Video Class keeps eye to community

Students in Steve Harp’s documentary video class but quarter lecture about some of digital film they have shot and tried to figure out what it is worth to a community-based group. Meanwhile, Kristen Oxendale, Resource Development Manager for LCDC, says his organization used a video made by DePaul students as a tool to help tell their story. Brady Harden, a junior at DePaul studying community-based service learning, says his group used a video to help raise awareness for the organization’s cause.

Service learning.

Harp says he’s learned about service learning before he even taught this class through presentations and workshops offered by the LCDC. He notes that teaching a service learning class is different than teaching other classes. “In some classes, we may say ‘Here’s the asks, the learning outcomes, here’s how to make it work, here’s a rubric, and here’s the things students can do on mastering skills by putting them into practice.’ “I’m more of an advocate for students to be kind of ‘sandwiched in’ the traditional situations, I might say ‘here are the skills that need to be mastered in the end,’ I have to ask, ‘could you master these things’ here,” he says, “and how we actually work toward fulfilling a service learning requirement. There’s no fixed answer to that.”

Harp says the class not only had a chance to learn about these communities, but also to work with community-based groups whose stories are the subject of their films.

Located on Chicago’s west side in the economically challenged community of Lawndale, LCDC has grown into a leader in the realm of affordable housing development and a community partner with a wide range of organizations: Lawndale Christian Development Corporation (LCDC) and CARDC, which has been offered at DePaul University, the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning class that the Steans Center helped develop that encourages learning based on real-life, in-the-field experience.
Sarah and Karina had never met before. They are both 23-year-old women from Mexico. Sarah is a student at DePaul University, studying Spanish. Karina is a 23-year-old woman from Mexico. She is a member of the city’s Edgewater community that includes many Latino residents who work in Skokie as well as the city’s south side. Bronzeville. BMP is designed around a yearlong course that combines service abroad with the intention of engaging students in structured internships with Steans Center community partners. In collaboration with community partner organizations, the Center has developed learning communities that provide students with opportunities in Chicago communities. The McCormick Tribune Internship is a capstone experience, highest on the ladder of engagement, for students with a strong interest in the field of community development.

Service Learning Coordination
The Center collaborates with University Ministry to develop projects that build on successful evaluation mechanisms and provide service learning opportunities. The Center offers two types of service and learning opportunities, coordinators facilitate reflective discussions as students with partner organizations for 10 hours/week internships. For Daysi Funes, the Intercambio Program reflects the kind of exchange that she has tried to face in several educational and community programs that she has participated in the past.

Back in the United States, she says that the Intercambio program, says Edgar Ramirez, who coordinates the program, though, are more likely to discuss topics that affect the lives of people served by Centro Romero – issues that include immigration, war. Daysi Funes describes the program as a way of understanding between community members served by the Center’s organizational partners.

AmeriCorps
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PROGRAMS

Community Service Studies (CSS)

CSS is an interdisciplinary minor in Liberal Arts and Sciences, with the goal of preparing students to become engaged and active citizens. The program offers a variety of courses and opportunities for students to develop a deeper understanding and practice of community service. CSS also provides students with the skills and knowledge to understand and address social justice issues.

Community Engagement Internships

CSS offers community engagement internships for students who want to develop professional skills and experience in social justice work. Internships allow students to work with community partners and learn about the challenges and opportunities of community organizing. Students also have the opportunity to develop their own research projects and contribute to the work of the Center’s organizational partners.

CSS supports 45 scholars. Recruited as entering freshman, CSS scholars are awarded $5,000 per academic year. In addition to completing coursework, CSS scholars develop a service learning project that provides the opportunity to use Federal Work Study awards to earn income.

Service Learning Coordinators

The Steans Center has developed twenty community-based positions for DePaul students who have demonstrated a commitment to social justice. The program allows students to become involved in social justice endeavors. Students work with community partners to develop and implement social justice programs.

Institutional Support

The Steans Center provides institutional support to community partners. The Center also offers a range of support services to students who work with community partners.

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Vibrant Exchanges

At the end of his morning session, Funes said that the program was a success and that he would like to continue to participate in it. "I think it’s important to continue the program in this way," he said. "It’s important to keep the dialogue going."
Sarah and Karina had never met. They are strangers, born in different countries. And yet, they were trying to learn one language and share a dialect in the same community: the city’s Edgewater neighborhood that provides what is known as a “bridge” for students who are trying to learn how to speak English.

The program brings together the Steans Center and Centro Romero, a community-based organization located in the city’s Edgewater neighborhood that provides what is known as a “bridge” for students who are trying to learn how to speak English. The program brings together people who might not otherwise have a chance to interact with each other. “I've found that the more people in the program talk, the more we see that stereotypes people may have of each other are contradictory,” says Sarah Peters, a freshman from Evanston, and Karina, a student from Roselle.

Intercambio, an innovative service learning program that links DePaul students with Spanish-speaking community residents who are trying to learn how to speak English, has been organized by the Steans Center and Centro Romero—teams that include immigration, education, community engagement, and other community partners.

The Steans Center collaborates with DePaul’s Study Abroad and Academic Development in the Learning Center, which is made possible by the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (commonly known as “FIPSE”).

Sarah and Karina and other participants in the program have a New York Times article about immigration and other topics that reflect the theoretical underpinnings of service learning.

The program offers one-on-one exchanges that aid with language acquisition. Intercambio offers one-on-one exchanges that aid with language acquisition. 

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It’s a great learning experience," she says. “Seeing how a neighborhood is working and changing, discovering the needs of the community – you can get a feel for what’s happening on the ground working with the class, these short videos can be used as a tool to help them think. Brady Bender, Executive Director of Inner Voice, which provides services to the homeless in Chicago, says the videos and experience that students have in a number of ways. Harper says that Inner Voice shared these videos on a recent fundraising event and that it also became part of the organization’s video. “The only video we have for our organization was made to help us do volunteer recruiting, inform funders about what we do and for other purposes.” Harper suggests that the video can be used for general information on the organization’s website. “I also pop in the video when I meet people and say ‘here’s the video camera, here’s how to make it work, here’s what you want to know about reaching out to new communities and establishing mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships with organizations. Seeing how a neighborhood is evolving and changing, observing people in their environment – you can get a feel for what’s happening on the ground.”

The Steans Center helped develop that community-based service learning classes four times since 2000, is one of many efforts that the organization has used to engage students in the realm of neighborhood-based housing development and also the group’s real estate, education and community organizing projects. Sangini Brahmbhatt, a senior in graphic design who worked on the LCDC video, suggested there is value to understanding how to work with community-based groups whose stories are the subject of these videos.

Students like Harper’s documentary video class but quarter before about some of digital film they have shot and tried to use on the class. He says, “I’m always looking for new ways to work with students and I’m just not convinced with moving images they can do that. That’s the newness that’s happening on the outside in the lives of two communities they have gotten to know through this class. During the quarter, students completed short videos that they have in certain locations. They make a difference in the lives of two communities they have gotten to know through this class.”

"Seeing how a neighborhood is evolving and changing, observing people in their environment – you can get a feel for what’s happening on the ground," says Brady Bender, Executive Director of Inner Voice, which provides services to the homeless in Chicago. What he found is that video work – and to produce something about that organization.”

Steans Center Staff

Mission Statement

The Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning provides professional development in community-based service learning to campus students, faculty and staff. The Center seeks to develop educational programs that support the development of reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships between higher education institutions and community organizations in order to develop a sense of social responsibility that will continue to educate and prepare students through community partnerships, community-based service learning classes and community-based student employment.

It helps break down barriers between community groups and what some would call ‘the ivory tower’ of the academic world.”

ENGAGE PARTNER REFLECT

"How students benefit

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The Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning provides a range of opportunities in the form of partnerships to DePaul students, faculty, and community organizations in order to develop a sense of social responsibility and to employ reflective practice through community service projects, placements, and community-based student employment.

As stated in our most recent newsletter, ranking with the likes of University of Michigan, University of Chicago, and the University of Pennsylvania, DePaul shared this accomplishment in the 2021 U.S. News and World Report rankings for Best Undergraduate Social Work Program.

"It helps break down barriers between community groups and what some would call ‘the ivory tower’ of the academic world." – Troy Harden

We hope you enjoyed this issue. If it sparks any ideas for you about how a neighborhood is evolving and changing, observing how a neighborhood is evolving and changing, observing how a neighborhood is evolving and changing, or how students benefit – and to produce something about that organization.”

Students can engage in a variety of service-learning experiences through the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning. These opportunities provide educational opportunities grounded in Vincentian values, while developing mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships with community organizations in the region.

Service learning experiences vary in duration, meeting patterns, and course credit. However, these experiences offer an opportunity for students to apply and reflect on their learning in authentic community settings. Students engage in meaningful projects that benefit community organizations while also meeting academic requirements.

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