, addresses civic engagement, community change, and social justice. Classes in the philosophy and fine arts departments instill appreciation for ethical principles and teach students how to reason their own ethical frameworks. Topics related to this standard (ethics, communication, diversity, community, citizenship, and social justice) are also presented through a student leadership class, courses containing service learning, our cultural diversity requirement, and the college’s professional development day activities. In addition, ethics, citizenship, respect for cultural diversity, and civic responsibility are a part of the college’s SLOs, PLOs, and ILOs.

“Service learning provides the students with the opportunity to gain knowledge of themselves and their communities. It involves cooperative rather than competitive experiences for the students thus promoting invaluable skills associated with teamwork, community involvement, and citizenship. The faculty, the college, and the community also benefit from this integrated community participation. Lifelong habits of civic participation are fostered and students are exposed to community needs and cultivate civic-minded participation. In addition, student and community misconceptions about at-risk, immigrant, and needy populations are addressed” (2A.100).

**Service Learning Supports Learning Outcomes and is supported by them**

**SLOs.** In addition, Service Learning supports diverse Student Learning Outcomes. Many classes that are key to major and transfer programs have SLOs that are or would be well supported by Service Learning. For example:

Ecology 1: “The student will compare and contrast the physical characteristics and adaptations of flora and fauna of a variety of local ecosystems.” Also, “The student will
cooperatively research, produce, and present with a group of other students a term project that analyzes the environmental, social, and economic impacts of a particular environmental issue and evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of the democratic process in dealing with these complex issues.” This course is tailor-made for Service Learning projects at local parks and preserves.

English 260--College Reading: “4. Formulate and practice successful approaches to learning college-level vocabulary, including identifying meaning through context, differentiating connotation and denotation, and dictionary skills 5. Demonstrate the ability to respond to college-level reading through paraphrase, summary, and responses to questions about reading selections 6. Decipher and explain main idea, supporting points, tone, purpose, figure of speech, and point of view.” These skills, useful in college, are also exactly the skills sought for K-12 students in a number of after-school reading and academic programs, several of which already benefit from having English 260 students tutor participating children.

Philosophy 3a--Ethics “Apply ethical theories to real-world issues such as capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, animal rights, racial and gender injustice, and future generations and the environment.” A number of local agencies work on these issues, and would welcome student Service Learners in a variety of roles.

Accounting 111--Income Taxes. “Students will gather, analyze, and interpret tax data. Students will explain and interpret tax law, solve tax problems, organize the data and summarize it by completing tax returns and schedules.” More than one agency that serves low income people could use students to help clients with personal financial record-keeping and income tax forms.

Child Development 14A—Work with School Age Children. “1. Students will plan a safe and healthy environment for school-age children. 2. Students will observe and demonstrate strategies to establish productive relationships between children, staff and families. 3. Students will review and explain the principles of growth and development for 5 to 12 year old children. 4. Students will develop and plan an appropriate environment and curriculum for 5 to 12 year old children. 5. Students will demonstrate appropriate discipline and guidance techniques for use in after school and recreational environments. 6. Students will demonstrate the ability to advance children’s physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development through personal interaction and curriculum planning.7. Students will identify major issues affecting children and their families and demonstrate the ability to develop appropriate responses. 8. Students will identify and understand the elements of a high quality after school program.” A more perfect fit for Service learning is hard to conceive.

Clearly there is much room for implementation of more Service Learning classes to support SLOs; the only limits are faculty capacity and staffing of the Service Learning program.

**GELOs, ILOS, and PLOS.** Service Learning also supports and is supported by a number of General Education Learning Outcomes, Institutional Learning Outcomes, and Program Learning Outcomes; these include many outcomes with applied, skills-based,
personal growth, observational, or experiential goals. There is therefore a great potential for Service Learning to grow at Gavilan, and it is a highly scalable program.

**Relevant GE Learning Outcomes**

**AREA B** Physical Universe and its Life Forms  
B8. Work collaboratively with others on labs, projects, and presentations.

**AREA C** Arts, Foreign Language, Literature and Philosophy  
C3. Demonstrate awareness of the thinking, practices and unique perspectives offered by a culture or cultures other than one’s own.  
C6. Analyze and explain the interrelationship between self, the creative arts, and the humanities, and be exposed to both non-Western and Western cultures.

**AREA D** Social, Political, and Economic Institutions  
D2. Critique generalizations and popular opinion about human behavior and society, distinguishing opinion and values from scientific observation and study.  
D3. Demonstrate an understanding of the use of research and scientific methodologies in the study of human behavior and societal change.  
D4. Analyze different cultures and their influence on human development or society, including how issues relate to race, class and gender.  
D5. Describe and analyze cultural and social organizations, including similarities and differences between various societies.

**AREA E** Lifelong Understanding and Self-Development  
E1. Demonstrate an awareness of the importance of personal development.  
E2. Examine the integration of one’s self as a psychological, social, and physiological being.  
E3. Analyze human behavior, perception, and physiology and their interrelationships including sexuality, nutrition, health, stress, the social and physical environment, and the implications of death and dying.

**Gavilan's Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (a sample of those relevant):**

1. Communication:  
   1.1. Students will communicate effectively in many different situations, involving diverse people and viewpoints.

2 Cognition  
2.3. Problem Solving: Students will identify and analyze real or potential problems and develop, evaluate, and test possible solutions, using the scientific method where appropriate.  
2.6. Transfer of Knowledge and Skills to a New Context: Students will apply their knowledge and skills to new and varied situations.

4. Social Interaction:  
4.1. Students will interact with individuals and within groups with integrity and awareness of others’ opinions, feelings and values.  
4.2. Teamwork: Students will participate effectively in teams, committees, task forces, and in other group efforts to make decisions and seek consensus.  
4.3. Effective Citizenship: Students will take personal responsibility for being informed,
ethical and active citizens of their community, their nation, and their world.

6. Personal Development and Responsibility:
6.1. Students will develop individual responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for diverse people and cultures.
6.3. Ethics and Values: Students will demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues that will enhance their capacity for making sound judgments and decisions.
6.4. Respect for Diverse People and Cultures: Students will respect and work with diverse people including those with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and different abilities.

**Program Learning Outcomes (a small sample of those relevant):**

**Computer Science**
- Use design problem solving to propose an aesthetically pleasing design that satisfactorily addresses clients' needs.
- Apply design principles and color theory when developing presentations.
- Design and present consumer products using working drawings, 3D graphic models and multimedia applications (audio, video, graphics and text).
- Develop an electronic portfolio to present to potential clients/employers.

**Social Science**
- Practice and analyze democratic civic engagement.
- Demonstrate and evaluate relationships between local and national issues, movements, and ideas as they relate to local communities.
- Demonstrate a range of skills including: research, documentation, analysis, evaluation, communication, contextualization, teamwork, observation, and cultural competency by relating social science concepts and theories to issues of importance to local communities.
- Identify, develop, use, and assess tools and methods for community change and social justice.

**ESL Intermediate level**
**Program Learning Outcomes:**
- Demonstrate a developing an aural/oral fluency in a variety of contexts.

**Water resources management**
- Demonstrate work ethic and model professional interaction with the public.

**Program Growth at Gavilan**
When we began Service Learning in 2007 based on a sabbatical project, we had only three sections, and all were in the Social Science Department. Today because the program has been funded for five years under Title V, the picture is much brighter and the program much more stable, with 13 sections in various departments scheduled for fall 2015 (see list below). Every semester under Title V, 2-6 new faculty have been trained to teach a Service Learning class; while some of the part-time faculty have left the college, many have joined the program when they are able to teach appropriate classes. Also all Communications 10 classes are Service Learning, as are designated guidance and psych classes that have not been scheduled but which we hope to see soon.
Finally, we have a number of faculty who will be trained to start teaching with Service Learning in spring 2016—in anthropology classes (2 or 3 new faculty), music (1), and sociology (1 or 2). And conversations with our interim Dean of Non-Credit have convinced us that non-credit ESL classes might be an excellent way to pilot Service Learning in the non-credit program in 2016.

SOC 1B: #10303: (M/W) 2:30-3:50
ENGL 260 #10676 F (9:10-12:15)
CMUN 6: #10411 (M/W) 9:45-11:05
HIST 5: #10247 (T/TH) 11:20-12:40
ENGL 260P #10692/#10693 (T/TH) 11:20-12:40
ENGL 260
HIST 1: #1080 (M/W) 4:00-5:201
HIST 3: #10245 (M) 6:00-9:05
ANTH 2 #10166 (T/TH) 11:20-12:40
BIO 1 #10018 (T/TH) 2:30-5:35
BIO 4 #10029 (T/TH) 8:10-9:30 (F) 8:10-11:15
ENGL 250P #10668/10669 (M/W)
ENGL 250P #10671/10672 (T/TH)
COMM 10—all sections

Data

Gavilan—There is an enormous body of data in academia pointing to the many academic benefits of Service Learning. (See below for national information.) Data at Gavilan suggests students at our college respond just as students respond elsewhere: Service Learning benefits them deeply and in a variety of ways.

Additionally, Service Learning at Gavilan benefits groups the college needs to reach: for example, low-income and Hispanic students. A study undertaken in May 2015 by Service Learning at Gavilan College showed students reported a series of important benefits. (See Appendix I for full survey results.)

Methodology: Short self-report paper surveys and an identical SurveyMonkey instrument were made available to students in seven different history, sociology, English, biology, and conflict resolution classes. Five of the classes are current Service Learning classes; in two more, students were asked whether they had had past Service Learning courses, and those who said they had were asked to complete surveys. Two of faculty members with current Service Learning classes also asked their students to complete surveys online at SurveyMonkey. At total of 122 students completed the surveys.

Of the 122 respondents to the survey, 33.6 percent reported being low income, 49.1 percent Hispanic, 7 percent returning to college after age 30, and 6.5 percent students with disabilities.
When asked whether SL helped them better understand course material, 78.6 percent agreed or strongly agreed that it did.

When asked whether Service Learning helped students get passing grades in the specified class, 73.1 percent said that they agreed or strongly agreed that it did.

A like number, 72.2 percent, agreed or strongly agreed that SL helped them with their readiness to transfer to a four-year college.

And Service Learning appears to have supported retention—68.5 percent reported that Service Learning helped them stay in the class or classes where they encountered it.

Many students also reported that Service Learning helped them increase their interest or excitement in getting a degree: 68 percent agreed or strongly agreed that Service Learning has done so.

While fewer students said that Service Learning increased their likelihood of transferring to a four-year college (57.9 percent agreed or strongly agreed) and that they believed Service Learning enhanced their interest in or ability to choose a major (62.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed), for both questions nonetheless well over half of those surveyed were in agreement. Additionally, it may be difficult for students to accurately answer longer-term questions about transfer or majors in the moment, as some are still undeclared, uncertain, and changeable. Also students with already-clear ideas about their transfer plans or majors would necessarily disagree that Service Learning helped them in these matters. As one student noted in the comment portion of the survey, “I liked the service learning, but I disagree with the questions because I was already sure about my major, etc.” To determine the extent to which Service Learning is helping Gavilan students choose majors and transfer, further study is probably needed.

The college has not been able to complete its own studies regarding the comparative advantages of Service Learning classes because our program is small, as is our college, and it is impossible for many classes to find control groups for comparison. Discussions with our former researcher, Randy Brown, have pointed up three obstacles to reliable data comparing Service Learning sections to like sections.

1. Most of our Service Learning classes are the only section of the class in question (Sociology 1B, Conflict Resolution, Archeology), rendering any comparisons virtually meaningless, as sections should be compared with other sections of the same class, or

   2. ALL sections of a given class are Service Learning (COMM 10), meaning there is no control class available, or

   3. Service Learning is used in one class (English 250) which is so targeted for various other interventions that, again, there is nothing useful as a control.

National—National data anticipates and supports our local findings; the research is unequivocal that engagement is key to student success, and Service Learning is a reliably successful means to engage students, including those who are from low-income or non-traditional backgrounds, and those from various under-represented population groups, including Hispanics. National research is both strong and clear that Service Learning aids student retention, persistence, and success. See:
Overview. Since 2010 Gavilan has included Service Learning in its Title V grant to improve Basic Skills education at the College. Several English 250 and a few English 260 classes have been taught as Service Learning sections, as have a number of other liberal arts and sciences classes. The grant has paid for two positions, an Instructional Liaison and a Community Liaison. We are waiting to hear in August 2015 whether a new Title V grant will continue our funding; in the meantime, we need continuity in our program that would be assured with college support. With deep understanding of the college’s need to use its funds wisely, we must explain why these positions are excellent investments, and essential to a safe and functional Service Learning program.

Gavilan’s 40 percent commitment to Service Learning is, in the Service Learning world, a thin shoestring. Four-year colleges and universities have entire centers with 3-10 staff people working to support Service Learning programs. Even community colleges in California have minimally one full-time position with one clerical support person (Mira Costa, Palomar, Evergreen DeAnza—which additionally uses students as paid staff). We have been able to make our own shoestring work because we are committed to our community, our faculty, and our students, and we work far more hours than the 20 a month required by the grant and by our reassigned time. We are also well organized and we have an excellent model, one being replicated elsewhere in California and Texas by faculty who have left Gavilan to create or support Service Learning programs elsewhere (Rice University, Hartnell College, Solano College, Foothill College.) We have given
technical support to fledgling programs at Evergreen College, Solano, and Hartnell Colleges. We also have extremely eager community organizations. (See some of their comments below.) At any given time, we have three to five new organizations in our service area looking for faculty to work with, and fifteen to twenty active community organizations that are working with students.

**Instructional Liaison.** Without the Instructional Liaison position, the following would not get done: training sessions that are geared towards helping teachers think through their own goals, design their Service Learning approaches, and customize their classes; follow-up help with specific assignments to ensure best practices are followed; follow-up to help teachers create optimal reflection opportunities for students, and to customize assessment and evaluation methods; troubleshooting when pedagogical issues arise in the classroom (a constant stream of such issues keeps the Liaison busy all semester); help in making Service Learning work with SLOs and PLOs for different teachers who have differing approaches; meetings to provide Service Learning faculty to share and improve their approaches; professional development activities designed to help all faculty understand the Whole Student by exposing faculty to community norms and conditions. Moreover, the Instructional Liaison cannot work without a Community Liaison, as it is extremely time consuming to do the work outlined below, and recruiting new teachers without having agency partners to offer as collaborators would be useless.

Trainings that are not in person cannot help faculty who have never done Service Learning figure out how to adapt the method to their classes, their assignments, and their students. Only deep thinking and skilled coaching can accomplish that.

**Community Liaison.** Without the Community Liaison, Service Learning would quickly die at Gavilan—but not without some potentially very risky death throes. The Community Liaison attends local events and fairs to look for agencies that might be candidates for partnership; the Liaison does a detailed intake and needs assessment to see if each potential agency is a good fit. (More than 100 agencies have been considered, and only about 40 have been good fits over the years.) A Service Learning model in which faculty persons are left on their own to find agencies in the phone book would result in problems, some of them potentially very serious to Gavilan’s liability. Most Gavilan faculty live outside the district and drive in, so they do not know our community. We have been told by faculty that without our support, they would not have time to implement Service Learning and would not feel comfortable finding their own agencies. Even for faculty in the area who would not object to finding their own agencies, the process is time-consuming and it is unlikely that our faculty would take the time to search out, interview, vet, and site-visit multiple agencies—most faculty use 2-6 different agencies per Service Learning class.

Agencies screened out by the Community Liaison have been screened out for good reasons: inadequate staff supervision, staff who are not trained to work with students, agency environment that is risky to students, agency staff who are inappropriate with students, agency staff who engage in discriminatory behavior towards our students, and agency clients who are not safe for students to work with due to anger or instability. Each of these problems has presented itself at least once (and some many times) in agencies that the Community Liaison has pre-screened out of our program; most of the time it takes an in-depth interview and site visit to uncover some of these problems. It is
imperative that careful good judgment be exercised in making partnership agreements with community organizations. Someone with time to make assessments and history of working in the community is really the only defense—but it’s been an excellent defense so far, as no major problems have arisen to date with programs screened into the Service Learning program.

So much depends on building trust and relationships, which is the main work of the Community Liaison. The Community Liaison also works with agencies to clarify their needs and define projects appropriate for students; creates and maintains a website listing for each active agency so faculty and students can “shop” for partners; checks in frequently with agencies to assure they are getting help they need; troubleshoots when agencies confront problems (a constant activity required in situations such as when a Gavilan student threatened to sue an agency, or when a Gavilan student allowed students to see a large bottle of oxycontin in his backpack, or when a client at an agency acted out physically towards others with Gavilan students present.) The Community Liaison person also sets up events on campus where agencies and faculty can meet and share ideas, and has facilitated some projects with partner agencies, such as Fresh On Tuesdays, an on-campus produce distribution through St. Josephs Family Center for low-income students. She is currently seeking to co-write a grant with local gang prevention groups, which are eager to work with Gavilan students. The Community Liaison also works with faculty to clarify their goals for Service Learning and to find new agencies, if necessary, for them to work with, or to match them with existing agencies. Since 2014, the Community Liaison has worked hard to find service options for students who come to Service Learning with criminal backgrounds, and who would thus be rejected by most agencies that work with vulnerable populations. With much hard work, a few community agencies have been identified to fill the gap so we can fairly serve all students in our classes. Finally, this year the Community Liaison has planned three Reality Tours under Staff Development Committee auspices to help Gavilan staff better understand the local communities our students are from, and the cycles of violence, poverty, and opportunity in our area. The Reality Tours were “transformational,” “powerful,” “eye-opening,” and “sobering,” according to faculty and staff who attended. Participants have become Service Learning advocates because they heard from agencies what a difference our students are making. In addition, the Service Learning team made a well-received presentation to the Liberal Arts and Sciences division meeting in March 2015, and often asks for Professional Development Day time to present to the broader college community about service, poverty, and community issues.

Gavilan Faculty on using Service Learning
From Tatiana Irwin, History:

Students who use Service Learning in my history classes make the connections between past and present and see the relevance of historical themes in their own communities. When students are in a Service Learning class they don't ask the "why does this matter" question because they can see the impact of history and the people in history on their own lives. Service Learning is important for differentiated learners who might need to do in order to learn. It is also the most meaningful way I can relate my Student Learning Outcomes to the course and the world around my students.

Students who use Service Learning learn better time management and organizational skills. They also learn to advocate for themselves and apply their
communication skills. Service Learning also helps my students with historical empathy. People who might have otherwise been perceived as irrelevant to them now have a shared history. Jane Addams and Dolores Huerta make sense as real people balancing work, life, and family just like my students. This makes my students more empathetic to their communities and one another overall.

I wouldn’t teach without Service Learning now that I have been exposed to it. I try and incorporate elements of it in my classes on other campuses that don’t have Service Learning and have seen the benefits.

From Jessica Gatewood, English Department

Service learning has been an amazing addition to my basic skills classes. As we read/write/discuss issues of social justice, world poverty, income inequality, and equity, students are able to -- through service learning -- see for themselves the needs of their communities; they are able to give back, reflect on their experiences, and tie their daily lives and communities to the work we cover in class. Really seeing the relevance of the material we cover and tying that material to their daily lives makes them passionate and determined to succeed. They stay in class, and they excel. More than that, they understand that what they cover in English is connected to what they cover in Sociology, and that Sociology is connected to Economics, and that Economics is connected to Administration of Justice, and that Administration of Justice is connected to other fields they study here at Gav, and that everything they study here at Gav is connected directly to their neighborhoods. Students who are connecting their college studies to their outsides lives are more likely to be successful students -- it breaks open the silo of the institution. Students need this. Gavilan needs Service Learning.

Service Learning has been life-changing for many of my students. Students who speak Spanish fluently are often drawn to the library in Hollister where they are able to help students with their homework. They reflect back to their own childhoods, remembering the times when they needed help with homework, but their own parents didn’t speak English, so they went without help. Now, they are changing the lives of kids in their communities by becoming that source of help for others. This is making them rethink their ideas about equity, about access to education, about success. They are critically thinking about their lives, their communities, and about how they can help to create change. As issues of equity and success become focal points for our college, we should be working to grow and improve those programs on campus that revolve around helping our students to better understand the terms we ourselves are embracing.

Students who walk into my class full of apathy walk out with an understanding that they have the power to help other people, to help their communities, to make real changes in the world. They get involved in donating to charities, they put together packages to send to Haiti, they change their majors from business to liberal studies because they realize they have the ability to change lives by working with kids. They even learn about important resources in the community that help their own families. More than once I’ve had students who have started working in the food pantry for Service Learning and have signed up for help themselves because their parents have lost their jobs -- they didn’t know about the help before my class, but now they don’t worry about going hungry.

I am planning to use Service Learning next semester in my English 260 class. It is such an important program, and my students become empowered, empathetic, strong critical thinkers when Service Learning is incorporated into my curriculum. Far from removing funding for service learning, we should be making it a priority on campus,
encouraging all departments to incorporate it into their classes, and taking the time to be the change we want to see in the world.

From Rey Morales, Biology

Service learning has had a huge impact on biology students’ success and retention. The Service Learning program has provided resources that allow Biology students the opportunity to learn first-hand the fundamental laws of science; it’s given them the opportunity to build intangible skills that allow them to become more constructive citizens of our community and it has allowed them to connect/reconnect with nature.

In addition, many of our Gavilan students have limited work experience. Service Learning opportunities help build experience, self-assurance, and it also helps strengthen their resume so that they can have better success in their future endeavors. Being able to have students work with professionals in their corresponding fields has allowed our students to connect with mentors in a way that no other program has endorsed. Through the Service Learning program, our students have earned the admiration and respect from community members; they have the resolution to roll up their sleeves and work alongside them knowing that experiential learning will solidify their academic success. SL program has allowed professionals in the field and community members to take an active role in educating our students. All of these efforts will not go unnoticed. Enhancing our academic learning and the students experience has encouraged many of our mentors/organizations return and become part of our Gavilan family and have become life long supporters of the college efforts.

Service Learning is an integral part of our Biology program. We have just begun to witness the benefits of service learning. Along with maintaining our collaborative efforts with local community organizations, the Biology program intends to utilize the SL program to help manage projects we initiated here on campus. For example, The Gavilan Arboretum, Native Garden and Outdoor classroom(s) will allow students the opportunity for ongoing experiential service learning not only for the Natural Science department but also for all the major disciplines on campus.

From Marilyn Chap, Sociology:

My students have benefited greatly from their participation in service learning in both my gender and social problems courses - but it is an ideal part of my social problems course. Students become much more invested in both their coursework and their work at the agencies. The research engaged in by groups at each service learning site across a period of weeks also teaches a high degree of collaboration and enables them to develop skills that later will serve them in excellent stead as they go on to other courses, and to their careers.

The material we address is reinforced in their service learning sites. It shows up particularly in their much heightened awareness of the social impacts of the social issues involved, and . Their ability to engage in both helping others, and a deeper analysis related to their own group research in the sites our course is connected with, proves to be of great personal meaning for almost all of the students, in addition to the enhanced academic growth they demonstrate. Many students go on to further volunteer efforts, and Gavilan's reputation is burnished by the engagement of these students in our local community.

I intend to keep using Service Learning, as it is one of the greatest adjuncts to the social problems course in particular that I could hope to have. My future students would
be very much more poorly served as students and as citizens of this community should they not have the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful program.

Incidentally, many schools are working on adding more to their service learning programs, due to the benefits to be gained. Certainly every school I have interviewed at has expressed an interest in either starting or further developing a service learning program. I would hate to see our own Gavilan service learning program not continue.

From Justina Buller, History

In the Spring of 2014, I taught a section of Women’s History, with a Service Learning (SL) component, at Gavilan College; during the same semester, at a different college, I taught the same class but without the SL component. This gave me the unique opportunity of directly comparing the effect of SL on student retention and their mastery of the subject matter. One of the biggest differences I noted was in class attendance; students in the SL section attended class more consistently than the non-SL section; many students noted that the SL component gave them the ability to feel that they brought something unique and valuable to each class discussion, because each student’s project was different. I have discovered that students often feel reticent to share and apply their own personal experiences to classroom discussions, but in an SL course they are given projects that force them to bring “officially sanctioned” outside experience to our classroom applications, and this gives them not only more confidence, but an interest in hearing what other students discover through their various projects.

The students in the Service Learning class were also much faster in coming to the realization that history is not a dead subject. This, I believe, is one of the most important and useful aspects about SL. Those students left the classroom with a sense that their community is living embodiment of historical forces, and that they now have specific tools that allow them to continue exploring this subject on their own. In short, I believe that Service Learning gives students both a sense of empowerment and obligation to their community that is hard to achieve in traditional classrooms.

Sam White, Associate Professor of English at Foothill College (formerly at Gavilan.)

When I think about retention and/or success among our students who have participated in Service Learning, I realize that it is the success of Service Learning that drives retention. Once students immerse themselves in the practice of giving back, they often develop a more profound sense of who they are, and how they matter in the world. Because they want to continue to make a difference, they usually conclude that education is what will provide the voice and platform needed to do this. When they continue their education, one consequence of this is that their self-confidence is strengthened as they become (more) educated about how the world really works, which, in turn, empowers them to want to effect some sort of change eventually. So, in the process of helping themselves, they end up helping our communities.

Aside from the sometimes obvious academic impacts associated with Service Learning, students are simply better people and members of society when they participate in this campaign. One reason I embraced Service Learning in the manner that I did is because of perceptions we often hold about students. At the onset of the semester, before we embark on our Service Learning “journey,” I would ask students to list stereotypes about young people that society projects or supports. Invariably, words such as lazy, irresponsible, selfish, disrespectful, etc. would emerge. This troubled me deeply; I felt that many wonderful, bright, caring, and passionate students were being wrongly characterized because of how younger folks are seen these
days. This was particularly true of the student athletes—a group often written off as *dumb jocks*. Witnessing the interactions between my students and the clients they served at St. Joseph’s Family Center was truly heartwarming, and I am certain that these young folks were making memories that will be with them for a lifetime. The simple act of handing out groceries may not seem like a lot, but it was clear during that last Thanksgiving when my students volunteered, that the families were truly impacted by the students’ generosity. Some of these students had never done anything like this before, which made this experience richer for all of us. When I think about what it means to be a teacher, this memory often comes to mind. Lastly, the mentoring process that goes on with Service Learning is an extremely valuable benefit for students. Careers have been made as a result of exposure to Service Learning.

I have seen the difference that Service Learning can make, and look forward to participating with my Foothill students—and faculty. Based on my observations, I believe that Gavilan has the best Service Learning model around, and I hope that any program that I am associated with is just as good.

**Importance to the Community.**

**From Mary Ann Sanidad, ESL Department:**

I believe my ESL 541 class and I participated in service learning three times...I felt the experience was very important to my students. Several things happened when they worked with [English native speaking] students: they were put in a situation where they worked side by side with an English speaker; they connected with someone who may or may not have had the same cultural identity but definitely had had different life experiences, yet they came to have an understanding and appreciation of one another; they made new friends. Although my students were afraid initially, they became very comfortable and enjoyed it. Not only did they have a valuable linguistic experience, but a socially enriching one as well. I am sad to hear that there is a possibility of no longer being able to benefit from these exchanges.

**From Kathy Baameur, ESL Department:**

English 250 students came to my ESL classroom every other Friday to facilitate and participate in class activities that reinforced the ESL student’s lessons. Each English 250 student lead a group of ESL students in these activities. This was a great experience for the ESL students as it gave them an opportunity to practice English and interact with mainstream students. This was invaluable for the ESL students who have a lot of anxiety and apprehension around interacting with and speaking to native English speakers. They formed friendships and gained confidence.

For the English 250 students, they gained a greater understanding of second language acquisition, and they enjoyed working with the ESL students - an opportunity they wouldn't have outside of Service Learning. There participation in the Service Learning gave them needed information for writing a paper about their experience and about second language acquisition.

Service Learning was a win-win experience. The Service Learning program is an essential part of every students’ learning experience. It can’t be replaced.

**From Chiquy Mequia, Morgan Hill City Centennial Recreation Center.**

We are desperate to get college students to help with homework at Village and Jasmine Square.
From Rachael Coronado Castro, Resident Services Manager, Eden Housing, Inc.

I am so sad to hear that funding for the service learning program is in jeopardy. The Service learning program has been an essential part of our afterschool program. Without the support of the Gavilan service learning program we may need to cancel our program due to lack of tutor support.

When we began our partnership eight years ago at the Sobrato Transitional center I never imagined the impact it would have on the families living there. At this site the partnership has been one of the keys to providing families the health and wellness needed to overcome serious social ills such as alcoholism and drug abuse. While the parents receive assistance at the center to battle their addictions, the children receive assistance from programs like the After school program to help them increase their opportunity for academic success and gain valuable social skills.

This Gavilan service learning program has provided 40 plus children with over 2000 hours of tutoring service. Our families in need would have had to pay roughly 46,000 dollars. This is a cost that our families who live in our affordable housing complexes just cannot pay.

Many of our children have increased their grades, their social skills and overall health in the family though the collaborative program. The program is in direct line with Eden housing’s mission, which is to “build and maintain high-quality, well-managed, service-enhanced affordable housing communities that meet the needs of lower income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Eden Housing recognizes the positive impact that a community can have on residents’ health and well-being.”

The program at Sobrato has been so successful that we began another program last year 2014, in Morgan Hill at the Crest Apartments. This year alone we were able to provide over 25 children with homework assistance. We had approx. 10 Gavilan students help with this program and provide over 200 Service learning hours. We just finished our program at the Crest apartments and the parents are already asking when the fall session will start.

It is my hope that the program continues to receive funding as it provides an invaluable service to the communities that need it most. The Gavilan service learning partnership, is at the heart of what makes it such a success. I am attaching a description of our after school program and of the responsibilities of the Gavilan service learning student for your reference. This program is based almost entirely on the support from the Gavilan service learning program. Without it our youth will not be able to receive the academic and life skills assistance needed to increase their opportunity for a brighter future.

From Sally Tiffany, Youth Services, San Benito County Library:

We have worked with Gavilan students from the Service Learning Program for the last 3-4 years. We are often in need of volunteers for our children’s programs and find that the Gavilan students are a great help. With more volunteers, we are able to offer a better volunteer/student ratio that is very beneficial to the children. At times, we can offer one on one support, which is ideal. I believe both the Gavilan students and our students gain from the collaboration. I feel that it is important for the Gavilan students--or any volunteer--to experience the direct result of seeing the children improve. The children in our program, of course, certainly benefit from the concentrated assistance. I certainly hope we can continue our partnership with the Service Learning Program!
From Pat Lawson North, director Vision Literacy, Santa Clara County:

Vision Literacy has supported students in the Service Learning program for approximately four years. The mission of Vision Literacy is: To assist every adult in the Bay Area who strives to improve their basis literacy skill to succeed in that goal. The Service Learning program is a perfect fit. Gavilan students are improving their own literacy skills and expanding their own vision of why education is important. They are models for many community members.

Service Learning student participation greatly increase the resources of Vision Literacy by tutoring adults, supporting community outreach in the community and by organizing events to build bridges from the campus to the community.

The collaboration is very important to Vision Literacy. The need for adult literacy resources in Gilroy is critical to the economic and education future of the next generations growing up in this community. Service Learning students, who volunteer their time, are changing their perspective of their own future by experiencing first hand the advantages of continuing their own education. Truly a valuable "Learn by Doing" opportunity.

Many Gavilan College students who have volunteered at Vision Literacy often open up to share their background of growing up in a family where their parents did not speak English and the impact on them. Parents wouldn't attend parent conferences, or award ceremonies because they didn't feel comfortable or know how to talk with others. The Gavilan Service Learning program provides new insights for students. Such as, real life experiences of working with an organization and community volunteers. Often meeting with residents of their own neighborhoods. Many who are struggling to survive due to limited reading and writing skills and feel trapped in low paying jobs.

Service Learning students often express that they want to be able to read to their children and have them speak English with confidence and prepared to learn when they enter school. They want to avoid the same struggles for their children that they had starting school, Service Learning students are the Change Agents for the current and next generation.

From Kim Meininger, Chamberlains Childrens Center, Hollister

Chamberlain’s Children Center empowers at-risk children in a home-like environment to heal from past trauma, discover their strengths, and develop the skills they need to achieve life-long success. Our service learning volunteers provide our children with valuable opportunities to develop relationships with adult role models, learn to trust people who come into their lives, and practice the social skills that make these relationships successful. During their time with us, SL volunteers participate in a wide variety of activities both in our school and our residential program. They aid our special education teacher with lessons and activities in the classroom, help children in our cottages with their homework, play with our children at recess and afterschool playtimes, and participate in dinner and nighttime routines. Some of these activities may seem mundane to a casual observer, but for our kids every activity provides learning experiences and life skills. Each SL volunteer is also an important model of how to be responsible with school and or work and gives the children an example of people who have goals and are working to further their own success in life.

We value the partnership with Gavilan Service Learning Program. It has been become an important part of the healing process for our children and has
provided us with outstanding employees as well. The program provides us with a steady stream of volunteers coming in to help our children practice fostering healthy relationships with adult role models. Many of our service learning volunteers have done so well during their time with us that we have gone one to hire several of them. Our children and our agency would be extremely disappointed if we lost this resource. It has been tremendously beneficial to our children as well as our agency as a whole.

From Cheryl Hugenor, Live Oak Adult Day Services, Gilroy

The Service Learning Program, since it started here a few years ago, it has been tremendously helpful both to Live Oak and to the students. The students often don’t have grandparents in their lives, and they truly bond with our seniors here, who tell the students over and over how nice, how smart, how helpful, etc. they are – I think it makes the students feel good about themselves. A few students have also told me over the time they have spent here has made them re-evaluate their future plans & made them interested in social services work or gerontology. The seniors love the intergenerational aspect of the program - they often don’t get to see their own grandchildren/great-grandchildren, and they thrive on the energy & enthusiasm that the students bring. When the students are here they help in all aspects of the program - they socialize, make newcomers feel welcome, assist with art projects, call Bingo, help with exercise class, dance with the seniors when we have a musical guest, and they think of fun projects for the seniors to do. Some students share their own talents by playing the piano or guitar, some bring a pet to visit, and others have actually been a featured guest speaker for the morning by sharing a particular life experience (one student served in Iraq & told us all about it - fascinating). Some students continue to drop by long after their required hours are finished, and we love to get updates from them on their lives. I always offer to write letters of recommendation for them for jobs, transfers to 4-yr. colleges, or scholarship applications - it's the least I can do after all they do for us!

From Gavilan Students

A sampling from a recent English 260 class:

1) While I was working at the Service Learning program, I got more than just a grade for my English class, I got many reasons to be motivated to continue with my studies. The first reason I got more motivated is that we all as second language learners struggle while we are acquiring a new language. At first I was very nervous about this service learning because my speaking skills are still bad. I thought it would be very hard for me to work in this service learning, although I knew that there would be ESL students who have been fighting with the same issue. However, while I was there, the things changed. I was very comfortable since all the ESL students were very friendly and they also were experiencing the same feelings I had. Caroline Gane, the teacher, also made me feel so good since she remembered me and some of my others classmates too. Working with the ESL program gave me another reason to be motivated to continue with my studies. It taught me that when people have determination, they can get whatever they want. All the ESL students are a good example of this since most of them are adult people who have been battling every day to come to school. However, they do not give up instead they are persistent and show a strong desire to acquire a new language to succeed in life.

2) This wonderful experience led me to meet new people who share the same interests as me. So this experience taught me to be more motivated in my education since I am not
the only one who struggles every day with my second language. Moreover, working with my partner and the entire group taught me that determination is the key to succeed in everything people want although there will be so many difficulties on the journey. To this point, this amazing program helped me to improve in my speaking skills which will be very helpful for my future classes.

3) Family and personal goals are factors that drive ESL learners to pursue their ambition of learning English. ESL students have to learn English since they emigrate from other countries. The reason why they decided to start a new life here is to provide a better life for their families. What really motivates these people to learn a new language while they work and take care of their families is their determination. During my service learning with the ESL students I notice that the love for their family and their desire to succeed is stronger than their fear to fail in their journey of acquiring English.

4) The instant ambience that I perceived there was full of brotherhood from the ESL students toward the English 250 students class. My experience was amazing and remarkable because I had the opportunity to interact with people who are facing the same experience that I just had one semester ago. In those meetings were fantastic to see the mix of feelings between the whole classes. We had Feelings of nervous and exciting emotions that encouraged us to talk, and got a faster and a good relationship in order to improve in get a better communication.

Another set from a recent English class:

1) Volunteering at Power School has taught me the importance of tutoring. It opened my eyes to see how many students rely on tutoring hours and how much it really helps them. Personally, it benefitted me because I’m majoring in child development, and this was a great experience for what is ahead of me in the future. For my final research paper, I can integrate what I have witnessed or experienced at Power School. I have closely observed the environment of the classroom, and how it effects students and their work performance.

2) When I first began to work with the San Benito County Library, I had easy communication with Sally, the coordinator of the homework club. I want to be an elementary teacher, so seeing how children are gives me insight. I learned a lot in the last couple of months about different environments children come from. Many children who come to the library for the homework club are self-motivated and others are motivated by where they come from. Understanding was an issue for many students whose home parents only speak Spanish. Children who have extra support are achieving more knowledge. Another thing I learned was to address a child who has a short attention span. I worked on staying more focused so that the children would be more focused. Without Service Learning, I wouldn’t have developed the techniques for helping children. Service Learning for some reason shows me how I was when I was little, and how I relate to most of the children today. I will incorporate my tutoring experiences with young boys to look at how boys approach asking for support in different ways than girls. From my observations, they tend to appear to be more distant. I want to research these differences further. Service Learning has helped me because I wish to have a minor in teaching for elementary kids. It has prepared me to have more patience and understanding of individual students. It helped me to
understand the thinking of children.

3) Working with Eden made me realize how much help second language children need. I got to see them grow little by little. It is sad when a kindergartner doesn’t know her ABC’s. I identify with these kids because I, myself, come from a Mexican family, and I know how hard it is to learn English and how hard it is when you need help with homework and you don’t have the support. I noticed that kids love to play and not do their homework. I think if you give children a time to play within their learning day, it will motivate them and help them to think freely. I will be discussing the importance of incorporating play in learning because I noted how kids have a new start and mindset with homework afterwards. Eden has helped me realize how so many people struggle, and it has made me want to go back and help them again. I want to show the kids that they can go to college and have a better future. It made me realize that a simple motivational pep talk can help the kids do better.

4) I have learned from this work in more ways than I expected. Working with Power School has made me realize how many young students need help with their education/homework. A lot of students don’t have enough support at home with homework. Seeing the first graders work so hard on homework motivated me to just put more effort into everything I do. If 6 and 7 year olds can do it without a lot of motivation at home, I should be able to do so as well. I don’t think I would have ever known how hard students work at Power School without attending. My research paper is going to have a main idea of the interconnected ways parents and program leaders can work together to help the students finish homework and reduce stress. Service Learning prepared me for my career. I want to work with children and now I see what it might be like. It honestly got me excited to start on my career path.

5) I benefitted from this work because the assistant director working at Power School saw my connection with the kids and asked me if I wanted to work there next school year!! I really want to do this. What I learned from working with the kids is how they motivate themselves when it comes to school or playing games. I also see how they encourage each other. I once saw this little boy telling his friend to finish doing his homework so they can play. I believe that I wouldn’t have the same insight without Service Learning. I would have never known about this program and the different things you can do to support children. I never knew why Power School was important to kids, but now I see why. I will use my observations at Power School as primary research. I have seen the level of engagement students have when working on computers. I want to think more about the benefits of technology for young students: computers, iphones, or any device which helps them learn. I will explore this further.

6) This semester I had the opportunity to help younger kids with their homework. They were able to see me as a leader/mentor. This means a lot because I feel like I created a safe space for them to just come up to me for help and feel comfortable with any questions or help they needed. I learned a lot, especially about motivation and some parenting issues. The leaders/mentors from Power School motivate the kids a lot to do all of their homework. They nurture them in every good way possible. Some kids and parents have issues, and by those I mean they expect them to do everything at Power School, so when they go home, they won’t have anything to do. I learned through my
interviews that being the main leader/mentor of a whole class of younger kids can be somewhat hard, stressful, and too much at times, especially when one is dealing with a full class of students that all need and want attention from that person. It is not an easy job at times. I guess this all prepared me to be really patient, no matter what. It got me more involved with kids. I help my little brother every day with his homework, and I also have a nanny job, which I love, and this experience with Power School and with these kids help me a lot in these other areas of my life.

7) Through my Vision Literacy interviews, I learned a lot about the fears and insecurities of adults when they are trying to learn a second language. This affects the whole family, especially when parents don’t speak English. There are many resources and much help for people learning a second language. What motivates them to go through this process is often family and the need for a better job. Because I am a second language learner, I understand the fears and insecurities and challenges these adults face. I have heard how students learn through things such as listening to music and watching t.v. shows in English. After my last interview, I have decided that I want to talk about the power of contextualized learning when learning a new language.

8) I saw how students benefited from me working with them. They made me feel like I was contributing to their learning. I also learned a few ways on how to make learning fun, which might benefit me later in life when I begin my career. I learned that parents have a lot to do with their kids’ motivation and how they learn. For example, when a parent comes in and says, “my child can’t do math,” that kid will not enjoy learning and will feel dumb. My research topic is about how to create a safe space for kids. Doing my interviews really drove me to ask this question: why are some kids too afraid to ask for help or to openly discuss issues. I would love to know how kids can feel comfortable. I know that at the program, the kids felt no judgment. When they couldn’t do something, I helped them through it. I said, “See, you’re smart, you can do it.” It would change their mood when it came to taking on a hard problem.

In Conclusion

The College, our students, and our community urgently need this program. It is popular with faculty and students, and highly effective at low cost. It is not viable without minimal funding for staff, but on very little money it can be sustained.

Please work with us to find a stable means to fund it.

May 2015 Service Learning Students’ Survey Results

Total respondents: 122 (note not all responded to all questions, so question totals are based on total response to that question)

41/33.6% Low income  60/49.1% Hispanic  9/7% students age 30+ 
8/6.5% students with disability
1. How many classes with Service Learning have you completed during your time at Gavilan College? **In one right now 57/46.7%**
   - 1 or 2: 27/22.1%
   - 3 or more: 25/20.4%
   - 6/4.9%
   - 11/9%

2. Do you believe that Service Learning helped you to stay in the class/es?
   - Strongly Agree: 23/21.5%
   - Agree: 60/49.5%
   - Disagree: 28/23.1%
   - Strongly Disagree: 10/7.4%
   **Agree overall: 68.5%**

3. Do you believe Service Learning helped you better understand the course material?
   - Strongly Agree: 29/23.7%
   - Agree: 67/54.9%
   - Disagree: 21/18%
   - Strongly Disagree: 6/4.9%
   **Agree overall: 78.6%**

4. Do you believe Service Learning helped you get a passing grade in the class/es?
   - Strongly Agree: 25/21%
   - Agree: 62/52.1%
   - Disagree: 25/21%
   - Strongly Disagree: 7/5.8%
   **Agree overall: 73.1%**

5. Do you believe Service Learning helped with your readiness for transfer to a four-year college?
   - Strongly Agree: 35/29.4%
   - Disagree: 51/42.8%
   - Strongly Disagree: 25/21%
   - 8/6.7%
   **Agree overall: 72.2%**

6. Do you believe Service Learning increased the likelihood that you will transfer to a four-year college?
   - Strongly Agree: 22/18.4%
   - Agree: 47/39.4%
   - Disagree: 42/35.2%
   - Strongly Disagree: 8/6.7%
   **Overall agree 57.8%**

7. Do you believe Service Learning increased your interest or excitement about getting a degree?
   - Strongly Agree: 33/27.7%
   - Agree: 48/40.3%
   - Disagree: 32/26.8%
   - Strongly Disagree: 6/5%
   **Overall agree: 68 percent**

8. Do you believe Service Learning enhanced your interest in or ability to choose a major?
   - Strongly Agree: 20/16.6%
   - Agree: 55/45.8%
   - Disagree: 34/28.3%
   - Strongly Disagree: 11/9.1%
   **Overall agree: 62.5%**