REACHING OUT: Institute for East African Collaboration Links DePaul, Kenya

In December of 2004, the Steans Center co-sponsored a group of 17 DePaul faculty and staff who traveled to Nairobi, Kenya to explore the possibility of working with Vincentian organizations in that country. The trip, which built on a few efforts to link the university to East Africa dating back to the 1980s, offered a first-hand view of the overwhelming needs of many people in the country—and suggested great potential for DePaul to make a difference. "We learned that the Vincentians in Kenya had a tremendous commitment to the country and really wanted to work with us," says Michael Skelley, Associate Professor in the School for New Learning. "When we came back from our trip, we were inspired—and knew we wanted to build on what we learned."

The group's experience led to the creation of the Institute for East African Collaboration as part of an initiative to locate service programs in areas of the world that are persistently marginalized both economically and socially. The institute, which is co-sponsored by the Steans Center, is guided by the values inherent in the Vincentian mission of DePaul University, which includes solidarity with the poor.

One Kenyan who has participated in several events held by the institute is optimistic about this project. "I am encouraged because I see a relationship being built between DePaul and people and organizations in Kenya," says Rev. Lennosio Lusabe, a Vincentian priest in Kenya who shared his experiences with the Institute last year while pursuing a master's degree in social justice at the Catholic Theological Union. "We will discover together new ways to work together and collaborate." In less than two years, the Institute has developed and supported projects related to HIV/AIDS, the lack of computer infrastructure, and future opportunities for experiential learning in Kenya.

HIV/AIDS Project
Gary Harper, a Professor of Psychology at DePaul, has developed a program with the Daughters of Charity in Kenya to offer HIV/AIDS training for professional schools and clinics in several communities, as well as an education program on HIV/AIDS for Catholic schools. Harper has been doing domestic HIV work for the past 20 years, including frontline intervention, policy and research. In Kenya, he and psychology graduate student Audrey Bonga found myriad opportunities to develop prevention programs, offering brief HIV prevention workshops for youth, peer educator training and focus groups that help define and tailor HIV prevention materials.

Technology
Meanwhile, John Rogers, Associate Professor in the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems (CTIS), led a contingent that focused on connecting people in East Africa to the rest of the world through computer technology. "I was surprised how there was virtually no infrastructure for so many people in urban areas," Rogers says. "It would be good for our students to eventually see that—so they can see what a community very different than Chicago looks like." Rogers will go on an exploratory trip this June with other DePaul faculty and is trying to help arrange a study abroad trip to Kenya for December, 2007. Another effort, involving CTIS Assistant Professor James Yu will explore pilot projects in wireless communication in Kenya.
Technology and Service Learning:
Students Gain Experience, Benefit Communities

DePaul students in a computer class look for real-world experience for the applications they are learning. Meanwhile, a community group lacks the technical expertise or resources to develop a website.

Now, through a growing partnership between the Searsos Center and the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems (CTI), students and communities both get what they need.

For the last five years, service learning courses have been offered through CTI and Searsos - including five courses offered this Spring Quarter through the partnership. Meanwhile, Searsos also provides support for faculty and the creation and execution of projects as well as follow-up for many other classes. In recent months, a wide variety of projects have resulted through this partnership, including a digital cinema project, in which a DePaul class developed a 12-minute video for Alternatives, Inc., a program serving youth that is based in Uptown, and a data analysis project that helps organizations assess who they serve.

Searsos also funds a graduate student at CTI, Marshall Haselar, who oversees technical projects in CTI courses. "We find out the technical requirements of a community-based organization and watch that with the class," explains Haselar, who works as a liaison with students, professors and community organizations. "It can be a completely win-win situation - communities get what they want, and our students get a tremendous amount of experience.”

Meanwhile, CTI master’s student Robert Garcia also contributes to the process in a significant way, since he has primary responsibility over the servers Searsos and CTI have dedicated to community projects.

Real-world experience
In CTI Assistant Professor Theresa Steinbach’s “E-Commerce Application Models” class last Winter Quarter, students designed a website for the Women’s Sewing Cooperative, a program of Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries also in the Uptown community on Chicago’s north side.

The Women’s Sewing Circle faced a dilemma: It had products to sell - including aprons, smocks, and “bibble covers” - but no way of selling its merchandise over the web. Students in the class built features on the organization’s website that create an easy-to-use method for visitors to purchase products. "Students came up with an analysis that suited the organization,” Steinbach says. “They also had to learn how to communicate with the client on many levels and ask thorough questions about what they needed."

The class assigned Matthew Panico, a senior majoring in E-commerce Technology, to be project manager and work directly with the client. “This class was fulfilling on all levels,” Panico says. “I hadn’t taken a class like this before, and found it was rewarding to support an organization that under typical circumstances could not have afforded this kind of work.” The web-based shopping cart he and other students created enables visitors to the website to sign in and keep track of what they buy, while providing IRSB with the ability to track who bought what items. Catherine Liberati, Women’s Program Coordinator for the organization, worked closely with the class. “I was surprised when they called me to view the work they had done,” she says. “I thought it would take much longer, and the students I worked with were very skilled. Their work looked so original. I cannot thank the class and professor enough.”

Searsos and CTI are just beginning to explore what this partnership can offer and have also developed strong links with other organizations, including the Information Technology Resource Center, a Chicago-based organization that supports Community Technology Centers throughout the city.
Through CTI projects, DePaul students, faculty, and Steans Center staff have been able to deepen pre-existing partnerships with community-based organizations, such as Arts of Life. Students in service learning courses have worked with the art studio for developmentally disabled adults for a number of years. This Spring Quarterly, E-Commerce students designed an updated website for Arts of Life, one that allows the organization to sell greeting cards-based on the artists’ paintings—over the web.

"The potential of this work is great, because this partnership provides an infrastructure for students who want to get real-world experience," says CTI Associate Professor John Rogers, who teaches the service learning class "Software Projects for Community Clients." "These projects provide an important way for students to learn new skills, gain hands-on experience—and to make a difference to a community."

DePaul students present "The Paulo Freire Pedagogy"

Eighteen people from DePaul—15 students and three staff members—attended the COOL Media National Conference at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee the weekend of March 3-5. The conference is the largest convening in the country of campuses involved in community service, social justice, and activism. More than 1,500 people attended the event, which featured over 200 workshops on a wide range of topics, including service and service learning, coalition building, advocacy, and issues like global health and public health. Next year’s conference will be in Chicago, hosted by DePaul and the Steans Center, the weekend of March 21-23, 2008.

Breakout session to discuss upcoming conference details

Billie Drakeford, a senior majoring in business administration, made a presentation at the conference with two of her peers. Their presentation, "Transforming Social Engagement: The Paulo Freire Pedagogy," was developed after their recent trip to Brazil sponsored by DePaul’s Master in Public Service program. During the trip, the students visited Non-Governmental Organizations and learned about Freire’s theory of Liberation Theology, especially as it relates to education. "This author and subject can provide a context for how people in urban areas live," Drakeford says. "I think it can help students doing service learning make their services more effective." Drakeford adds that the COOL Conference offered a great chance to reflect and learn about service learning as well as activism. "I had an opportunity to see the impact other students have made and to network with them," she says.
M3C FELLOWSHIP

The Midwest Campus Compact Consortium (M3C) Citizen-Scholar Fellowship program is a nine-state initiative led by Wisconsin Campus Compact that integrates education with civic engagement. This year, 13 DePaul students are M3C Fellows.

"The money we get through the program is not the main point - it's basically the experience, being able to make a difference in someone's life."

—Tiara Collum

The M3C Program is only offered to college students fitting one or all of the following characteristics: first-year, first generation, or low-income. Fellows are asked to complete 300 hours of service in a calendar year.

M3C Fellow Charlene Rhinehart tutors Visitation students after school three times per week.

Tiara Collum, a freshman majoring in Secondary Education, works at Visitation Catholic Elementary School in Englewood. Through this program, she is responsible for tutoring students in math, science, reading and other subjects. On Fridays, she and other Fellows in the program gather at DePaul for reflection sessions, a chance to address issues related to their experience. “I am learning through this experience that a person is not defined by his or her appearance, social status, what school you go to, or how much education you have,” she says. “A person is way more than that.” Collum adds that “the money we get through the program is not the main point - it's basically the experience, being able to make a difference in someone's life.”

The M3C Program at DePaul is a partnership of the Steans Center, the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, Student Support Services, and the McNair Scholars Program.

Continued from cover

Reaching Out: DePaul-Kenya

School for New Learning Degree Program
Another key development is the more than $500,000 in external funding that will make it possible for DePaul to run a School for New Learning degree program in partnership with Tangaza College in Nairobi, Kenya. The DePaul degree would be targeted at reaching people from Africa who would come to Nairobi to study. The program will offer a bachelor's degree focused on management and leadership for people working in development organizations.

Support for Organizations in Kenya
Skelly adds that another project would involve faculty and staff in working directly with Kenyans Educating Youth, a Vincentian organization that educates children living in poverty. “Faculty and staff would help them in terms of financial development, fundraising, planning and resource development,” Skelly said. “This would be service work for faculty and staff - and create the foundations for us to have students involved in that. We want to create relationships with these groups.”

http://cbsl.depaul.edu
As I think about departing as the executive director of the Steans Center, I am compelled to reflect on the last seven and a half years. Since I began the community-based service-learning (CBSL) program in October 1998, the field has grown considerably. Service-learning is no longer educationally questionable, but rather recognized as a primary mechanism for involving institutions of higher education in the well-being of their surrounding communities. I am proud of the contributions that the Steans Center and DePaul have made to the practice and the literature of the field. Not only has the Center grown DePaul’s CBSL program from 22 courses and 230 students to 175 courses and 2,500 students, but has developed and supported a range of placement-based, project-based, and research courses across the University’s curricula. We now consistently support innovative, community-based research and projects when they involve faculty and students working together to produce knowledge or intellectual and artistic products that a community partner has defined as important.

The Center has developed DePaul’s Community Service Studies program, which has simultaneously anchored the Center in DePaul’s curriculum and provided an outlet for Center staff to model excellent service-learning pedagogy, including teaching strategies in community settings. It has created extraordinary student development opportunities through its community-based Federal Work Study programs, its Jumpstart program, its employment of service-learning coordinators, and the McCormick Tribune Community Internship Program. It has developed the DePaul Community Service Scholars Program, an exciting, cohort-based new student scholarship program. All of this activity has led to national recognition when U.S. News and World Report named DePaul’s service-learning programs as one of the best in the nation.

If there is one thing that I have learned through this work, it is that community engagement initiatives in higher education institutions are most successful when they align closely with institutional missions and strategic plans. The Steans Center’s success lies largely in its ability to integrate DePaul’s institutional priorities and its Vincentian identity with three important stakeholders: faculty and students and communities.

The Steans Center has built a strong foundation for itself. The staff is creative, dynamic, and smart. I leave as executive director knowing that the Center will continue to distinguish itself and DePaul in the area of civic engagement and community-based learning. It has truly been a privilege to have served as the leader for such an exciting enterprise.

Laurie Worrall, Ed.D.
Associate Vice President
Academic Affairs

Irwin W.
Steans Center
Mission Statement
The Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning provides educational opportunities grounded in Vincentian community values to DePaul students. The Center seeks to develop mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships with community organizations in order to develop a sense of social agency in our students through enrollment in CBSL courses, community internships and placements, and community-based student employment.

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McCORMICK INTERNSHIP

The McCormick Internship program, which is supported by a $500,000 endowment from the McCormick Tribune Foundation, funds the highest rung of DePaul’s Undergraduate Ladder of Civic and Social Engagement. The program gives students a hands-on experience with a community organization in Chicago.

Students can craft their own work experience through the internship for one, two or three quarters. Participants in the program work an average of ten hours per week for ten weeks in the internship and receive a $1200 stipend per quarter for the program. This year, five DePaul students participated in the program. "This internship helped give me the chance to work with youth and teach them that their voice is powerful," says Erin Timmy, a senior majoring in Women’s Studies and Psychology who has conducted outreach for the nonprofit group Females United for Actors, helping the organization broaden its support around the city.

"I am working in an area I care about, and that’s really important to me," says Timmy. "Students typically get a faculty member to recommend them for the program and work with groups they have a relationship with through work with a faculty member, a community-based service learning course, volunteering, or in other ways. Any student can apply for the program, application information can be found at our website."

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