Student Civic and Community Engagement at the University of Minnesota: Findings from the 2017 Student Experience in the Research University Survey

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Compiled by Kateryna Kent in cooperation with the Office of Institutional Research
This report presents findings from the Civic and Community Engagement Module of the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey, which was administered in 2017 to undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. The University of Minnesota received responses from approximately 11,870 students in 2017 (~41% response rate). The report is organized according to student responses related to their participation in community service activities, course-based service learning, and other community-focused experiences. Key findings include:

- **Participation in Service**: Findings demonstrate that approximately 27% of survey respondents who answered questions in the civic and community engagement module (n = 4,402) participated in community service on campus and 50% participated off campus during the 2016-2017 academic year.

- **Importance of Opportunities to Engage in Community Service**: The majority of students (79%) agree that opportunities for community service while in college are important to them. Additionally, 89% of students agree that opportunities to connect academic work with community-based experiences are important to them.

- **Involvement in Community Service**: Students are most likely to report that the reasons they became involved in community service include becoming a better citizen and community participant and because they hold a belief in the cause.

- **Areas in Which Students Volunteer**: Students are more likely to volunteer in organizations focused on education, and social issues. The top organizations in which students volunteer include Feed My Starving Children, Boys and Girls Club, and Pratt Community Schools.

- **Course-Related Community Service**: Twenty-four percent of students indicated that they had a service learning experience related to their courses. Overall, students listed 100 courses in which they had conducted community service work.

- **Community-Focused Experiences**: Students were more likely to have been engaged in experiences for job or career development (n=543), charity (n=328), and community development (n=287).
Table of Contents

Student Civic and Community Engagement at the University of Minnesota: Findings from the 2017 Student Experience in the Research University Survey

2017

Executive Summary ............................................................ 2
Participation in Community Service .................................. 4
Time Spent on Community Service .................................. 4
Interest in Community-Focused Activities ......................... 4
Importance of Opportunities ............................................. 5
Reasons for Becoming Involved in Community Service ........ 6
Areas in Which Students Volunteer .................................. 7
Course-Related Community Service/Service-Learning .......... 9
Community-Focused Experiences ...................................... 10
Class Activities .............................................................. 12
Civic Engagement .......................................................... 12
Participation in Community Service (Module)

“During this academic year, have you done community service either on and off campus?”

The figure below is drawn from the Community and Civic Engagement module. About 27% of students who completed the module responded that they had completed community service on campus during the 2016-2017 academic year; 50% indicated that they had participated in community service off campus.

Time Spent on Community Service (Module)

“Thinking about your participation in all forms of community service, which includes service through clubs, courses, and one-time events, please estimate how many total hours of service you completed this academic year.”

More than one-third of students indicated spending 1 to 10 hours on community service for the last academic year, 23% spent 11 to 20 hours, 26% spent 21 to 50 hours, 10% spent 51 to 100 hours, and 5% spent over 100 hours.

Interest in Community-Focused Activities

“To what extent has participation in community-focused activities at this university influenced your desire to continue community-focused activities after you graduate?”

Fifty-seven % of students indicated that their participation in community service influenced their desire to participate after college to some extent, 21% to a great extent, and 22% not at all.

Figure 1. Student participation in community service either on campus (n=4,402) and off campus (n = 4,402).

Figure 2. Number of hours spent performing community service or volunteer activities per week (n = 11,518).

Figure 3. Students’ estimate of total hours of community service completed for the academic year (n = 2,419).

Figure 4. The extent to which participation in community-focused activities influenced students’ desire to continue community-focused activities after they graduate (n = 1,736).
The majority of students (79%) agree that opportunities for community service are important to them, while 21% disagree that opportunities for community service are important to them.

Figure 5. Students’ level of importance for community service opportunities in college (n = 4,364).

The majority of students (89%) agree that opportunities to develop their leadership skills while in college are important, while 11% disagree that opportunities to develop leadership skills in college are important to them.

Figure 6. Students’ level of importance for opportunities to develop leadership skills while in college (n = 4,361).

The majority of students (89%) agree that opportunities to connect their academic work with community-based experience are important to them, while 11% disagree that opportunities to connect academic work with community-based experience are important to them.

Figure 7. Students’ level of importance for opportunities to connect academic work with community-based experience (n = 4,358).
Reasons for Becoming Involved in Community Service

“If students responded that they had participated in community service, they were then asked to indicate the significant reasons they became involved in community service. Students could select more than one significant reason for involvement. The most-selected reasons include to become a better citizen and community participant (81%), a belief in the particular cause (76%), a unique or interesting opportunity arose to participate (70%), and change conditions in the community (68%).

Figure 8a. Reasons students became involved in community service.

Figure 8b. Reasons students became involved in community service.
Areas in Which Students Volunteer

“What was the focus of the organization where you did community service?”

In the 2014 revised SERU questionnaire the areas of focus of the organizations where students did community service were collapsed. The focus area ‘Education’ includes child care, education K-12, higher education, tutoring, and mentoring. ‘Health’ includes agriculture/nutrition, health, mental health, substance abuse. Focus area ‘Social issues’ includes civil rights/human rights, disability, diversity, housing/homelessness, hunger, immigrants, seniors/elder services, women’s issues, social justice. ‘Environment’ includes animal welfare, environment/sustainability. The largest areas of focus where students conducted community service in 2017 SERU include education (n = 1104) and social issues (n = 1104), health (n = 926), and environment (n = 417). Students could select more than one option for this answer.

Figure 9. Focus of organizations in which students conducted community service (students could select all that apply).
Areas in Which Students Volunteer

“Please name up to three organizations and their location where you participated in community engagement during this academic year.”

The top ten organizations in which students reported volunteering in 2016-2017 are listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number of References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feed My Starving Children</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratt Community Schools</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Brothers, Big Sisters</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota Children’s Hospital</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Harvest</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairview Hospital</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennepin County Medical Center</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald McDonald House</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students listed 100 unique courses that had a service learning component through which they had become involved in community service. The most frequently cited courses are listed below. Additionally, 24% of students indicated that they had been involved in a course with a service-learning component (Figure 10), and, of those who indicated enrollment in a service-learning course, the average hours of participation are located in Figure 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAD 3971*/</td>
<td>Leadership Minor: Field Experience</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLPD 3306/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA 3971</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL1501W*</td>
<td>Literature and Public Life (WI)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDHD/PSTL1525W</td>
<td>First-Year Inquiry: Multidisciplinary Ways of Knowing (WI)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESPY 3011W*</td>
<td>Ethics in Natural Resources (WI)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAN 3401*</td>
<td>Latino Immigration and Community Service</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSOS3104*</td>
<td>Global and Diverse Families</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC4966W*</td>
<td>Sociology Major: Project Seminar (WI)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLHS3402W*</td>
<td>Capstone Project in SLHS (WI)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDHD3001</td>
<td>Exploring the Teaching Profession I</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL3741*</td>
<td>Literacy and American Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates a course with a service-learning attribute

“During this academic year, how many times have you enrolled in a course that had a service-learning component?”

Figure 10. Frequency of enrollment in courses that have a service- learning component (n = 4,390).

“What was the average number of total service hours for the service-learning courses you took?”

Figure 11. Average number of hours for service-learning course (n = 1,036).
Community-Focused Experiences

“To what extent have you been involved in the following community-focused experiences during this academic year?”

Community-focused experiences include internships and field study, rather than individual course-related experiences. The areas in which students were more likely to participate at least one term include internship or clinical practicum experience (24%), academic field study (17%), and study abroad or other internationally-based experience (14%).

Figure 12. Student participation in other community-focused experiences.
Community-Focused Experiences

"Which of the following best characterizes the nature of your community-focused experiences during this academic year?"

The community-focused experiences in which students were most likely to engage include job experience or specific career development (n=543), charity (n=328), community development (n=287), and social change (n=276).

Figure 13. Student engagement in various community-focused issues or activities.
Class Activities

“How often have you been asked to (or how often do you) acknowledge personal differences?”

Students reflect on their responsibility to acknowledge personal differences more often outside of the classroom than they are asked to do so in the classroom.

Figure 14. The frequency in which students have been asked to reflect on how often they are asked to acknowledge personal differences in the classroom and outside of the classroom (n = 4,298 and 4,294).

“How often have you been asked to (or how often do you) act on community or social issues?”

Students act on community or social issues outside of the classroom more often than they are asked to do so in the classroom.

Figure 15. The frequency in which students have been asked to act on community or social issues in the classroom and in which they do so outside of the classroom (n = 4,268 and 4,267).

Civic Engagement

“To what extent has your participation in community-focused activities while attending this campus enhanced your desire to continue studying at this campus?”

Seventy-eight percent of students agree that their participation in community-focused activities while attending this campus enhances their desire to continue studying at this campus.

Figure 16. The extent to which participation in community-focused activities enhanced students’ desire to continue studying at this campus (n = 1,736).