



In Service to Discipline, University, and Society: Expanding the Role of the Faculty Through Service Learning

Public service has come into the limelight recently as Americans have been called upon to attend to the needs of fellow citizens. **Since their inception, postsecondary institutions have been in the service of the larger society**, whether they serve as the testing ground for free speech, arrive at cures for disease, develop sophisticated weaponry, prepare teachers, or groom students for futures in an increasingly complex world. In a very real way, American postsecondary faculty members have been engaged in some variety of service since the founding of Harvard University in the early 1600s. **More direct community service has played an elemental role in the careers of faculty members in postsecondary institutions across the United States, one that has grown over time in partnership with research and teaching.** In most cases, however, service has taken a backseat to other responsibilities of the professoriate, especially in institutions that place weighty emphases on research and publishing.



The changing face of community service learning has presented faculties with new opportunities and challenges. **No longer is it acceptable to send the ardent student into the field to “go forth and do.”** Instead, the academy has compelled its membership to design courses and research around the service learning experience that enrich education for undergraduates and graduate students alike. The effect of this movement—whether intended or not—has been to **overlap scholarly responsibilities in a way that enables professors to pursue innovative lines of research and simultaneously enhance their proficiency at undergraduate instruction.**

Programs like ArtsBridge offer unique opportunities for faculty members to see the direct impact of their works and share them with students and peers as well as members of the larger community. **Through directed action research, scholars are able to apply solutions to real world problems and open the university to the public as an important resource.**

Since the inception of ArtsBridge, **faculty members across the University of California system have joined together in a concerted effort to preserve arts education in our public schools, providing guidance and inspiration to undergraduate and graduate scholars working with children and young adults.** In many cases, University professors have worked directly with teachers in providing professional development and support, participated in the development of state standards for the visual and performing arts, or contributed service to arts education organizations. **Academic administrators have also assumed important roles by helping to shape the role of the research university in community service learning,** encouraging ArtsBridge to document their experiences and studies in academic and lay journals and emphasizing the importance of service in the retention and tenure process.

Through service learning programs like ArtsBridge, faculty members help **redefine the priorities of higher education,** gaining keen insight into the needs and abilities of the communities that support it, and reify the **commitment of the University to serve the larger society in which it exists.**