We Make the Road by Walking: Experience from the Past to Help Inform the Future
“There is only one thing more powerful than learning from experience and that is NOT learning from experience.”
Archibald MacLeish
Dear Bennion Center Friend:

In 2008 -- after the Bennion Center’s 20th anniversary year -- a group of Bennion Center alumni and current staff came together to document the Center’s first two decades – the successes, the challenges, the unresolved questions. We were moved by the belief that others might benefit from the experiences we’ve had getting to this point. This document is the result.

There are a few things we know with certainty: the enduring example of Lowell Bennion’s life of service is, and should continue to be, a powerful anchor for the Center’s purpose. Strong and committed student leaders, given the opportunity to really lead, bring perpetual life, passion, energy, and curiosity to the Center’s work. Faculty interest and advocacy, buoyed by institutional support, are essential to building an ethic of civic engagement into the academic offerings of the University and the field of higher education. These things we know from 20 years of experience.

There are other things that we think we’ve learned, but new ways of organizing may yield stronger results. For example, we wonder if future leaders can find more consistent ways to meet community partner needs. We wonder if there should be more encouragement for service-learning faculty to be out in the community with their students.

We know there are still looming institutional barriers and unanswered questions that challenge the Bennion Center and the University: how can faculty values and reward systems be broadened to embrace innovative service-learning teaching and community-based research? What would it really look like if this University saw the well-being of its communities as an institutional priority?

During these first 20 years, Center participants have invented new approaches -- new ways of being -- in order to move toward our vision. We know others will do the same over the coming years. We hope that sharing our successes and our toughest challenges will be useful on the way forward.

Your friends in service,

Irene Fisher, with:
Irwin Altman       Mark Hampton       Robert Nielsen
Linda Bonar        Deborah Hannan-Wunderli  Karla Mendieta Padilla
Inga Chapman       Dick Jacobsen       Kim Hooper Paulding
Paul Christenson   Janet Kaufman       John Pingree
Gina Cornia        Yevgeniya Kopeleva   Christy Tobolski
Bill Crim          Curtis Larsen       Clif Uckerman
Connie Della-Piana Kathryn Lindquist   Leslie Warner
Linda Dunn         Patrick McCabe      Marshall Welch
Andrea Pinnock Ferguson  Jonny Murdock   Shannon Huff Wilson
Deberah Hair        Jack Newell        Katie Winters
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Executive Summary

This document is not a comprehensive Bennion Center history. It is a planning tool carefully created for future Bennion Center decision-makers – the advisory board, the service council, individual student leaders, service-learning scholars, engaged faculty members, university administrators, and community partners. The document focuses on ten themes from the Bennion Center’s first 20 years – themes that have been part of the Bennion Center evolution across time. Each theme, or section, includes a basic narrative, lessons learned we call “take away ideas,” unresolved questions/continuing challenges, and one or more personal perspective essays. Each section is deliberately brief to enable busy activists to be informed by the past as they plan for the future. The document can be read as a whole or by selected themes that apply to current decisions facing the Center.

Key ideas from each of these ten themes are very briefly summarized here, followed by an equally brief discussion of relevant “take-away ideas” and major unresolved questions/continuing challenges. See specific themes for more detail.

Summary of Key Themes

The Beginnings and Early Years: The Bennion Center was founded on the service example of Lowell Bennion, with the initial vision and planning from a representative board of advisors who “gave first” in a hands-on service project in November, 1987.

The Role of Student Leadership: From the beginning, the Center’s primary focus was authentic service program leadership and decision making by student leaders who quickly adopted a contagious bias toward action and passion for community work.

Learning from Service Experience In and Out of the Curriculum: Students quickly realized that learning opportunities surrounded each act of service and community involvement and moved to utilize co-curricular reflection and curricular connections between coursework and service, especially in the Service-Learning Scholars Program.

The Faculty Role in Curricular Service-Learning: As excited as students were with learning and service, faculty leaders had to develop service-learning courses and to advocate for this teaching strategy with their colleagues in order for service-learning to become part of the curriculum.

Embedding Civic Engagement within the University: To be sustained, service-learning had to be integrated into the campus culture through departments and colleges as
seen in promotion, retention, and tenure policies, thus giving this work a real value. A strong Faculty Advisory Committee led the way to articulate “socially responsive knowledge” as the primary goal of service-learning.

Understanding the Culture of the Bennion Center: The culture of the Bennion Center reflects its values for action, change, and learning and can be seen in individual acts of community leadership and an intentional community of those who serve.

The National Higher Education Environment: Higher education, including the U of U, saw three waves of campus-community work during the past 20 years, moving from a focus on co-curricular community service, on to service-learning, and then to civic engagement.

Bennion Center Organizational Relationships: The Center adopted a collaborative approach from the beginning, partnering with on- and off-campus allies on shared goals.

Awards, Fellowships, Scholarships: Bennion Center Advisory Board members and community friends initiated various awards and other recognitions that financially support specific service work and/or highlight outstanding achievement. All are given in the name of individuals who lived a service example for others.

Summary of Lessons Learned and Continuing Challenges

The lessons learned and continuing challenges of the Bennion Center’s first 20 years are summarized here and explored more extensively within each of this document’s ten themes. It is our hope that current and future Bennion Center decision-makers will be informed but not constrained by this look at the past.

About students: We are convinced that the Bennion Center’ vitality grows from the community of diverse student leaders who direct the co-curricular service programs and take responsibility for making decisions and solving problems within the student component of the center. We believe continuing that vitality will require involvement of diverse people and ideas, authentic student leadership opportunities, resistance to doing the same thing over again just because it was done last year, and avoiding “creeping hierarchy” in the center’s organizational structure.

About faculty: We have watched individual faculty members commit themselves to decision making and advocacy for socially responsive knowledge and to teaching service-learning classes. We know these veterans and new faculty leaders are essential to the continued growth of community engagement from within the campus. We wonder if increased emphasis could be put on getting these faculty members out into the community with their students as well as on building more cohesive networks of faculty who can support each other in this work. We suggest these ideas because we have seen
the “fire” in students who experience community problems first-hand, and we have observed the importance of peer support for shared work.

Even more importantly, we know that we have not yet resolved the question of how the U’s promotion, retention, and tenure policies can be broadened to include service-learning teaching and community-based research. This is a crucial focus for the future of campus-community engagement at the University of Utah and in all of higher education.

**About community partners:** Knowledgeable community partner agencies and individuals have been important to the center’s success in the first 20 years. Yet we are convinced that broader and deeper partnerships are possible. This will require that the center 1) strengthen its capacity to find shared campus and community goals upon which to build ongoing partnerships, 2) bridge the discontinuities of the academic year that result in breaks in needed community support, and 3) deepen community partners’ understanding of the learning side of service-learning.

**About the organizational structure and culture:** For 20 years, the Bennion Center has quietly avoided use of hierarchical organizational structures and has kept the decision-making responsibilities with those closest to the work at hand. This non-hierarchical structure has enabled large numbers of center leaders to experience the growth that emerges with autonomous leadership and decision-making, a major strength in the development of future leaders. One of the unresolved questions that remain is how to be accountable to community partners and the campus while maintaining this non-hierarchical structure.
Theme One:  
The Bennion Center’s Creation and Early Years

It started, for our purposes, with Lowell L. Bennion. In 1987, at age 79, Lowell was living a life that made his name synonymous in Utah with compassion, service, and commitment. University students facing life questions sought his advice while he headed the LDS Institute of Religion and while he served as associate dean of students at the University of Utah. Supporters of racial equality admired his early statements on African Americans and the priesthood in the LDS Church. Academicians in Europe and the U.S. praised his graduate work, carried out in multiple languages, on the sociologist Max Weber. Young people in his Millcreek neighborhood responded to his regular calls to join him in week-end service projects. Males who grew up in Utah remembered learning about work, play, and talk at Lowell’s Teton Valley Boys’ Ranch. Hundreds of elderly women whose physical and emotional needs he responded to called him their friend. Those who knew him in his “retirement years” respected his humanitarian work as director of the Community Services Council.

Dick Jacobsen, a U of U alumnus and Palo Alto developer, was one of Lowell’s admirers. Dick and his wife, Sue, acted on that admiration after they heard about the creation of a new community service center at Stanford University. The Jacobsens offered an initial endowment gift to the University of Utah to begin a campus community service center named for Lowell Bennion. Dick made a note to himself in his personal journal in 1985 that the University of Utah could “do what Stanford is doing, could do it in the name of Lowell Bennion…and could do it better.”

Internal Campus Planning

The Jacobsens’ initial endowment gift offer was made to the U through Tony Morgan, who had been Dick’s LDS mission companion and was then serving as vice president for budget and planning at the university. Tony took the lead in initial planning for the new center. He secured agreement from President Chase Petersen, the University of Utah Board of Trustees, and others key to the new center’s success. He oversaw the creation of a campus-community Bennion Center Board of Advisers. He guided the approval process through the board of trustees, the academic senate, and other formal entities. Dean of Liberal Education Jack Newell was the lead author on the center’s mission statement. Drew Petersen, a dentist, father, and active community participant, served as board chair and helped to organize the search for the first director.

Selection of final candidates for the director position was handled by a committee of the advisory board, with a final decision by then Dean of Student Affairs Norm Gibbons. Gibbons, himself a strong and active proponent of service to others, selected Irene Fisher from two final candidates chosen out of a field of nearly 100 applicants.
In many ways, Irene’s selection was an unlikely one: a female among largely male administrators, a non-Mormon in a heavily Mormon state, a community activist with little personal experience in academia. But those involved in the selection reportedly sensed her commitment to and experience with community needs, and were moved by her action orientation and her visible belief in the capacity of students to learn while making a positive social and environmental impact.

By November, 1987, the foundation for the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center was in place, with a board of advisors, a mission statement, a director, a place within the student affairs organizational structure, a small office in room 270 in the Olpin Union Building, and an operating budget of $40,000. It was time for the real action to begin.

When the new director formally met the entire board of advisors in early November, 1987, she suggested the board members operate in the philanthropic tradition by giving first of their own time and energy. She invited board members to join her in attempting to save a non-profit boarding house, the Sugarhouse Living Center, which housed 26 chronically mentally ill residents. The boarding house, threatened with closure by the Salt Lake City-County Board of Health, helped prevent homelessness by providing a stable environment and handling medications essential to the residents’ functioning.

The Center’s First Service

On the day the Bennion Center’s first director began her service, the front page of the Daily Utah Chronicle, the U of U student newspaper, carried a headline story about the opening of the center. It included pictures of Jack Newell, Tony Morgan, and other board members lifting a claw-footed bathtub out of the Sugarhouse Living Center, tearing out carpet, and working to make the facility a viable home. Once started, people didn’t want to stop, and on successive Saturdays, more board members and students continued the work to completion. This and other early actions of the center caused Tony Morgan to remark that this enterprise certainly didn’t operate on standard “university time.”

During the early foundational period, Pat McCabe, who represented ASUU on the board of advisors and was the first student to take action in the name of the center, asked Lowell how he could get started even before a director was hired. Lowell suggested that Pat compile a list of students willing to participate in one-day service projects so they could be ready when the director was selected. Nearly 80 students responded to Pat’s ads in the Daily Utah Chronicle. Together, Pat and Irene and others planned the first of these “Volunteer Corps” projects for the Saturday after finals in December. Using Pat’s list of invitees, the center committed to deliver 34 frozen turkeys and dinner ingredients to elderly and disabled people who lived alone in their homes. The planners admitted to some anxiety about whether enough volunteers would show up the day after finals during Christmas break so that the cars holding those turkeys could actually be emptied. There was no problem. Students came in small groups, took their turkey dinners and the addresses, and went off for a morning of visiting and delivering. The first of what has extended to 20 years of monthly “Volunteer Corps” projects was completed successfully.
Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas

- From the beginning, students took the lead in making decisions and shaping the center’s actions and organizational structures. These leadership opportunities generated interest among students who saw themselves as potential leaders and those who already had an interest in the community. It is the contributions of students new to community service and leadership that are responsible for maintaining the energy, vitality, and curiosity of the Bennion Center.
- *A bias toward action* was a vital component of the Bennion Center’s work from the beginning. The energy generated from this approach proved attractive to students and to community partners and played a major role in the center’s early visibility and capacity to get things done.
- The name of the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center had instant “mission recognition” to people in Utah who knew of Lowell and his reputation for service to others. Unlike many institutions that are named for substantial donors, the Bennion Center’s purpose was instantly known through its name. This has proven invaluable in earning a recognized place on campus and in the community.
- Tony Morgan’s early planning included consulting all entities and individuals on campus who would be potentially impacted by and interested in the center, eased the way for a new campus unit, and avoided possible friction.
- Space immediately became a major concern, as the initial office in 270 Union, with room for only one person, placed threatening limits on a growing center. It was immediately obvious that centralized campus space was at a premium. We also learned that maintaining a central location on campus is key to continued success. This asset is assured through U commitments to the major donors in endowment documents.
- For almost all people involved in the center, the mission, the energy of organizational creation, and the sense of community created by the center’s work proved to be a passion rather than just another activity.

Unresolved Questions/ Continuing Challenges

- Observers of and participants in the Bennion Center have questioned how the center has maintained its energy and vitality over the first 20 years and how similar energy and passion can be maintained as it ages. Past experience suggests that the key to maintaining this “newness” and passion comes from assuring that students continue to assume leadership for the programs they direct and for decision-making within the center’s student component. The constant renewal that comes with students participating and then graduating and moving on, making way for new, energized, and curious students, is essential to maintaining the heart of the center’s culture. How will future leaders of the Bennion Center maintain this “newness” and openness to innovation as the center ages?
Daring Visions and Bold Leadership: Reflecting on the Early Years
By L. Jackson Newell, Founding Board Member

In the beginning, the character, identity, and mission of the Bennion Center were all up for grabs. Inspired by Stanford University president Donald Kennedy’s ground-breaking idea for a center for student engagement in humanitarian service (in the very midst of the 1980s “Me Generation”), University of Utah alumnus, Dick Jacobsen, immediately put three and three together: Why not create a similar center at his alma mater, name it for the most dedicated humanitarian he knew, the aging Lowell Bennion, and make it all possible with an anonymous gift from himself and his wife Sue to get the whole thing started? What university president would turn down a proposition like that?

Chase Peterson bought in immediately and assigned his fiscal vice-president, Tony Morgan (an old fraternity brother of Jacobsen), to guide the proposal through the political hoops. He then charged Dean of Students Norm Gibbons to find the right person to serve as the founding director of the center. Gibbons established a search committee on which I served along with Ramona Adams (Assoc. Dean of Students), Boyer Jarvis (Assoc. Academic VP), Eunice Shatz (Dean of Social Work) and a healthy representation of students, faculty, alumni and downtown community leaders. Ours was a crucial task, we understood well, because the person we recommended would play the primary role in shaping the character and nature of this new university entity.

Candidates were many and we struggled to rank their potential to lead in this unique situation. By the time we got down to a short list, those ranked as most qualified were all men, including a former Mormon bishop and an LDS Institute of Religion leader. Except, that is, for Irene Fisher. A seasoned social service leader and activist in Salt Lake City, Irene’s record of advocacy and community engagement stood out--and she had an unmistakable glint in her eye. The committee rambled on, as such bodies do, then foundered. It foundered because several of us saw Irene’s experience as a peer leader, and her rooting outside the prevailing culture, as ideal qualities for attracting the broad spectrum of students the center hoped to involve. Appoint someone imbued with top-down leadership experience and the participatory dream of a student-driven center might wither before it blossomed.

Irene’s backers prevailed, starting as a determined minority and ending with a clear majority. The committee did submit two names, as requested by Dean Gibbons, but we rank-ordered them (contrary to his instructions) with Irene Fisher clearly on top. After additional vetting by the administration, the dean announced her appointment with obvious satisfaction. Irene’s leadership of the Bennion Center over the next fourteen years more than justified the trust we placed in her. She took her gifts for leadership by example and democratic decision-making to the level of art.

From the start, the Bennion Center needed a compelling mission statement to position itself within the university and the larger communities of need and service. The newly created Advisory Board, widely representative like the search committee, tackled this
challenge. How fully might students be involved in deciding what to do? How broadly would we envision the community or communities we sought to serve? What kinds of service would we hope to render?

This charter board dreamed in wide panoramas that were inspired especially by the blend of moral vision and practical methods long used at Deep Springs College in California. If students were to do the work, then students should decide what work to do--and organize the projects themselves with staff support. If we defined our “service area” in local terms alone, we would blind ourselves to human needs and suffering beyond the boundaries of our city and state. Finally, if we took a narrow view of humanitarian service, we would not tap the variety of interests, skills, and passions our students might bring to the center’s work or offer our beleaguered planet. Out of these vigorous conversations came a composite vision by which we raised each others’ consciousness of human needs everywhere. The resulting mission statement captured the imagination of thousands of students as they came to know the joys—and endure the hardships—of rolling up their sleeves on behalf of those who hunger, suffer, and languish without hope.

From the beginning, students flocked to the Bennion Center from every corner of the campus. And they multiplied in near-Malthusian proportions from one year to the next. Their mounting numbers—and enthusiasm—exceeded our grandest expectations and helped put the University of Utah in the national limelight. One challenge led to the next, however, as students began to wonder, “If we are to address homelessness downtown or hunger in Africa with any hope of making a difference, then we need to know a whole lot more about the causes and nature of these problems.” They soon asked if professors who study such issues could help them understand how to serve more effectively. With their needs voiced, the notion of “service-learning” courses dawned. Carol Warner in Psychology and Doug Rollins from Pharmacy were the first to respond with brand new courses designed for Bennion Center student volunteers. Their courses, initially offered during the 1989-90 academic year, prompted other students to pose their service-related academic needs and other faculty to respond. Within two years, the university catalog listed twelve Service-Learning courses, and many more followed. The crucial link between knowledge and service had been forged, and this bond would strengthen immensely as the Bennion Center gathered momentum in succeeding years.

With a special interest in undergraduate educational programs, I have studied American universities throughout my career. Since World War II, few reforms have rivaled the positive effects that have flowed from the humanitarian service movement and, especially, service-learning courses. This movement has elevated students’ social consciousness, stimulated teaching innovation, and connected theory with practice. Once a professor takes her students into the field to test—and apply—their theoretical knowledge to real human conditions, the rewards for both faculty and students are addicting. These professors never teach courses in their disciplines quite the same again, and they come back repeatedly to teach Bennion Center students to understand the problems they strive to address as volunteers. Intrinsic rewards have driven and sustained great teaching and, more importantly, learning that endures. Voluntary service has often led to career choices and life-long commitments.
The final sentence in the Bennion Center’s original Mission Statement read: “In a society of material plenty, those who participate in the Center’s activities and projects will find meaning through community service and pleasure in the improvement of life around them.” Pleasure indeed. The most profound lesson I learned from my years on the Bennion Center board and as a volunteer was to take students’ (and others’) voluntary service at face value. No doubt, many enlisted with self-interested motives--hoping to gild their resumes for medical school applications or gain an edge in competitive fields after graduation. But serving others in need seems to change us. Motives evolve. Those who signed up for the wrong reasons usually stayed for the right reason. People change, younger ones especially, and so do career goals and avocational interests. More than anything else, this phenomenon has been the magic of the Bennion Center. May it endure, adapt and grow as society’s problems change--and as the university’s students themselves evolve from year to year. Onward!
Bennion Center Beginnings

By Dick Jacobsen, Founding Board Member
From the Bennion Center’s First Five Years of Caring

Growing up as young high school and college students in the Salt Lake Valley, Sue and I had an opportunity to become familiar with Dr. Lowell Bennion, his writings, his philosophy, his teaching, and his example of simple Christian service quietly rendered to all segments of the community. Our lives were touched by Dr. Bennion, and our way of looking at the world profoundly influenced. Service became an important ingredient in our lives. In our own small way we tried to render service according to those same simple Christian principles, visiting widows, painting homes, and trying to bring some warmth and comfort where we could see it was needed most. We hoped and dreamed for the day when we might be able to do more.

In the early 1980’s a nationwide movement centered in community service took root on a few pioneering campuses across the country. The political activism of the 60’s followed by a more apathetic and inward turning bent in the 70’s eventually gave way to a genuine concern among university students and faculty for the welfare of the local, national, and global communities of which they were a part.

As a result of our personal involvement with the California Family Foundation working on local issues of education, employment and housing, we became aware of the Stanford Service Center and its efforts to provide service opportunities for Stanford students.

Thinking of Stanford’s activities in the area of community service and remembering Dr. Bennion’s lifelong association with the University of Utah, it occurred to us that it might be possible to create a community service center at the University of Utah naming it after Dr. Bennion, and thereby giving it a set of values and a philosophical foundation on which to build. In early 1986 I visited with Tony Morgan, a good friend of ours and a vice president at the university. I asked Tony if he thought the idea had merit and if the University might be interested in such a venture if I would take the responsibility for finding the initial funders.

Tony discussed the matter with University President Chase Peterson and a few other key people among the university faculty and staff. The response was not only encouraging but enthusiastic. Everyone seemed to feel that the idea of a community service center was timely, and they all knew and loved Lowell, and concurred with the idea of associating the center with his name “if we thought it would be helpful.”

From that point on the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center seemed to take on a life of its own. Tony was very instrumental in moving the idea through the required review and approval process within the university, assisted by other members of the faculty and staff, and solidly supported by President Peterson. The idea seemed to catch fire throughout the University. It was almost as if we had touched a match to dry grass. Everywhere we found enthusiastic support for a community service center in general and great love and admiration for Dr. Bennion in particular.
Theme Two:  
The Role of Student Leadership

In the fall of 1987 the University publicized the planned creation of the Bennion Center through press releases to local newspapers. Irene Fisher, soon to become the successful applicant for the position of director, read about the plans for the center in *The Salt Lake Tribune*. The article mentioned the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), a new national organization created by two recent Harvard graduates to encourage college students to become engaged in service in their communities. She called COOL and told them what she was doing. The COOL response: “Be sure you use the student-directed program model, not the clearinghouse model.”

This sound advice proved central to the Bennion Center’s development. It meshed with Fisher’s desire to emphasize student leadership development in the center’s programs. Fisher had observed that many community problems go unaddressed because those who see the problems lack the personal belief that they can do something about them. She wanted the Bennion Center to change that. She wanted the university to graduate the community leaders of the future.

The First Student Leaders

In 1987, shortly after the center opened, Irene and others asked the Salt Lake Rotary Foundation for funding to pay a small number of students to create community service programs that they would each direct. She received the funding and immediately advertised for seven students to work 20 hours per week to create the first ongoing service programs. Eight students responded, and she selected them all. Each of these student program directors met weekly at 6:30 a.m. (the only time left in their busy schedules when they could come together), and each created an ongoing program to address a community need about which they were personally concerned. One student, a recovering alcoholic, created a program through which he recruited students to volunteer with him at Odyssey House, an agency serving recovering alcohol and drug abusers. Another, concerned about strong educational opportunities for children, created a partnership with Lowell Elementary and organized students to tutor there. Yet another student, herself legally blind, believed that the U should have a support group for students with disabilities. She worked with the U’s Center for Students with Disabilities to create such a group.

One important piece of advice to each student director -- “remember, you are in charge of this program” -- proved to be a powerful motivator toward serious leadership and commitment. It established the model for the next 20 years of student leadership development. The center experienced rapid initial growth, from eight ongoing student-directed service programs involving 546 volunteers in 1987-88 to 19 programs and 1,409
volunteers in 1988-89, and 27 programs and 2,762 volunteers in 1989-90. By 1992-93, the Bennion Center was involving 5,000 volunteers per year in 45 programs and knew it had to curb its growth and focus on strengthening training, agency partnerships, and funding diversity. In the center’s 20th anniversary year, it sponsors 45 student-directed programs and has kept a fairly steady number of programs in operation. The programs themselves change somewhat each year, depending upon community partner needs and student interests.

The student-directed programs use various types of action to achieve their goals. These include direct and indirect service, public interest advocacy, and community organizing on primarily local as well as state, national, and global levels.

In the student component, and in all other parts of the Bennion Center, the service came first and the infrastructure to support it grew as needed. Initially, with a small number of student leaders, the directors could handle shared decision-making fairly informally. By 2008, a more elaborate organizational structure had developed to enable more experienced student coordinators to support beginning directors. A broadly representative decision-making structure is in place, guided by a student service council. Key steps in the evolution to a more formal organization structure included: ceasing to pay students to direct programs except in cases of real economic need, development of more training strategies, an advanced guidance layer of experienced program directors (called coordinators) to assist newer directors, a cabinet of student leaders to lead on internal decision-making and problem-solving, and annual selection processes of new leaders. Each year, almost all applicants for leadership positions are selected and placed in positions of responsibility that match their interests and capacities. Almost no one is told they can’t have a position. The underlying premise is that most students that have the commitment to direct a program have or can develop the skills to be successful.

Training and other support strategies evolved over time, with the continuous theme of student leadership at the fore. Training for new and experienced directors, coordinators, and other leaders changed over the years, and included basic orientations, fall trainings, winter retreats, coordinating-group meetings, and in-depth summer leadership programs. At all times, experienced student leaders determined the best ways to offer the learning opportunities they thought necessary. The core belief has been that leadership is learned by leading.

Benefits of Students Taking Leadership

The energy and community accomplishments that emerged from this model have been almost consistently strong. Those responsible for each student program understand that the responsibility for success lies with them. They know the internal sources of support, guidance, and advice, but they also know that the program decisions and actions ultimately come from them. Within this framework, undergraduate students forge amazingly strong programs and achieve important community results while developing their own leadership skills by doing.
The center has often used the slogan “we make the road by walking,” understanding fully that each individual and the entire center learn as they deliver service. As in all human endeavors, those doing the “walking” sometimes stumble. This happens, in the Bennion Center setting, when a student leader fails to deliver the needed leadership for some reason. Sometimes students simply fail to realize the amount of time and work necessary to lead a program. Sometimes other activities, academic demands, friends, a new boy or girl friend become a higher priority. When this happens, the center must take action to assure accountability to the community and to guarantee that community partners are not disappointed. More experienced student coordinators face the responsibility of resolving these problems, thus creating another layer of problem-solving leadership.

**Students as the Cultural Heart of the Organization**

The student component of the Bennion Center has played a very important role in developing and “living” the culture of the center. Center leaders repeatedly committed time and energy to identify the values they saw as key to the center itself and to their understanding of the larger community. The student leaders kept these values in focus by adopting a “Good On Ya” Guy, a stuffed koala bear that rotated regularly to a student leader who had shown, through her actions, a belief in the shared Bennion Center values.

In 1990, faced with some tough decisions about controversial actions relating to the work of the Campus AIDS Project run by the center, student leaders adopted a consensus decision-making process as a way to respect the views of all participants in the center’s work and to determine what Bennion Center actions all student leaders could support. (A description of this consensus process in operation is included in the section on culture.)

About once every two or three years the student leaders addressed the question as to whether or not some students should be paid for their involvement. Each time this idea was presented to student leaders, they opted not to take this approach. They saw that all leaders could not be paid, and they refused to pay some and not others.

In 1997, the Bennion Center initiated the Alternative Spring Break Program, which has been operated every year since, in partnership with the offices of the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Health Promotion, and Alcohol and Drug Prevention. Students lead each spring break trip, supported by a faculty or staff mentor. Alternative Fall Break trips and Alternative Week-ends have been held the past several years, and the same offices are working toward a shared sponsorship of these programs.

**Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas**

- Students and staff active with these extra-curricular service programs learned early in the center’s development that size and numbers could not be the only measure of success. Although both community needs and student interest would have allowed continued program expansion, quality became a key concern, and those involved in 1992 made the
difficult decision to freeze the number of programs at the current level and eliminate weaker programs in order to bring new programs into being. The number of student-directed programs has remained fairly constant.

- There is a continuous challenge to maintain the balance between allowing students to learn by leading and meeting community commitments fully. The issue surfaces in different ways in different years, and the struggle to find the right answer for each situation is part of the student learning.

- At several times during the Bennion Center’s development, staff members came to believe that the system would work more effectively if coordinators were paid a modest stipend. Each time this idea was presented to a decision-making group of student leaders, they rejected it, believing that this step would diminish the value of their service. This view has always prevailed, although the Helping Hands scholarships enable the center director to give small stipends based on need.

- Staff members must be selected who can offer appropriate supports and training for student leaders without “taking over” when challenges arise. This takes a certain temperament and willingness to accept that a program will sometimes have failures and all involved will have to learn through those failures as well as the successes. Problems have been viewed as learning opportunities rather than failures.

- Community partner agencies and individuals who need the help of students and who also value the student learning process are invaluable. Nurturing the strength of Bennion Center-community organization partnerships has to be a strong and continual focus of attention.

- Early in their involvement as program directors, many students find it very difficult to acknowledge that they are experiencing problems in organizing or operating their programs. Too often new directors feel that those around them are all succeeding, and an admission of a problem is too personally threatening. The center’s culture of learning through doing must be strong enough to overcome that problem, in order for a struggling director to seek the help needed to overcome challenges.

- Although the center offers various types of training for new and experienced student leaders, it became clear early in its development that “real learning” most often came through the doing. Frequently, staff reported hearing from a student that they had just “learned” something by “doing” that staff thought had previously been “taught,” or at least discussed, in a formal training session.

- Bennion Center students and staff recognized early that all applicants for leadership positions had skills and capacities of value to the center and to the community. Thus, the annual selection of leaders focused primarily on finding the right leadership match for an applicant’s interests and skills rather than on selecting only the best people. This approach stems from a belief that in a democratic society, all members of the community can, and indeed should, play an active role.

**Unresolved Questions/ Continuing Challenges**

- How can the center be accountable for both student leadership development and high quality responses to community needs? The issue of balancing student leader accountability and community need is an ongoing challenge that needs continual
attention. Whatever the new solutions will be as new actors come on the scene, it will be important that the answers are developed and implemented by involved students, because addressing this ongoing challenge offers rich learning opportunities.

- How can the center assure that new staff who work with student leaders have the temperament and skills to support, not take over, student leadership? It has been evident throughout the life of the Bennion Center that staff must have the capacity to stand beside, not in front of, the student leaders charged with carrying out a given program or project. The center’s past and future success will depend upon the continuation of this approach. The energy and vitality that have been an ongoing characteristic of the Bennion Center grow primarily from new students experiencing community problems and needs, from their developing a passion to make a difference, and from weaving that passion into the culture of the Bennion Center.

- It is a challenge to pass on the learning from one year’s program director to the next, and an even bigger challenge to maintain the history and “lessons learned” within a long-time program through a succession of new directors. Too frequently, the learning from years past is lost in the inevitable change of leadership. Continuity of staff and multi-year involvement of student directors can help mitigate that challenge; other solutions are still needed.

- How can the student leadership component of the Bennion Center continue to innovate, to test, to create, and to learn together as the organizational infrastructure ages and solidifies? In the second year of the Bennion Center’s life, its student president suggested that “we should close our doors in five years, stay ‘dark’ for at least two years, and then start over, so that new people can experience the creativity and challenge of creation.” In the absence of such a drastic action, new leaders will have to determine how the vitality that characterizes the center can be maintained. Several key elements to success in this area will include continuing a strong student leadership and decision-making model; building a supportive community of student leaders; welcoming a diversity of student leaders; and maintaining a willingness to address needed organizational change, a bias toward action, and a willingness to risk. Student leaders and staff can help maintain innovation by challenging the phrase “but we did it that way last year” whenever they hear it.
The First Project Youth

By Deborah Hannan-Wunderli, Founder of Project Youth

Everything I’ve ever needed to know, I learned during the first year of Project Youth. In short, I learned that an inspired idea, joyful enthusiasm, and daily hard work truly make up the formula for something big to happen.

It all started when my college sweetheart (now my husband) and I were hanging out in the basement of his family home talking about what we want to do with our lives, thinking about how people end up where they end up, and the importance of having a positive vision of your own possibilities. As we were talking, we began to appreciate the value in our own lives of certain expectations we had of ourselves that guided who we would become from an early age. One of those expectations was that we’d go to college. The idea was instilled in both of us as far back as we could remember, and the question was never if we would go but where we would go. We then thought of the many kids who do not attend college and considered what a tragedy it would be if many capable young adults ended up not in a position to attain a higher education simply because they didn’t have that vision planted in their minds as kids. So we wondered if it would be possible to instill the idea in kids before they made choices that would make it more difficult to choose that path. Could we get kids from disadvantaged grade schools to spend a day on the University of Utah campus and begin to see themselves as potential college students?

Fast forward a few months later and you would have seen 2000 sixth graders come to the U of U, escorted around campus by 400 student volunteers. During the course of the day, they stopped along the way to see faculty presentations from the different colleges, and ended up at the Huntsman Center for a big rally. I’m compelled here to say what I truly feel: IT WAS AWESOME! The energy among the kids and volunteers was truly awe-inspiring. It was one of the best and most humbling days of my life. To this day, it remains one of my most defining moments — something I’ve reflected on often — something that breaks me free from the tyranny of the probable to elevate my thoughts to the belief in the possible.

Of course, what’s often left out of the story was what happened between the lofty rhetoric of the original idea and its big finish. That’s the space where all insecurities, uncertainty, discouragement, setbacks, and day-to-day leg work take place. That’s when the vision starts to fade in the face of physical and mental fatigue. The harsh reality I learned most clearly from Project Youth is that a good idea is not enough. It takes work to give an idea life. And there was no shortage of work. From the first conversation with Chase Peterson, the president of the University at the time, to the conversations with all the schools we wanted to invite, with every student group to get volunteers, with every faculty and staff member to get presenters and facilities, with sponsors to get funding, it took energy — energy to overcome fear of rejection, energy to sell the idea with the conviction it deserved, and energy to keep the faith that it would actually work. It still seems a little remarkable to me today that it actually did work and that people responded the way they
did. It was incredible how many people contributed their time and effort to make it happen.

At the end of the day, the story of Project Youth is the same as the story of the Bennion Center, which is the same as the story of every worthwhile endeavor. It is ultimately a story of inspiration, faith, and persistence. It’s a tried and true formula to be sure, but I didn’t fully appreciate it until the Bennion Center helped me experience it first hand by giving me the opportunity to take an idea and run with it. It was a simple idea, but one we thought could make a difference. As I reflect back now, I wonder what has happened to that first group of 2000 kids that came to campus. Did it actually make a difference? I know for sure it at least made a difference in one person’s life – mine.

Addendum by Barbara Thornton,
Former Bennion Center Student Program Director

I was lucky enough to attend Project Youth as a sixth grade student in 1995. The experience of being mentored by college students as I toured the amazing University of Utah campus was an indelible one. Despite coming from a family of educated parents and older siblings, I had little exposure to the scope of activities, programs and multi-faceted educational opportunities available in a university setting. Later, as a college student, I became involved with the very program that inspired and enlightened me as a child. I have been involved with Project Youth for five years (including the privilege of serving as co-director) and I am thrilled that I can continue to share this mind-opening experience with sixth-graders every year.
Theme Three:
Learning from Service Experience: In and Out of the Curriculum

Center leaders have often described the Bennion Center’s development with the phrase “we make the road by walking,” understanding fully that each individual and the entire center learn as they deliver service. From the beginning, the Bennion Center seemed to attract students who were especially caring, inquisitive, and ready to ask hard questions as well as engage in community action. “Why isn’t the family of this elderly woman helping her?” “I’m enjoying this tutoring, but why don’t we have more teachers to assure all these children get help?” “I want to help in this homeless shelter, but it doesn’t seem like the right place for families…isn’t there a better way to enable people to get back on their feet?” “How can I prepare myself for a lifetime of community service?” “Isn’t there a way to prevent this problem from happening in the first place?”

Clearly, the first focus of the Bennion Center was on action, while the quest for deeper understanding has been the persistent partner to the action. Growing out of student interest and action, two modes or “tracks” for learning began to emerge: one curricular and one co-curricular.

Co-Curricular Learning through Action and Reflection

In 1989, students attending an annual COOL Conference and another group of students who went on a rural Utah spring break service trip simultaneously discovered the power of reflection. The COOL conference attendees were introduced to the idea of reflection as a strategy to deepen the learning from active service by attending a conference session on that topic. Students who participated in a rural service trip to Myton, Utah, stopped on the way back to Salt Lake City to have a picnic lunch and spent nearly two hours talking about the amazing experiences they’d had; what those experiences meant to them; and what they’d learned about rural Utah, about Myton and its history, about the differences between small town and urban life, and about themselves. Both groups came back eager to explore the use of reflection to enhance their own learning.

In 1989-90, Dan DeGooyer became the first student leader to hold the reflection director position. His challenge was to help other student leaders develop ways to include reflection within their service programs. Out of the subsequent thinking and planning came frequent “reflection sessions” and an annual reflection magazine that included the thoughts, poems, and essays of Bennion Center participants. Student leader training was expanded to include sessions on the rationale and strategies for including reflection in their programs. Student leaders learned about the action-reflection cycle as a mode of understanding and learning. Indeed, for a time reflection was emphasized so strongly within the student component that it became known as “the R word.” The fundamental co-curricular strategy for learning was born and, over time, became well established.
Building Links Between Service and Coursework

Almost simultaneously with the use of reflection, other student leaders were beginning to think about ways to link their service involvement with their academic coursework in a variety of ways to enhance their own learning. Patrick McCabe, while serving at the Salt Lake Homeless Shelter and Resource Center, decided to do his Honors Program thesis on the legal right to shelter. In the process of strengthening his own learning, Pat received recognition from the Honors Program for the outstanding thesis that year, largely due to his ability to include his learning through active involvement as well as his library research on the topic. Dave Vandemberwe, the student director of one of the center’s programs serving elderly people, decided to add a gerontology minor to his undergraduate education. Other students designed their own majors, linking service and their coursework through the Bachelor of University Studies Program.

Very importantly, Andy Cooley, an active Bennion Center volunteer, ran for student body president pledging that if he were elected he would find a way to link service and the curriculum. All this happened before Bennion Center leaders even heard the term “service-learning.” Andy Cooley won the ASUU election and promptly appointed a three-person committee to carry out his service-learning campaign pledge. The committee included Andrea Pinnock, then student president of the Bennion Center; Valerie Arrango, ASUU representative; and Janice Ugaki, junior class president. In one very intensive year’s work, the three young women developed a proposal for what has become the Service-Learning Scholars Program. They presented the idea to all the necessary individuals and groups on campus, modified the proposal based on the input of these people, and in two important final steps gained the approval of the U’s Academic Senate and the Board of Trustees. The foundation of the University of Utah’s nationally recognized Service-Learning Scholars Program was in place.

These events of 1989-1991 marked an important step forward in the life of the Bennion Center, mirroring similar discoveries within the national higher education community service field. John Dewey, David Kolb, and other educators had long understood the power of learning through the action–reflection learning cycle. Bennion Center participants discovered the paths to richer learning for themselves through their own service and active inquiry.

Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas

- The impetus for both curricular and co-curricular learning grew from the interest and determination of active Bennion Center student leaders who wanted to take responsibility for their own learning. The student interest was supported by staff, the Bennion Center Board of Advisers, and individual faculty members and administrators, but students led the charge. The clear lesson is that students, supported by key allies, can create change within the university when they are committed, consistent, wise, and determined.
Curricular and co-curricular service and learning opportunities can exist side by side within an organizational structure like the Bennion Center. Both provide important but different learning opportunities. Co-curricular learning is especially valued for the leadership lessons it offers. Curricular learning is important because it may be meshed within any academic field and community work related to that field, and it engages faculty in the learning process.

A focus on learning through doing empowers those who are involved because it clarifies the reality that in dynamic work like community service even leaders don’t have all the answers before they begin.

While students initiated co-curricular reflection and curricular service-learning, it has and will take strong faculty and U administration participation to move the service-learning and civic engagement agenda forward. Key administrators have played an important role in enabling the development of curricular service-learning.

Housing both curricular and co-curricular programs within the Bennion Center requires continual work to assure coordination and cooperation, especially out in the community. It also requires that those involved in one set of programs respect the value of the other. This requires special focus, because academia in general tends to place more value on learning that bears course credit.

During the development of service-learning, Bennion Center leaders learned valuable lessons from the past. Older national service-learning initiatives had mistakenly given academic credit for service itself, rather than credit for the learning that grew from service involvement. That practice led, in a number of national instances, to the discrediting of service-learning. Armed with that lesson from the past, the U of U has continually avoided that pitfall.

Unresolved Questions/ Continuing Challenges

How can the Bennion Center and student leaders deepen and enrich reflective learning in a busy, action-oriented environment? The potential for asking deeper and more challenging questions is periodically visible within Bennion Center activities; the room for growth in this area is significant.

How can the Bennion Center continue to attract student leaders from diverse political, religious, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds, so that group reflection sessions include the challenges that grow from diverse views? Student leaders frequently comment that they are working with more diverse students through the center than in other spheres on campus. Maintaining and enhancing that diversity will require continual attention and further work.

Other continuing challenges and unresolved questions related to curricular service-learning are included in the sections on the faculty role and on embedding civic engagement within the University.
Personal Reflection
By Patrick McCabe, Former Student Leader
From The Bennion Center’s First Five Years of Caring

During winter quarter, Grethe Peterson, a member of the Bennion Center Advisory Board, reported her reaction to KUED’s documentary on the plight of the homeless in Salt Lake City. The student members of the board were intrigued by the discussion that ensued and thought the Bennion Center could get involved by creating a “Campaign for the Homeless” on campus. I agreed to be the campaign director. As I read the name now, I think I would select a less noblesse oblige-sounding name. Rather than doing something for someone else, we primarily provided help for people to help themselves. The name also implies that the homeless are powerless and need things done for them. As I learned more, my perception of the homeless changed considerably.

I hit the ground running the following autumn because I was able to attend a Salt Lake City conference on homelessness. I met many more people devoting their time to the problem. I also learned about an attempt in New York City to craft a legal right to shelter from broad phrases in the New York State Constitution. I was stunned by this “radical” idea. However, it seemed like an elegant solution to the problem: just make being homeless illegal and require society to provide some minimum level of subsistence for anyone who needs it. As with all seemingly simple solutions to complex problems, the difficulty was in the execution. How minimum a level of subsistence? How can this legal right be enforced? Ultimately, I turned my interest in these questions into my senior honors thesis. This linkage of my community service work with my academic work foreshadowed the development of the Service-Learning Scholars Program created in 1992 and the establishment of Bennion professorships to create courses linking hands-on service in the community with a course of study. My work on this paper also confirmed my interest in studying law.
An Epiphany in the Cold  
*By Bill Crim, Former Bennion Center Student President*  
*From The Bennion Center’s First Five Years of Caring*

While helping to serve lunch at the St. Vincent de Paul Center, a man came through the line with two small children, a boy and a girl. I offered to carry the trays of the children and did so. As I walked to the table with the little girl I heard her cry and saw her pain as she rubbed her hands together, “Owee, owee, owee.” Her fingers and cheeks were bright red from the cold, her eyes were pained and red from the tears. Apparently her hands had been frozen numb outside and as they began to thaw, the biting pain caused her to cry out. I was dumbfounded. I didn’t know what to do. Her father caught up and sat down, and I backed away, wondering how it could be. I returned to my duties and despite the horror of this experience, I soon filed it away in my memory, so as to avoid the pain of contemplation and the nagging sense of responsibility.

Later that night, I returned from the airport and passed a woman stalled on the freeway. This day had been bitter cold and was getting colder. A National Weather Service warning had been issued for dangerous, freezing winds, and I later learned that record low temperatures had been reached. The woman asked us to jump-start her car, which we attempted. I stood out in the cold for probably five minutes before she decided that it wouldn’t work. I thought that I was literally frozen…I had never been that cold. As I sat shivering in the car, the image of the little girl I had seen earlier in the day returned with great force, and with that image, an intensity of feelings which I have rarely experienced. I have seen tremendously disturbing sights while working with the homeless but I have never felt as angry, frustrated and sad as I did then.

Where is she? What, if anything, is protecting her from this freezing wind? How many other people have no protection from the elements? This is supposed to be the land where all are “endowed with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” and today I saw a little girl crying from the pain of frozen hands because she has no home, no adequate clothing, and has to wait outside in sub-zero temperatures for some lunch. We cannot rest until every child and person has an independent and warm place to sleep, eat, play and learn.
Service is Always Possible

By Robert Nielsen,
Former Bennion Center Student Leader and Staff Member
From The Bennion Center’s First Five Years of Caring

It was Winter Quarter 1990, and I was trying to balance two classes with full-time employment. This was not an easy task, since my job required me to drop my life and jump into a snow plow every time the clouds threatened. But that quarter had a profound influence on how I now view the college experience.

I met several students who volunteered and directed projects in the Bennion Center. I also met Irene Fisher, who was teaching a legislative process class that I was taking. Irene's class turned out to be one of those points in your life to which you look back and see a significant change of course. Through her class and the friendship of Hillary, Dave, Sara, Duane, and other Bennion Center volunteers, I had been introduced to a way of making a difference. These friends had shown me that it was possible to serve people AND go to school.

As I stated in my application to become a project director at the end of that quarter, “my experience in volunteer projects has been minimal. This is perhaps the very heart of why I have applied for this position. I have travelled through college with an ‘I’ll help others after I’m stable’ outlook, but am realizing that my efforts could be effectively used to better the lives of others right now.” After applying for a position as Public Interest Advocacy Project Director, I quit work and returned to school as a full-time student and Bennion Center project director. I was beginning to understand that if we all wait until we are “stable,” people within our community will experience needless inequities, abuses, and loneliness.

Three years have passed and I am still at the Bennion Center learning to serve others, learning about ways to bring about change in our community, and learning that significant events begin with small acts of kindness. The Bennion Center experience has been incredible. The Center has provided me and other volunteers the physical, financial, and emotional resources necessary to coordinate service projects which not only make an immediate difference for the recipient, but make a lasting impression on the volunteers. The value of these resources cannot be overstated, for they have allowed me to explore different means of serving others. Ultimately, the existence of the Bennion Center has helped me move from a job of servicing mowers, plows, and turf to a career of serving people.

Although I will soon be leaving the Bennion Center, its influence will always be with me. I have learned that people can make a difference in the lives of others, and that we cannot wait for someone else to initiate change. The Bennion Center has certainly made a difference in my life and career. Hopefully, I will now be able to do the same for others.
A Personal Perspective on Service and Learning
by Yevgeniya Kopeleva, Service-Learning Scholar

Stepping into the University of Utah as a first-generation college student wasn’t easy. When the U seemed like an enormous place where no one knew your name, the Bennion Center was my haven where every conversation led to a friendship. It became my home and inspiration to succeed for the next four years.

I walked into the Bennion Center as “Artem’s little sister.” I didn’t know I was going to co-direct Project Youth as a freshman or become the Education and Ability Coordinator my sophomore year. I didn’t think I would be interested in environmental issues until I took the Service-Learning Global Environmental Issues class. I think back upon my Service-Learning Art in the Community class and always remind myself how, although the fifth graders may not remember anything I taught them about photography, they will always remember me wearing University of Utah gear and know that they too can reach for their dreams and go to college. I spent my birthdays participating in Alternative Spring Breaks in Seattle, San Francisco, and Portland, serving those in need and gaining a better understanding of the world around me. I lived in the Service House with some of the most incredible people on this campus. I was no longer “the little sister.” I became known as the small individual with a big heart and the desire to transform the world; I was Yevy.

It is these experiences through the Bennion Center that sparked my interest in the Service-Learning Scholars Program and helped me discover my passion. It is the last four years of involvement that have guided me to fulfill my ISP and lead the Community Engagement Co-requisite initiative with fellow scholars Patrick Reimherr and Jon Hayes. Looking back at our college career, the one thing that stood out to the three of us was our service-learning classes. The best memories came from the experiences we had outside the classroom. In our student government roles, we felt that the opportunity to take what you are learning in the classroom and apply it to the real world is what higher education should offer and provide for students. Just like one student led the creation of the Service-Learning Scholars Program, we had the passion and the drive to enhance the undergraduate curriculum with the help of Dr. John Francis, Linda Dunn, and Katie Winters.

Due to budget cuts, we decided to take a step back and begin with showing the significance of the foundation of the proposal in hopes of setting the precedent for our university to continue thinking of ways of helping students become civically engaged and ready to face the world when they graduate. We are proud to say that along with our leadership capstone class and the support from the Bennion Center, the lower-division writing requirement, Writing 2010, will offer service-learning sections this fall. Our hope is to introduce students early on to valuable academic and co-curricular experiences that they can continue to take advantage of and participate in the numerous opportunities available at the U and beyond.

The tears, the laughter, the joy, and our constant desire to make this university a better place is the reason we never gave up. I know that our countless hours of meetings,
conversations, discussions, research, presentations, and lack of sleep on behalf of the community engagement initiative have and will continue to have an impact on the future of the University of Utah and our communities. As difficult as it may have been at times, I wouldn’t trade this experience for the world, as it has made me a stronger individual. I am truly grateful to the Bennion Center for being my very first home at the U, my inspiration to make a difference on campus and the world, and the impetus for my personal transformation to a small individual with a big heart.

Being a part of the Service-Learning Scholars Program challenged me in numerous ways, taught me the importance of determination, reinforced my passion of enhancing the world around me, allowed me to reflect and discover who I am and where I am going, and helped me become a change agent today, tomorrow, and always.

The Service-Learning Scholars Program has taught me that SERVICE is not what you do, but it’s WHO YOU ARE.

To me, SERVICE IS
lending a hand to someone else,
stepping out of your comfort zone,
discovering who you are,
realizing your passion,
loving what you do,
involving yourself in deep conversations,
learning something new from each experience,
asking questions,
being challenged,
exploring the world around you,
finding ways to solve an issue,
informing others,
being present,
listening,
reflecting,
doing something because it makes you feel good,
creating memories,
building relationships,
getting others involved,
and sharing your stories with those around you.

SERVICE IS LOVE!
It’s not only the people you meet,
but it’s also the conversations and life lessons you will forever remember.

To me, SERVICE IS NOT WHAT I DO, BUT IT IS WHO I AM.
Theme Four: 
The Faculty Role in Curricular Service-Learning

At its inception, the Bennion Center was placed organizationally within The Office of Student Affairs and Services, a non-academic unit of the university. This placement reflects both the initial vision of the founders as well as the understanding of the role of community service within academia nationally at that time — community service was assumed to be part of the student affairs (not academic) offerings of the U.

Still, faculty members and upper-level administrators were involved very early in the development of the Bennion Center and have been key players consistently throughout its 20-year lifespan. Tony Morgan, Vice President for Budget and Planning and a faculty member in the College of Education, was mentioned earlier as a center founder. Jack Newell, the highly respected Dean of Liberal Education, served on the founding Bennion Center Board of Advisors and was the lead author of the center’s initial mission statement. He also helped the first director, Irene Fisher, to identify courses with potential academic links to community service involvement. Cecil Samuelson, then Vice President for Health Sciences, chaired a Bennion Center Faculty Advisory Committee that helped the center understand the potential for faculty involvement.

In the first months of Fisher’s tenure as director, Boyer Jarvis, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and an involved community activist, offered to set up visits and accompany her to visit with each academic dean on campus. Jarvis suggested that Fisher ask the deans how he or she would recommend the center could best link with the academic departments within their particular colleges. He told Fisher that each dean would have a different idea, and that she should follow their recommendations carefully. Jarvis proved right in his recommendation; the early meetings with the academic deans proved a good investment leading to future academic service-learning support.

Early Understanding of the Faculty Role

In another early development, the Bennion Center received a letter from Tim Stanton, an academic staff person at the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford, with a message from the group he represented and to which the U’s President Chase Peterson belonged -- Campus Compact. Campus Compact, a new organization of college and university presidents committed to a community service role for higher education, was seeking to understand the faculty role in this growing community service movement. Stanton enclosed a questionnaire seeking faculty responses to the question “What is the faculty role in service for higher education?” Rather than seeking individual faculty responses to these questions, Fisher asked James Clayton, then U of U Provost, to convene a group of faculty members to discuss these questions. Clayton brought together 40 faculty members from across campus who spent two hours grappling with this and related questions. By
the end of the session, Fisher had digested several important ideas. The term “service” to
the faculty in the meeting meant service to an academic discipline or to an academic
department or to the University. It was only about halfway through the meeting that
everyone together realized there was an additional meaning of the term service – service
to the community. Clearly, community service was not at that time a part of faculty
members’ understanding of their roles.

The faculty members present said that time demands and lack of institutional recognition
would be the main barriers to faculty involvement in community service in the years
ahead. They recommended creation of what came to be called Public Service
Professorships. The Public Service Professor positions began the following year, in 1989-
90, with initial funding of $20,000 from the Office of the Vice President for Academic
Affairs. The professorships provided both funding and recognition to faculty members
who proposed and were selected to carry out a community project related to their
academic work and involving their students. Carol Werner, psychology, and Doug
Rollins, pharmacy, were selected as the first two Public Service Professors. Their
pictures, along with their annual successors, hang outside the Crimson Commons in the
Olpin Union Building. Public Service Professors have been recognized at commencement
and at their own college convocations annually.

The Bennion Center created a network of departmental faculty liaisons for all willing
departments on campus, and maintained regular communication with each member as the
center developed. The faculty liaison network has since been disbanded, but in early
years it played a role in helping build faculty awareness of developments in service and
learning.

Roots of the Faculty Advisory Committee

A Faculty Advisory Committee began to meet in 1989 and helped the center make
decisions that related to faculty involvement and curricular development of service-
learning. This committee divided itself into committees to carry out specific assignments
such as selecting the Public Service Professors. As the Bennion Center and the national
service movement worked to link community service and academics, the Faculty
Advisory Committee defined for the center what service-learning would mean on the U
of U campus, and outlined the criteria for designation of a service-learning course in the
course catalog. This process helped the faculty committee members and Bennion Center
staff to more fully understand service-learning and how it could be integrated into
academic coursework. The University of Utah is one of only a few institutions that
clearly define the criteria for acceptance of a course as service-learning.

Faculty Understanding and Student Action Come Together in a Key Step

At the same time that Faculty Advisory Committee members were gradually increasing
their understanding of service-learning, students in the Bennion Center were developing a
proposal for the Service-Learning Scholars Program. When that program was approved in
1992, the Faculty Advisory Committee was well positioned to take on the task of
approving service-learning classes, a necessary step to assure that future service-learning scholars could take 10 hours of service-learning classes to complete their requirements. Faculty members across the campus who were aware of these developments were frequently eager to have one of their courses designated as a service-learning course in order to attract highly motivated, service-oriented students to their classes.

The creation of the Service-Learning Scholars Program brought students together with faculty to implement the new program and increase the number of service-learning courses. (See the section on “Learning through Service: In and Out of the Curriculum” for more depth on the development of this program.)

Within 30 minutes of the final step in approval of the Service-Learning Scholars Program at the academic senate, the first service-learning scholar candidate, Scott Warnick, had secured his service-learning advisor, Dean of Liberal Education Reba Keele. Warnick and Keele agreed to work through the steps to carry out the requirements of the Service-Learning Scholars Program. The Bennion Center agreed to use the Warnick-Keele experience to develop the Service-Learning Scholars Program details and to enable them to create the first “how to” publication for the program. Warnick and the first group of service-learning scholars were recognized at the U’s commencement ceremonies in the spring of 1994. The number of graduates has increased gradually to 22 in 2008; over 70 students are now actively pursuing the service-learning scholar designation. Since 2001, the Scholars Program has been strengthened by that year’s Borchard Fellow Martha Bradley’s creation of a one-hour seminar that would support scholars in the semester prior to their community project. A Bennion Center staff person currently teaches that seminar. The Service-Learning Scholars Program has provided an important anchor point for service-learning within the curriculum.

Student Views on Service-Learning

From the beginning, students who enrolled in service-learning courses were almost universally happy with them. For example, in student evaluations of service-learning classes in 1993-94 and 1994-95, 84% and 94%, respectively, agreed that “The service I did through this class helped me to see how the subject matter I learned can be used in everyday life.” Eighty-nine per cent and 94% of 1993 and 1994 respondents agreed that “Some educators say that real learning means being able to integrate learning into your own behavior. With that definition, I feel that this class was successful in helping me really learn.” Respondents strongly agreed (by 90% in 1993 and 93% in 1994) with the statement “The idea of combining service to the community and university course work should be practiced in more classes at the University of Utah.”

By 1995, 45 service-learning classes had been approved by the Center’s Faculty Advisory Committee. In 2008, 3,198 students enrolled in the U’s 130 service-learning courses and gave 143,775 hours of service to their communities.
The Complexities of Faculty Involvement

Throughout the 20 years in which the U of U has been building its capacity to support service and learning in the curriculum, the faculty role has been complex and challenging. Across these years, individual faculty members have experienced exhilaration with service-learning outcomes and frustration with a higher education reward system that places little value on innovative teaching and even less on community engagement. Despite these barriers, faculty leadership has been key to the forward momentum of service-learning.

Anecdotal information abounds within service-learning circles about the excitement of faculty watching students gain new and deeper understandings of subject matter as they see theories and abstract ideas played out in real world settings through their service. Ted Eyring, retired chemistry faculty member and associate dean of science, for example, taught a chemistry course with a control group of students who did not participate in a service-learning component in the course and another group that did. He wanted to show a statistical difference in learning outcomes between the two groups. Although his measures were statistically inconclusive, he became a service-learning advocate, building a strong service-learning component into all his classes. He believed that while the “service” the students carried out was of value to the community, that service was also “real undergraduate research” that offered important learning. Other faculty supported service-learning because it offered a way to expose students to the concept of community service or “professional service” obligations throughout their lives. Student surveys administered in service-learning classes consistently documented the positive responses students had to service-learning involvement and the student enthusiasm helped build faculty interest.

The Academic Reward System and Civic Engagement

As the reader is undoubtedly aware, the U of U is classified as a Research I institution, with the primary expectation for faculty members being original research. Untenured faculty members are frequently advised to wait to become involved with service-learning until after they secure tenure. In some departmental units faculty members frequently report little collegial support for this type of involvement and little understanding of the value and challenges of innovative service-learning teaching or of civically engaged research. The Bennion Center’s Faculty Advisory Committee spent considerable time and energy determining how to impact promotion, retention, and tenure guidelines to be more supportive of high quality service-learning teaching and community research. Their recommendations are visible in the Faculty Service-Learning Manual developed by the Center. This problem continues in 2008 and is a central challenge to the expansion of service-learning teaching and civically-engaged scholarship for faculty.

In early 1990, the Borchard Foundation, based in California, provided the Bennion Center funding to design a program that would advance the understanding and practice of service-learning teaching. Through a large gift from the foundation to fund the Borchard Fellows, the Bennion Center was able to create a three-year teaching and research
program that supported four faculty members in four different colleges to teach a regular course one year, teach the redesigned course with a service-learning component the second year, and then teach the course again with a strengthened service-learning component based on that experience. A research piece was wrapped around the entire effort, with a funded researcher who made sense of the experience and reported on the outcomes. Faculty members from pharmacy, mechanical engineering, communication, and special education met quarterly with the lead researcher, the dean of the graduate school, to discuss their common experiences and to learn from each other. The visibility of this project served to educate four Fellows and other faculty observing the research and teaching project. The Borchard Foundation subsequently provided annual funding for a Borchard Faculty Mentor to carry out a needed function for the Bennion Center and to assist new service-learning faculty to develop and teach courses. The Bennion Center now funds a Borchard Faculty Fellow annually to assist in expanding service-learning and civic engagement on campus.

Some Service-Learning Faculty Pioneers

This discussion cannot conclude without mention of at least a few of those innovative, creative faculty members who helped develop service-learning on the U campus by creating courses that offered the University community examples of what is possible with this pedagogy.

Nancy Nickman, one of the four Borchard Fellows, modified her course in pharmacy practice to include a service component. Each student visited regularly with an elderly individual selected through S.L County Aging Services. The “service” performed was simple social interaction for both the student and the elderly person. It enabled the students to gain a personal understanding of the kinds of people they would encounter most often in their professional work. This course has been taught by Nickman or other faculty members to the present. Nickman received the national Campus Compact’s Thomas J. Ehrlich Faculty Award in 1995-96 for this course and her other work for service-learning development.

Craig Denton and his photojournalism students in the Communication Department partnered with the Salt Lake Homeless Shelter to tell the stories of homeless families and to gain needed support from the community. Denton could see the change in his students’ attitudes as their pictures moved from distant views of homeless strangers to close-up images that portrayed real human beings.

Don Bloswick and his mechanical engineering students strengthened their knowledge of ergonomic principles by developing a mechanical wheelchair that enabled their users who could support their own weight to get from a sitting to a standing position without assistance. These undergraduates, when facing a real problem posed by their community partners, were able to find a solution and subsequently seek a patent to protect their innovations.
Fred Montague taught a global environmental issues course through the Biology Department and enabled his students to live the important concept of “thinking globally and acting locally.” Students planted trees, developed and tended community gardens, and taught environment classes to elementary age children while exploring the environmental issues that face the planet.

**Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas**

- Although the Bennion Center has always been part of student affairs, U administrators and faculty were willing from the beginning to work with center leaders to discover, fund, and implement service-learning courses and initiatives. There were no impediments to working with both academic and student affairs. By 2008, student affairs was reorganized to become a part of academic affairs.

- Faculty and student leaders helped the university learn about the value of service-learning by developing model service-learning courses and advocating for institutional changes such as the Service-Learning Scholars Program.

- Individual faculty members were able to carry the message of service-learning pedagogy to others in their own departments and colleges. Involved faculty members became the advocates for service-learning. They also helped the institution understand service-learning by creating courses that served as concrete examples of this pedagogy.

- Service-learning scholars educated many faculty members about service-learning as they sought faculty to serve as their advisers in the program. Other Bennion Center students served as paid classroom assistants in new service-learning courses and handled reflection sessions and community connections.

- Service-learning courses require an expenditure of faculty thought, time, and energy that is rarely rewarded by a research institution.

- The use of the term *service-learning* can sometimes refer to the general method of learning through action and reflection, and other times to mean the inclusion of service within an academic course. At the University of Utah, the term has been used to mean the latter, yet this implies to some that learning through service occurs only within courses. It may even undermine the value of learning through co-curricular service. Bennion Center leaders attempted to find other language to differentiate between these two modes of learning but have been unsuccessful in finding appropriate language.

- As faculty became engaged with service-learning issues, they began to realize that there were additional ways that academics could contribute to community knowledge while advancing higher education purposes, especially through community-based research and other forms of knowledge generation. These possibilities are still unclear, and indeed, even the language used to describe this involvement is indefinite, with terms such as *community-based research, civic engagement, civic or community scholarship*, and other terms used without clear consensus on their meaning.

- Bennion Center staff discovered that while faculty members were willing to teach service-learning courses, they rarely joined their students on the “front lines” in the community. Those few faculty who engaged with their students in their service were better able to examine their experiences in relation to course content.
Unresolved Questions/ Remaining Challenges

- How can a Research I institution create a home for service-learning teaching and community-based research within departmental and institutional promotion, retention, and tenure expectations? The answers to this question will be discovered only with the active engagement of interested faculty and students with support from Bennion Center staff.

- How can the Bennion Center and their allies increase personal and professional support for those faculty leaders engaged in service-learning work?

- What are additional roles of faculty in bringing higher education knowledge generation and community needs together effectively? What language should be used to best describe these roles?

- Two historical observations lead to one important unanswered question. Observation #1: Faculty teaching service-learning courses or attempting to understand civic engagement rarely spend time with their students in the community. Observation #2: It is the personal engagement with people and needs in the community that energizes students. The question: Is it desirable to expect service-learning faculty to be personally involved in the community in ways that support their own students and enhance their own research and teaching? If yes, what strategies can service-learning advocates use to encourage this involvement?

- Additional questions related to the faculty role are identified in the following section on embedding service-learning and civic engagement within the institution.
A new faculty member in spring 1997, I began to learn about service-learning and investigate possibilities for incorporating it as a practice and pedagogy in my English Teaching Methods courses. My colleague and I in English Education were interested in being able to offer our students some real-world learning experiences corresponding to their classroom learning. Stephanie Peterson in the BC invited us to West High to attend the final meeting of a service-learning scholar with her project partners; it was an important gesture, because service-learning became real to me that afternoon as I perceived the impact we, the university partner, and West High, the community partner, could have on each other. Shortly thereafter, we began a conversation with staff from the Community Education Program at West High. What started off to be a conversation about how our students could be involved in pre-existing programs to support students at the high school became a conversation about starting a new program at the high school: the Family Literacy Center.

Having no idea what this meant, we started slowly; Irene Fisher’s guidance on this was crucial to us. We spent a year planning with our students: doing research at the high school and in the neighborhood with various constituencies—parents, administrators, students, and others. The following school year, beginning fall 1999, we opened the FLC in West High room 404; the principal was an enthusiastic supporter and gave us this classroom to use. In the first couple years, we had BC’s support and we had the expertise of an undergraduate T.A. to guide us in the ins-and-outs of s-l including reflection with our students. By the third year, I was the only director of the project as my colleague left the university, and I sought external funding to perpetuate and develop the center. In the first few years, the BC granted us seed funding, which enabled us to hire former students to staff the center at West High. By the fifth year, I had raised enough funding to hire a full-time staff member to keep the doors of the FLC open full-time during the school week. At this writing, I have continued to raise funding annually to retain the onsite director and have succeeded. The objectives, as I have stated them on grant applications, include the following:

We wish to provide learning and enrichment opportunities for students and families in Salt Lake City's West High community. We wish to keep students in school who are at risk of failing/dropping out, strengthening their academic performance and seeing them through graduation; providing language-learning opportunities for ELL (English language learners)—and thus to help immigrant and refugee students and families succeed; providing youth advocacy; and supporting teachers in enhancing their curricula by bringing arts and science programs into the school. The FLC works with a very broad academic spectrum and range of students, from those newly arrived in the country from African refugee camps to those in need of various kinds of support.
West High has offered our students a highly diverse population through which to see the complexities of education. As a central West side learning institution of many generations, it has:

- over 2500 7th-12th grade students
- 60% of students speaking 52 languages other than English in their homes
- 45% of students identified as low income
- 46% identifying as ethnic minorities, with Latino students as the largest group among Pacific Islanders, Asians, Africans, African Americans, and Native Americans.

With our base at West High, we have reached out to other west side neighborhood schools and organizations, all with corresponding demographics—Jackson Elementary, the UNP Children’s Book Exchange, the Sorensen Center, the 3rd District Juvenile Court tutoring program, and Horizonte Instructional Academy. In these contexts, the methods of teaching English/Language Arts that my students learn have been investigated, tested, expanded, and revised. English Education students participate in a broad array of classrooms and disciplines as tutors, mentors, and translators, contributing 500 hours each semester and gaining valuable pre-professional experience.

The FLC has implemented numerous programs, projects, and curricular developments at West High, including:

- the national Guest Writers Series, with over 25 renown authors conducting readings and writing workshops in the past 5 years to classrooms, assemblies, and after-school audiences
- the local guest writers series, with university creative writing graduate students presenting workshops in West High English classes
- field trips to galleries, museums, and university performances/lectures as with Sebastaio Salgado’s visit and the Monet to Picasso exhibit
- the ELL Literary Magazine project, including workshops with local guest writers and the annual production of a class chapbook
- Facing West, an ongoing series of student portraits showcasing the diversity of West High and the community (displayed in the Salt Lake Public Library, local galleries, and West High)
- the Altered Book project, enabling students to study narrative and bookmaking, and tell their own stories.

Some FLC community outreach service projects include:

- “In Our Neighborhood,” including reading in a bilingual kindergarten and reading with children and parents at the 4th South Health Clinic
- Warm-Up Winter Sock and Poetry Drive (this year will benefit homeless youth)
- Valentines for Veterans—book drive for VA Hospital
- Take a Dictionary Home—dictionary drive
- Summer Reading Book bags—for ELL students and their families
- Mentors in Our Neighborhood—local artists, musicians, scientists, etc. visit classrooms to share their passion for creating and learning
- Where We Come From—sharing cultures and traditions in the classroom
Involvement in community cultural awareness events at West High and beyond.

Funding and project support has come from:
- Lowell Bennion Community Service Center
- R. Harold Burton Foundation
- George S. and Delores Dore Eccles Foundation
- University of Utah English Department and College of Humanities
- West High School
- University Neighborhood Partners
- Utah Humanities Council
- Salt Lake Arts Council

As of this writing (March 2009), the FLC is at a crossroads. Seeking funding for the project to continue next year is a challenge in the current economy. However, wishing to expand the project rather than conclude it, I have entered into conversation with Linda Dunn, the current director of the BC, as well as Prof. Jan Dole in the College of Education. Thus we have begun thinking about how to deepen the institutionalization and sustainability of the FLP—a transformed Family Literacy Project—that would be housed in the new Utah Center for Reading and Literacy. Such a move would potentially enable a much broader range of undergraduates (all pre-service teachers from preK-12) to be part of the FLP and would give the project infrastructure support that it has not had until now. In the College of Education, it could also be a source for faculty and graduate student research, a partner citywide in implementing best literacy learning practices, and a base from which undergraduates from all disciplines could be involved.

The FLC began in 1997 with a conversation, and it is conversation nested in the desire to enhance education and have an enduring impact in the community that is now guiding its evolution.
Theme Five: Embedding Service-Learning and Civic Engagement within the University

“The university’s faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to contribute time and expertise to community and professional service, to national and international affairs and governance, and to matters of civic dialogue.” So declares the University of Utah’s mission statement.

“Don’t get involved in community service, service-learning, or any of those things until after you have tenure. They’ll take you away from the research and publication that have to be your first priority.” That’s a paraphrase of a comment heard frequently by untenured faculty members at the university, which is first and foremost a research institution.

Within the space between these two statements, the Bennion Center has struggled to determine how service-learning, community-based research, and civic engagement can be built into the University’s reward structure so that the ideal in the U’s mission statement can become a stronger reality.

Embedding civic engagement within the academic offerings of this university must reasonably be viewed as a long term persuasive campaign. This campaign has been carried out at the university itself as well as within national academic disciplines and other research institutions. The discussion of this persuasive campaign, read in conjunction with the section on the faculty role, will hopefully provide an overview of the key elements in the campaign and lay a foundation for the future.

Understanding the Challenge of Institutional Change

As those familiar with higher education will already know, faculty members create the values framework within which the institution functions. The formal faculty reward system (retention, promotion, and tenure) is the guiding force that determines faculty success. Within a research institution, the primary value is research, including publication of books, articles in refereed disciplinary journals, and securing of research grants. Retention, promotion, and tenure (RPT) guidelines vary from discipline to discipline, depending upon appropriate ways to measure research output in different fields. The primary formal rewards for faculty have been and continue to be determined in the promotion, retention, and tenure processes of each department, college, and the institution. Faculty frequently tell us that the primary informal approval from their colleagues also comes for research and publication in scholarly journals.
Creating academic institutional change in this arena requires change within the university administration, in the thinking of individual faculty members, departments, and colleges, as well as in national disciplinary associations and other research institutions.

**Ongoing Support from the U’s Central Administration**

It is important to acknowledge that at no time in the Bennion Center’s campaign for service-learning and civic engagement has there been active opposition from administration, faculty, or others. Indeed, there have been varying and important levels of institutional funding and moral support for service-learning and civic engagement from 1988 forward. The U’s presidents have all been members of the state and national Campus Compact. President Bernie Machen was the president of the national Compact. Each president contributed to the work of the center in different ways, through verbal public support, through institutional funding, and through inviting Bennion Center presentations to the Board of Trustees, the president’s cabinet, the National Advisory Committee. The senior vice president for academic affairs has spoken in several national conferences to describe the support for service-learning from within this research institution. Both senior vice presidents have provided funding for service-learning and civic engagement. This administrative support should be seen as critical, but not sufficient, in the effort to create institutional change.

While much progress has been made, it is important to also note that many faculty on campus were apathetic toward or unaware of these developments, or saw them as passing fads. College and departmental administrators often advised young faculty to stay away from the Bennion Center and service-learning prior to gaining tenure.

**Student and Faculty Contributions to the Persuasive Campaign**

Action to persuade this institution to more fully embrace service-learning and civic engagement has primarily come from students, from individual faculty members who were early adapters to service-learning, and from other faculty members who served on important Bennion Center action committees. The student and individual faculty roles are spelled out in other sections of this document. It bears repeating here that student and faculty leadership were the twin pillars of change that have created the Service-Learning Scholars Program as well as 300 service-learning courses in 41 departments. Student and faculty leaders have modeled the value of civic engagement in their own spheres, serving as passionate advocates to others.

In every case in which an academic department developed a plan for implementing service-learning across their department, at least one individual faculty leader played an important developmental role. Mark Bergstrom in the Communication Department, for example, taught the basic research methods course for a number of years as a service-learning class before the department formally agreed to offer it as a service-learning course no matter who taught it. This move assured the course is not dependent upon one faculty member. Each individual faculty member who developed a service-learning course served as a model, helping the campus learn the possibilities of service-learning
pedagogy. The departmental initiatives described later were dependent for their success on the individual faculty leaders who built service-learning courses in this early stage.

**Key Leadership from the Center’s Faculty Advisory Committee**

Individual faculty members, as shown above, played a role as models and advocates within their own departments. Another type of leadership came from the Bennion Center’s Faculty Advisory Committee and special sub-committees. Importantly, each of these groups of faculty had a clear action charge that was designed to move forward the agenda of service-learning and civic engagement across the campus. Faculty members who served on these committees were selected for the respect of their colleagues, their knowledge of the campus, and their willingness to engage with the Bennion Center. In any campus forum in which faculty would best respond to faculty colleagues, members of this committee rather than center staff made the presentations. On many occasions, committee members remarked on their willingness to serve with the Bennion Center because real action resulted from their group decisions. The “bias toward action” was visible here as well as with student leaders.

In 1994, an invited outside evaluator of Bennion Center service-learning programs recommended the center develop an institutional rationale for integration of service-learning that would reflect the shared vision of those involved on campus. At a summer retreat, members of the Bennion Center’s Faculty Advisory Committee accepted that recommendation as one of the group’s major goals for the coming academic year. A sub-committee, jokingly dubbed the “whether or why” (to institutionalize service-learning), or WOW committee, was appointed to develop this rationale. The process of creating the document and rationale helped everyone involved deepen their shared understanding of the value of service-learning. The document itself became invaluable in presenting the thinking of the Bennion Center, as shaped primarily by involved faculty, to a broader audience. Professor Irv Altmann, who chaired the sub-committee and was the principal writer of the document, willingly spoke on campus to numerous audiences and helped to increase understanding of the importance of service-learning: to teach socially responsive knowledge. (The complete document is included in the appendix.) The creation of this document and its broad discussion on campus was one of the most important steps in the campaign of persuasion for service-learning.

**Building Service-Learning within Departments**

Subsequent to the completion of the WOW Document, the Bennion Center’s faculty advisory committee focused on institutionalizing service-learning within departments. In the first year of this effort, the two senior vice presidents and the president all provided funds to invite academic departments into a partnership agreement to build service-learning into their course offerings. Eight departments accepted the offer, encouraged by internal faculty leaders who had already developed service-learning courses on their own. This process has been repeated in subsequent years and has proven significant to building long-term commitment.
In 2000, the focus on service-learning began to expand to a broader view of campus-community partnership. The new language called for civic engagement—a broad range of ways including but not limited to service-learning—to meet educational goals while directly benefiting the community. In 2001, Marshall Welch, then the new Bennion Center director and himself a faculty member, convened a Civically Engaged Scholarship Study Action Group of faculty to explore what forms civically engaged scholarship might take. In 2003-2004, five students serving as “Civically Engaged Fellows” successfully completed a project designed to promote civic engagement on campus. In these first steps toward a broader view of campus-community engagement, the center began by building support among individual faculty members and students. Further strategies for advancing this work are clearly needed.

**Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas**

- Institutional changes to encourage the involvement of faculty members and academic departments encountered deeply held values that placed research as a more important contribution than teaching or service. Changes in this reward system to place a high value on the teaching of socially responsive knowledge have and will require a long-term, persuasive approach to institutional change. Change will have to come at the institutional level and also at a national level, since faculty members often consider themselves more strongly tied to their academic disciplines than to their institution.

- Change in a university can come both from bottom up and top down, but there are serious challenges to each. Individual students and faculty were able to make real contributions to the creation of service-learning courses and programs. Top administrators can help with public attention and funding. Support is needed at all levels.

- Some disciplines and departments have been more open to service-learning and civic engagement than others. Leaders are still needed within all disciplines, but especially visionary faculty leaders are needed in colleges such as science, mining and minerals, and engineering.

- Real change requires leadership from individual faculty members, but if that change is to be long-term, it requires departmental and college buy-in based on inclusive and thoughtful planning. The changes must reinforce goals of the campus unit.

- The need to include civic engagement within the reward system of the institution should not be seen as antagonistic to an emphasis on research or teaching. The change requires a broader view of what constitutes legitimate research and teaching as well as methods to evaluate community-based research and teaching.

- Strong faculty leaders are essential to creating institutional change. Even though Bennion Center staff have typically been highly regarded, faculty who have personally succeeded academically and have earned high regard within the institution are the most persuasive spokespersons.

- For some reason, discussion of work to enhance communities seems to cause those faculty involved to get in touch with the “better angels of their nature.” It seems that these reactions have and can give meaning to the academic life.
Unresolved Questions/Continuing Challenges

- Many of the first wave of faculty members who served on Bennion Center committees, developed service-learning courses, or provided leadership in other ways have made their contributions and have retired, moved on to other interests, or used up their best ideas. How can continuing momentum be found for what is inevitably a long-term change in both the University of Utah and higher education in general? One observation from the past that may help answer this question relates to informal or formal teams of faculty, who, often across departments and disciplines, support each other’s interests in civic engagement and service-learning. The Borchard project participants and the more recent informally designated “tribe” of faculty who will soon have a book on service-learning published provide two examples. Faculty members in these two groups became civic engagement advocates and practitioners as well as friends and colleagues.

- In the mid-1990’s when the Faculty Advisory Committee grappled with how to address promotion, retention, and tenure issues within the institution, the group decided to encourage service-learning practitioners to present their coursework in RPT processes within the teaching category. The results of this thinking are included in the Bennion Center’s Faculty Manual. It may be time for a group of currently involved faculty to revisit this issue and to offer guidance in how to present and evaluate civic engagement within RPT processes.

- The Bennion Center’s organizational structure to involve faculty was created in the early 1990’s. Some changes have been made in the type and role of committees, but it may well be time to ask if the current status of civic engagement on campus requires new faculty leadership structures. A new approach to mobilize energy might be a focus, perhaps the creation of a “Third Decade Plan for Civic Engagement.”

- For many years, the Bennion Center was the only campus department striving to involve faculty members in community work. Since 2001, University Neighborhood Partners has been in place with a partially shared goal of wedding campus and community needs. The Bennion Center’s significant role on campus complements University Neighborhood Partners’ visibility and physical presence in a geographical area of need in the community. How can the potential of these two entities best be harnessed to expand civic engagement?

- Should the Bennion Center support initiatives to mandate service-learning courses on the campus? This question has been raised roughly once each five years, and in the past the center has not supported this approach. This may or may not continue to be the appropriate response, but the center may well need to be prepared for such proposals in the future.

- Given the current status of service-learning and civic engagement on campus, is it time to ask the question: How will we know when we have succeeded? What is the ultimate goal for these types of offerings at this institution? This may well be a new question to ask a representative group to consider.
Civic Engagement/Service-Learning in the 21st Century
By Irwin Altman, Former Distinguished Professor of Psychology, and Chair of the Bennion Center Faculty Committee

Civic Engagement is a broad term that incorporates service-learning classes, community-based research, and community outreach/service projects. My experience is primarily in the service-learning arena and my remarks are restricted to that topic. I leave it to others to address incorporating all aspects of CE into the curriculum of higher education.

Integrating SERVICE LEARNING (SL) into the curriculum of higher education is, in my experience, absolutely necessary, definitely an opportunity, and surely a very difficult process.

Why is it necessary for higher education to include SL as an essential and integral part of the fabric of every student’s education? My perspective on this need/demand/necessity is summarized, in part, in remarks made at a banquet honoring SL scholars at our university several years ago. I said:

“We are entering an era in American life in which every educated citizen must be more than a skilled engineer, doctor, lawyer, scientist or simply a well read and educated person. Because of cultural changes, an aging citizenry, population growth, a massive wave of new immigrants, changing economics, and the inability of government to meet all of our local needs, it is becoming evident that our educated citizens must also become community problem solvers. They must know how to apply and translate their knowledge and skills to the solution of social problems in their communities. Doctors must gain an understanding of the lifestyle and background of the people they serve; architects and city planners must appreciate the culture and customs of the people for whom they design places; lawyers must have insight in to the lives of the people they represent above and beyond the strict legal issues, and so on. In short, we are entering an era of rapid change on many fronts, and the knowledge that students gain in colleges and universities must become “socially responsive” so that they can have the skills to apply socially responsive knowledge to the communities in which they live.”

These thoughts hold true today—perhaps even more so in view of the world economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 and the shifting international geopolitics of the present era.

The demand/need/necessity for SL to be a central part of every student’s college education must be addressed—because our college students will be on the front line of coping with and solving community problems for decades to come. And they must be prepared to do so as soon as they complete their studies. Just as we expect engineering, business, architecture and professional school students to have problem-solving skills at the completion of their undergraduate education, so it is that all undergraduates, regardless of major, must learn problem-solving skills by the time they graduate. And this must be accomplished without sacrificing basic understanding of concepts, methods and theories of students’ majors and disciplines.
If we succeed in this transformation of higher education, the opportunities and rewards for students, faculty and institutions will be manifold. For students, understanding how to translate the basic ideas of their majors into visible results is exciting and empowering. And SL projects sometimes result in community-based jobs following graduation. For faculty, teaching SL classes and supervising SL projects often involves the incorporation of ideas, methods, and knowledge of several disciplines, potentially enhancing the perspective of faculty and opening up new and exciting problems, ideas and collaborations. For institutions, empowering students with tangible skills can result in a variety of rewards—students as alumni in important community positions, visibility of students and the institution in political and community settings—thereby highlighting the credibility of colleges and universities beyond the present somewhat fragile and variable esteem we presently experience.

At the same time, there are significant barriers to integrating SL into the basic fabric of the curriculum of higher education. For example, it is a fact that SL courses and projects are highly labor intensive for faculty and students. Student projects in communities require extensive planning, careful supervision by faculty, considerable effort in designing courses, establishing community placements for students, and they involve substantial effort maintaining ongoing liaison and management of student projects as they are conducted. As a result, most SL courses must be quite small compared with traditional classes—a serious problem when we presently demand high student credit-hour production by faculty and departments.

Furthermore, time and supervision requirements of SL classes may subvert research and scholarship of faculty—a crucial aspect of faculty productivity and a necessity in research universities. Indeed, the traditional norm is for faculty to spend equal time in research and teaching, and to produce scholarly products in the form of books, articles, research grants, and a variety of tangible scholarly products. The simple fact is that a faculty member’s career and the stature of an institution are based in large measure on faculty ability to complete research on a sustained basis. How can this be accomplished in a situation where more time than ever is spent in labor-intensive SL classes and projects?

In addition, there is enormous pressure on individual faculty, departments, colleges, and the institution as a whole to produce student credit hours, enrollments, and majors—so much so that annual budgets at our and other institutions are significantly linked to production of student credit hours. Given the need for SL classes to be small, in view of necessary supervision time that exceeds that of regular classes, how can departments, colleges and the institution meet the production demands placed on them?

I do not have a complete answer to resolving societal demands, teaching requirements, faculty careers, and institutional pressures to make SL an integral part of our higher education curriculum. But here are some guiding principles that seem essential.

The leadership of our institutions, boards of trustees, and the Board of Regents must provide strong impetus and support of the idea of SL as a central feature of the curriculum of higher education. SL should be a high priority for the system. In addition,
faculty governance bodies must be charged with conducting a full-scale analysis, development of plans and policies, and identifying cost requirements to achieve the goal.

But more than words are needed. The leadership must be committed to obtaining funds and establishing funding priorities for programs; special allocations of funding should be provided by the legislature; capital campaigns and fund raising should place SL programs at the very highest priority. Obtaining necessary funding will require energetic and committed leadership at all levels—not merely words or lukewarm financial support.

Within the university, colleges and departments will have to develop local plans, programs and priorities as follows:

- Reshape the curriculum to develop student requirements to include SL and regular disciplinary courses as aspects of general education and departmental majors.
- Reshape the curriculum to have enough low-enrollment SL classes coupled with regular classes in such a way as to maintain a given level of SCH production.
- Reshape the teaching roles of faculty to include SL classes and to provide graduate and undergraduate TAs to assist in managing classes.
- Reshape the hiring and structure of faculty positions to include tiers of regular faculty, post docs, lecturers, non-tenure track faculty, and others to manage the whole curriculum in ways that maintain SCH and preserve selected faculty as teacher-scholars.
- Reshape tenure and promotion principles to acknowledge the special teaching demands of SL classes, and to give recognition to SL teaching as special (although not a substitute for research/scholarship).
- Develop institutional and college funding and grants to develop and manage SL classes, including faculty release time and special funds when needed.
- Encourage colleges and departments to build stronger ties with community agencies and incorporate selective agency personnel as adjunct faculty/consultants/co-teachers in certain classes.
- Make SL funding a primary role in university development and fund-raising campaigns for student scholarships, faculty chairs, and programs targeted at SL.

What I have presented may be a pipe dream or, some might say, a grandiose delusion. However, the proposed ideas are one logical derivation of the challenges facing higher education in the real world of the 21st century, and the absolute necessity for higher education to serve society by addressing these problems in ways that directly contribute to their solution. Although what I have presented may be a pipe dream, perhaps even delusional, so is it maladaptive and unacceptable for higher education to continue doing its business solely as it has done for several decades. We are obligated to respond to immediate and future needs of the communities we serve, and the present educational system needs to develop new programs alongside productive and viable existing ones.

If the perspective presented here is inaccurate or foolish, then an alternative vision is necessary. What shall that be? If an alternative isn’t proposed and put in place, then higher education as we know it will fall by the wayside to competitors—such as for-profit private institutions (that have been enjoying major successes in recent years). So, let us wake up; a new age is here!! We must get on board with new ideas and programs or
suffer the consequences of mediocrity and failure to serve new generations of students and communities.
Theme Six: Understanding the Culture of the Bennion Center

Most of us know the story of the blind men and the elephant. As a reminder, it’s the story of six blind men who were told there was an elephant in their village. They didn’t know what an elephant was, so they decided to go feel it. One touched his leg and said, “Hey, he feels like a pillar.” Another touched the ear and said he felt like a big fan. Another touched the tusk….and so the story -- and their ensuing argument -- goes.

The culture of the Bennion Center may be likened to the parts of the elephant: it undoubtedly feels different depending on where you touch it. The new student volunteer who comes to a Saturday morning yard clean-up, the faculty member who serves on the Faculty Advisory Committee, the service-learning scholar, the community partner -- all experience different aspects of the wide-ranging community that is the Bennion Center. But we believe there are some common threads throughout.

For our purposes here, we will attempt to paint a picture of what we and others sense when we engage in Bennion Center work over an extended period of time within the physical campus space where center planning and interaction happen. The student leaders who dominate this space, who organize much of the community involvement, and who are intense in their participation influence the culture of the center very strongly and positively. Much of this discussion of organizational culture, then, focuses on students who individually and collectively shape what people call the Bennion Center.

The Paradox of Individualism and Community within the Center

Understanding the culture of any organization can best be derived from living that culture. Connie Kubo Della-Piana attempted that living understanding of the Bennion Center as she conducted field work in the center for her 1995 doctoral dissertation, Performing Community: Social Commitment and Individualism in a Community Service Organization. Connie’s participant/observer comments may help us as we offer glimpses of the complex and exciting culture of this living organization and those individuals who function within it. Her observations especially focus on the strong roles of individual student leaders and their simultaneous immersion within the Bennion Center’s intentional community.

From the beginning, Bennion Center student leaders assumed dual roles: to individually lead a year-long community service program and to participate in the shared responsibilities of all the other students carrying out similar work. For example, in 1987 Brenda Dea individually created and directed a service partnership with Lowell Elementary School. She also worked with other students to recruit volunteers for all their programs, answer the Center’s telephone, create public relations materials, learn and
problem-solve, and make decisions about the operation of the student component of the center. Each student had a clear individual leadership responsibility as well as a shared role within the Center.

Within this community, student leaders very quickly decided to clarify the ways they wanted to work together and the values they saw as essential to the shared work. As Connie Della-Piana reminds us in her dissertation, these students identified values such as “respecting self and others; engaging in thoughtful action; valuing education, knowledge, and understanding; expressing and sharing emotions and feelings; appreciating humor and fun; nurturing integrity and commitment; and practicing open and honest communication.” As Connie says, “It is in the management of these themes of action and value, practice and significance that community materializes.”

**Living the Center’s Values**

In order to actually live these ideals within an everyday environment, the students created the “Good On Ya” Guy. The “Good On Ya” was (and is) a stuffed koala bear awarded every two weeks to a student leader or staff member who shows, through their actions, that they practice one or more of the Center’s professed values. The “Good On Ya” has changed hands at regular center meetings and still looks amazingly new today, despite 20 years of rotation. In recent years, the “Good On Ya” has traveled to conferences, retreats, and service projects with Bennion Center students.

In a similar values exercise several years later, student leaders defined the attributes of community they saw as important within the center. Once again quoting Connie: “For members of the Center, community is defined in terms of action-oriented words such as ‘being responsible, engaging in critical evaluation, being open to diverse ideas and expression, being just, engaging in celebration, being contemplative, building consensus, being inclusive, and engaging in purposeful activities leading to a common vision.’”

These concepts, which may seem commonplace to the reader, were intensely discussed, debated, and selected; they took on meaning to the participants through their decision-making process and through subsequent shared experiences.

Student efforts to define the type of community they desire for the Bennion Center continue to the present, as seen in the 2008 Service Council mission statement. “As Bennion Center student leaders, we strive for a better tomorrow, and take action for a better today. We are planting a seed for change that will flourish in a diverse community. We promote an action-oriented and impactful volunteerism marked by empathetic advocacy, unity, open-mindedness, and long-term sustainability, all while having fun.”

**Using a Consensus Process to Make Vital Decisions**

In a 1991 statement of values, the Bennion Center said: “We value the shared experiences and values which make us a community. We value group decision-making and problem-
solving by consensus, which ensures consideration of individual needs with a focus on the community good.”

That same year, a situation arose that seriously tested the Center and the student leaders’ commitment to several of those attributes of community. For the first several years of its existence, the Bennion Center’s student-led AIDS Program had made Thanksgiving pies for affected people, helped in the AIDS Foundation’s food bank, and carried out other direct services. In 1991, students active in the program decided that they wanted to add service actions that helped to prevent the disease. They began to work with other health-related groups primarily to distribute condoms on campus and to sponsor Stop AIDS meetings. Shortly, concerned individuals began to call President Chase Peterson’s office to object to these actions. The president’s office called the Bennion Center director, Irene Fisher, to alert her to the concerns, but was quite willing to allow the center to determine how to deal with these concerns.

Each program director had been told he or she was in charge of their program. There was as yet no clear way to deal with a program’s service actions that might be seen as controversial either within or without the Bennion Center. The student leaders convened to determine how to handle this situation. They agreed that their values for community dictated that a consensus decision-making process should be used to assure that our internal community supported the actions taken in the name of the organization. The group agreed to seek consensus, rather than the more common majority, to determine the group’s actions. This decision grew from a belief that seeking only a majority vote was inconsistent with the community value of honoring diverse opinions. (See Scott Peck’s A Different Drum for an understanding of this value for community. The Prologue to that book is included in the Appendix.)

One meeting of all student leaders was held to learn more about how to carry out a consensus decision-making process. Four early morning meetings allowed time for thorough discussion of the issues involved, and additional small group discussions were visible within the center. Meetings were long, thoughtful, and difficult, with student and staff participants eager to seek consensus, but with very different perspectives evident. A final consensus was eventually reached that allowed some efforts to prevent AIDS but did not support condom distribution on the campus in the center’s name. Irene Fisher invited volunteers in the AIDS Project to dinner at her home the week-end following the final consensus meeting, and the participants rose to her challenge to brainstorm 100 actions they could take to prevent AIDS that would fall within the consensus decision guidelines.

This consensus process was extremely challenging for participants, but most agreed that this was a real example of how public decision-making should be carried out: with respect for all views, with careful self-evaluation, and in awareness that the group’s integrity depends upon its members’ supporting its actions. During the 20 years since that experience, Irene Fisher has had many unsolicited calls and conversations with students who felt this was one of the most powerful learning experiences they had during their college years. The experience did a great deal to bring together students who said they
would never have worked with people with views so diverse without the Bennion Center community. It worked to solidify the concept of community within the Bennion Center. This concept may or may not be “felt” by all the blind men or by Bennion Center participants outside the student component, but most of those who spend considerable time with the center develop an awareness of this intentional community.

The Impact of Tragedy on the Bennion Center Culture

The Bennion Center’s experiences with death and tragedy have served to further define the organization’s culture. Lowell and Merle Bennion died of causes related to old age, Lowell in February, 1996, and Merle in 1994. Drew Peterson, the Bennion Center’s first board chair, became a quadriplegic after a motorcycle accident and died several years later. Todd Mitchell, student director of the center’s Navajo Project, was killed in a Biathlon accident in 1991. Dan Wendleboe, a student participant in a center service trip, died in a vehicle accident in Mexico in 1991. Chelsea Hale, a Special Olympics leader and frequent volunteer, died in 2001. More recently, students participating in an Alternative Spring Week-End experience (similar to Alternative Spring Break, but shorter and held in Salt Lake) were present outside the Salvation Army when a homeless person who had just been inside with them fell and died in their midst. These deaths all left voids in the fabric of the Bennion Center community. On several of these occasions, University Counseling Center staff helped Bennion Center participants reflect on the losses and deal with individual and group grief.

One of those tragedies especially impacted the Bennion Center because it occurred on a center-sponsored service trip. In 1991, on a post-Christmas service trip to Mexico, one of the three vehicles carrying students overturned, killing one student and seriously injuring three others who had to be air-lifted back to Salt Lake. This tragedy continues to impact those who were on the trip both emotionally and physically.

Those impacted by the Mexico accident, including students on the trip, their parents, and other Bennion Center friends, all came together with love the night those on the trip returned; they shared their experiences and feelings. These were powerful and formative experiences that brought participants even more closely into a supportive community. Unlike some tragedies, law suits and blame were totally absent from the Mexico accident. Doris and Stratford Wendleboe, Dan’s parents, were present when the other students returned, and throughout the following months and years they have shared loving interactions with the Bennion Center, including the dedication of a Dan Wendleboe Memorial Library within the center.

Another way to view the culture of the Bennion Center that may be helpful is through the lens of the center’s several mission statements. The following three sections of the document focus on cultural signs of commitment to action, change, and learning, the three elements constant in all three statements of mission.
Cultural Signs of the Center’s Value for Action

The Bennion Center mission statements and the Pledge to Our Community all emphasize a focus on action, and the center has created a culture to live this idea as well as speak it. This action focus has been evident since the earliest years, beginning with the example set by Lowell Bennion, who acted on his belief in service and influenced so many others. It was evident through the service project carried out by the board the day before the center formally opened. It was visible in the slogan that came back from the 1987 COOL Conference with seven Bennion Center student leaders: Ain’t nothin’ to it but to do it. Tony Morgan, Vice President for Budget and Planning, commented that “the Bennion Center obviously doesn’t work on University time!!” The center has consistently focused on hands-on service first. Action shots in annual reports, newsletters, and brochures are prevalent. Although the center holds forums and other conversational and celebratory events, they almost always include direct service and support rather than supplant action in the community. Hands-on service has always been a part of the interview process for new directors, emphasizing that service action is expected for everyone. The Lowell Bennion Drivers’ Club, which enabled one student leader a week to drive Lowell on errands, helped students see Lowell’s action focus, as they visited widows in need of friendship and practical support such as changing door locks, weeding gardens, and cleaning behind the refrigerator. Faculty members who serve on Bennion Center committees frequently comment that they find these committees satisfying because something really happens as a result of their decisions. Action is a Bennion Center cultural value.

Cultural Signs of the Value for Change

Change, within the Bennion Center context, has expanded progressively to mean 1) change in individuals to value and practice lifetime service, 2) change within the Bennion Center itself, 3) change in the university, to link its resources to the community, 4) change in higher education and academic disciplinary associations, 5) change in faculty members to visualize and practice service-learning teaching and civic engagement, and, 6) ultimately, change in our communities. Almost all activities supported by the Bennion Center can be linked to the desire for change in one or more of these areas.

Student leaders first face the concept of change as they direct their own programs and come to ask why questions about homelessness, or drug abuse, or inadequate education, or lack of services for the elderly. They also experience the need to change their programs or other aspects of the Bennion Center in order to overcome problems and to more effectively serve the community. Student conversations often focus on the need to go beyond band-aid approaches to community problems to address prevention. The continued evolution within the center testifies to the flexibility built into the culture of the organization.

Another perspective on change can be seen in the recurring student conversations about charity, issue advocacy, community education, and social justice. Lowell engaged in all these approaches to building a better world. All are evident in the array of Bennion
Center programs. Yet the conversation continues as individuals try to understand their own interests and actions and as the Bennion Center defines which of these approaches to community change fit within the center’s understanding of service. Change is a Bennion Center cultural value.

**Cultural Signs of the Value for Learning**

The title of this document underscores the center’s belief that we create ourselves as we go – the life of the individual, the center, the community: *We Make the Road By Walking*. Cultural underpinnings for the center’s focus on learning can be seen in the reflective conversations, reflection magazines, and the current annual reflection gallery. These pragmatic approaches to learning reinforce the focus on learning by doing so inherent in the center’s practices. The sign in the director’s office, which has remained there through many of the 20 years, says it clearly: *Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand.*

A comment from one student leader helps illustrate the learning emphasis. About mid-year, this student leader came into Irene Fisher’s office and excitedly asked, “Do you know what I just figured out?” Irene doesn’t remember the specific knowledge he announced, but it was a concept Irene was certain had been taught in basic leader training. Careful review showed it had indeed been part of the curriculum. The comment reinforced for Irene and others that real learning grows out of application and experience, which is the primary mode of learning for student leaders and volunteers.

Kim Paulding, a Bennion Center alumna, remembers the learning power of just one afternoon with the Lowell Bennion Drivers’ Club. As students took Lowell to visit elderly people who lived alone in their own home, they saw friendships, service, joy, and action.

The shared value of learning has been visible in the center’s faculty committees and the board of advisors. Participants in these groups have grappled with issues of service-learning and civic engagement, have expanded their own knowledge of these issues, and have shared their learning with others throughout the University. Faculty have learned through creating service-learning courses themselves and sharing their learning with others. Oftentimes students have led faculty members to that learning by inviting them to support center programs. Learning is a Bennion Center cultural value.

**Other Glimpses of Bennion Center Culture**

The six blind men might well experience any of the following aspects of center life and draw conclusions about the Bennion Center culture from that experience. Taken together they reinforce the sense of community, the aversion to hierarchy, and the value for inclusivity.

Throughout many years in the Bennion Center’s history, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members came together in a spring semester book group. Attendees,
usually about 20-25 people from across these groups, read and talked about a book with a strong relationship to the Bennion Center’s service work. Books included The Call of Service by Robert Cole, Amazing Grace by Jonathan Kozol, Some Do Care by Robert Damon, and many others. These sessions offered a reflective time to integrate the authors’ ideas with the service experiences of diverse participants.

**Informal impromptu discussions** within the center often focus on community issues related to service and offer opportunities for diverse participants to express their views. These discussions can and often do serve to stretch and even challenge participants’ views. Unfortunately, in some instances students who are less confident in expressing their ideas report feeling uncomfortable with these exchanges. Additionally, the open cubicles in the Bennion Center can invite conversations that may be overheard by others who disagree without offering an opportunity to express a counter view. Center leaders, who are eager to encourage a range of ideas, religious and political beliefs, and ethnic backgrounds, realize that it is and always will be a constant challenge to assure that an open inviting atmosphere exists for all.

For the first fourteen years of the Bennion Center’s life, **no titles** were used in written communication, i.e., invitations, letters, annual reports. This decision had a two-fold purpose: to keep titles from causing a feeling of separation between academics with degrees and community partners, and to simplify the compilation of mailing lists, etc. This may have contributed to a feeling of informality and acceptance. Throughout the first 20 years informality has remained a hallmark of the center with use of first names the norm.

It has been the goal of leaders within the Bennion Center to assure that information about events, decisions, and policies is easily available to all leaders, with the assumption that **access to information** within a community equalizes opportunities, encourages participation, and empowers everyone. As changes in the means of communication have changed, the Bennion Center’s communication has changed as well, moving from weekly written memos to all student leaders to e-mail and internet linkages.

The **organizational structure** of the Bennion Center has always grown out of the service work that exists at any given time. At many periods in the center’s history, leaders have struggled to draw an accurate organizational chart. Initially that chart was a series of circles radiating outward from center leaders, to active volunteers, to the community. At one time, center leaders spent a summer reading Meg Wheatley’s books on organizational structure, and drew a series of circles with interactive, two-way arrows. At yet another time the organizational structure was pictured as a flower, with multiple petals representing different facets of the center’s work. Several times, for hiring purposes, the center had to provide the U’s Human Resource Department a more traditional organizational chart. A student leader seeing this series of boxes arranged above and below each other commented, “Oh my. I thought my position was more important than that.” In practice, participants learn the Bennion Center structure by living within it. Hierarchy has not been a value of the Bennion Center.
Another cultural value is that **decisions** are made, as much as possible, by the people leading and doing the service work, not the center director or staff. In most instances, this method works well and provides a strong and very real sense of empowerment to those in student leadership positions. Some degree of ambiguity exists about the role of staff and the advisory board in relation to the student component decision-making structures. This may be an organizational reality that will continue, as student empowerment and organizational accountability must co-exist.

The **Bennion Center Advisory Board** has existed since the creation of the center itself and includes representatives of each group of participants – students, faculty, staff, community members, and alumni. The board is regularly asked to offer advice on key issues that impact all segments of the center, including financial development. The board has been involved in selecting each new director in 1987, 2001, and 2008. Other decision-making bodies include only students, or faculty, or alumni. These groups guide the student component, focus on faculty and curricular issues, involve alumni, or carry out other functions specific to one segment of Bennion Center participants.

Over the years, the center has celebrated special **one-time events** as well as annual recognitions. These include the center’s fifth, tenth, and twentieth anniversaries and the fall Legacy of Lowell and the spring Celebration of Service. All these celebrations share common components: they have all included direct hands-on service; each focused on some type of shared reflection on individual and group achievements; all have all tangible community outcomes; and with only a few exceptions, they have been low-key and informal. A permanent, physical location – the Bend in the River – grew from the center’s 10th anniversary celebration and continues as a community site for learning and a potential for campus-community partnerships.

The **spaces** that the Bennion Center occupies have had an impact on cultural development in a variety of ways. This was especially true as the center moved from its first tiny office in Room 270 Union to a portion of the current space in 101 Union, when Dick and Ted Jacobsen helped it expand within its current space, and when the center established the Service House at Fort Douglas. Within the current space, priority has always been given to assuring that student leaders have adequate and well organized space that is inviting and that helps them carry out their responsibilities. The acquisition of the Service House opened enormous and not-yet-fully-realized potential for students with similar community service interests to live more fully with diverse others who share their service interest.

Bennion Center **fund-raising practices** have reflected the culture in a number of ways. Most importantly, the center has, from the beginning, refused to follow the customary practice of listing donors by some hierarchical system, identifying those who gave the most, those who gave somewhat less, and those who gave small amounts, i.e. gold, silver, bronze donors. Although U development officers warned we would not be successful fund-raisers without using that approach, the center chose to maintain the practice of recognizing the value of all donors, regardless of the dollar amount of their gifts. Those
involved in fund-raising believe that this approach matches the value system of the type of donors attracted to our community work.

The center held only **one major fund-raising event** in its first 20 years. This was an evening with Robert Fulghum, the author of *Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* in 1993. Other sources of funding are the endowment earnings, University funds, and foundation and individual gifts. The center completed those first 20 years with an endowment of $3,012,749.

The culture of the Bennion Center has undoubtedly been influenced and shaped by the directors and staff members across the years. The first director’s passion for student leadership development influenced the basic structure of organization. The second director’s interest in civic engagement and linking faculty teaching, research, and service influenced faculty involvement with the center. And the third directors’ role, in her still-new position, has been energizing and empowering for all who have worked with her. She is ushering in a new era of campus and community engagement.

**Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas**

- One of the continuing challenges for American society is the interplay of individualism and commitment to the common good. A focus on each within the Bennion Center culture poses rich learning opportunities for all those involved, especially when problems arise that enable participants to probe their own and their colleagues’ values and viewpoints. The books *Habits of the Heart* and *The Different Drum* have helped participants as they wrestle with these issues.

- One of the attributes of Lowell Bennion’s example is his personal integrity: he walks the talk. The center has struggled to truly live the values it professes and to make those values tangible in its activities and forums. It is the opinion of the authors that this commitment is a major attraction of the center.

- The culture developed within the student component has been strong enough that, over time, it has impacted Bennion Center staff and other individuals who become involved, especially faculty members.

- The organizational structures have remained intentionally free of hierarchy and rich in opportunity for leadership.

**Unresolved Issues, Continuing Challenges**

- Bennion Center student leaders have consistently proclaimed a value for diverse opinions, diverse approaches to community service, and diverse political viewpoints. Maintaining an **open and inclusive environment** is essential to the capacity to attract and involve diverse participants. Yet any number of actions could easily tend to encourage or discourage students who perceive the center as too conservative, too liberal, too passive in the face of social injustice, or generally not in tune with a given student’s views. The possibility exists that, over time, the center could be viewed in such a way
that it can no longer attract the desired range of participants. The use of consensus
decision-making to determine the center’s actions in relation to the Campus AIDS Project
work is an example of one way to avoid that polarization, while exposing students to a
type of decision-making that values all viewpoints and people. Thought must be given to
this issue so that proactive approaches can prevent the center from becoming out of
bounds to segments of the student population.

• The Bennion Center houses both co-curricular and curricular programs. This provides
opportunities and challenges, and always requires careful balancing so that opportunities
are seized and challenges are addressed. Moves have been made to unite the student-
focused programs in both areas, but more attention to this issue may be needed in the
future.
Bennion Center Culture
Experienced Through Years as a Student Leader and Staff Member
By Curt Larsen, Former Student Leader and Staff Member

It was almost seven o’clock. The wild rice preparation was simmering pleasantly on the stove. The asparagus tips were nearly through marinating. The stuffing for the Rainbow trout, ready to go into the fish, and the whole unit, with fresh rosemary, was under the broiler. A simple pot of beans was warming on the back burner, and water stood ready to accept a few cups of a simple short grain rice.

For several hours that night, twenty-three Bennion Center students and a few newcomers would sit, crammed together in a small living room in the Brigadoon Apartments a few blocks from campus. Thirteen of them ate a small bowl of rice with their fingers from a Styrofoam bowl. Eight more filled their stomachs a bit more fully with assorted-sized plates of the same rice accompanied by black beans. And two students picked over the stuffed trout, wild rice pilaf with pine nuts and ginger, and braised asparagus tips, leaving much on their plates for a chocolate dessert yet to come. The occupants of the room sweated—it was a warm evening and the wall air-conditioning unit rendered meaningful conversation difficult. Valuing the words of their peers over cooler temperatures, each forehead glistened. The sobering topic: how to connect the privilege which comes from being raised in an educated, western world family with the harsh realities of a hard- scrabble existence that most experience in the developing world. More so, how does one get beyond silly self-centered guilt at the recognition and target meaningful ways to work to change the existing global dynamic in some small way?

This was the bi-weekly experience for a cluster of U of U students during the time of Grok, a Bennion Center program proposed in the mid-1990s by Jared Raynor. Similar efforts--discussions, service activities, reflections, and advocacy efforts—are repeated over and over by new waves of students who spend time grappling with the social ills of their day. Opportunity to understand, unwrap, and own the difficult problems of their world is what makes those who spent significant time affiliated with some aspect of the Bennion Center the thoughtful, committed citizens Margaret Mead believes are the only ones who have ever changed the world.

At the Bennion Center, hierarchy genuinely does not exist. Students see that the problems and challenges of the society they inhabit are real and aren’t disappearing with the solutions currently being tried to solve them. They learn that each of us has real responsibility to examine and change the current reality, and that those who aren’t engaged do little to make things better—indeed, they merely reinforce the status quo. They learn that they can and do make a difference, and that that difference can be positively made in countless different ways. Whether they worked on issues of health, poverty, ability, and sustainability or moved from issue to issue, Bennion Center students took ownership for a piece of the issues of their day. After they leave those walls, they understand that they must continue to take responsibility for the challenges around them, that they truly get Gandhi’s plea to be the change they wish to see in the world.
The center embodies one of Lowell’s core values—that people learn to love people, especially people who think, speak and act very differently than they do. When I look back at my Bennion Center days, I often reflect on the Marcel Proust quote, that “the true path of discovery lies not in seeing new lands, but in seeing with new eyes.” The magic of the Bennion Center lies in the collective understanding that students’ journeys must take them outside their comfort zones, but despite their level of greenness or experience in leadership, they have authentic ability to run the programs they oversee. This teaches them that they really do have important things to say and do to shape the values of the society they live in, and an obligation to question the way things work. The Bennion Center is a real community, a tiny version of the larger society in Salt Lake, in Utah, in the US, and in the world.

As the center continues to grow and change, the cultural importance for students to actively create and reinvent the programs and direction of their work becomes all the more integral to moving the center, and American democracy in general, forward. Keeping students in the driver seat of the creative ideas and potential policy solutions to society’s ills may best be summed up by former student Randy Katz, who once remarked, “I got my degree from the U. I got my education at the Bennion Center.”
The Culture of Community and Consensus

By Bill Crim, Former Bennion Center Student President

The Bennion Center has always been about much more than community service. It has been about reflecting and learning from that service, about developing a sense of civic engagement, about creating opportunities for leadership and collaborative problem solving. Most importantly to me, it has been about helping create an understanding of the concept of true community – and giving me tools to help build that sense of community where I live and work.

Evidence of the need to strengthen our sense of community, to bridge differences, and to build social capital is everywhere around us. Hyper-partisan political gridlock prevents us from solving some of our most critical challenges, and ideologues on both extremes of the political spectrum use the media to attack, denigrate, and push people towards fear, anger and even hatred of those with whom they disagree. The idea of building consensus with people with whom we disagree seems less believable to most people than the idea that they will win the lottery.

In the class I teach on community and non-profit organizations for the Department of Family and Consumer Studies, I ask students to write about community and the notion of solving challenging problems through consensus. Nearly everyone starts out believing that it’s completely impossible – a “utopian fantasy,” to use the words of one student. That’s not surprising, really. We are constantly reminded about what separates and divides us. We avoid political and policy conversations with people who disagree with us – even, or sometimes especially, if they are close family members. Sometimes we go to great lengths to surround ourselves with people who think like we do, and to avoid those with whom we disagree. How many people have ever had the experience of being part of a diverse community in which differences were respected and celebrated – and where disagreements were resolved, not by voting or compromising to the lowest common denominator, but by finding true consensus?

Fortunately, the values upon which the Bennion Center has been built help create that community and provide many of us with the experience that proves it is not a “utopian fantasy.” Imagine the surprise (and resulting hope) that people experience when they hear the “real life” example of a diverse group of people resolving conflict gracefully and in a way that strengthens the mutual commitment and bonds that people have within their community. For me, this experience was among the most powerful and formative of my life.

In about 1989, in the early and formative years of the Bennion Center, one of the student-led projects was focused on the timely and important issue of AIDS awareness and prevention. Irene Fisher recognized the potential of this project to become controversial, both within the Bennion Center and among the broader campus population. She also saw a tremendous learning opportunity and helped guide the entire group of student project directors through a process of defining our common values and establishing a framework for how we would work together and make decisions consistent with our community.
values of respect, inclusivity, consensus and others. It’s important to note both the vision and courage of Irene in creating this environment – trusting and then supporting a group of young college students to develop and be accountable for the results of this process.

Over the course of the school year, this diverse group of student leaders stayed committed to building consensus around what could have been an extremely divisive issue. The goal was to find a way for the Stop AIDS project to pursue its mission that was consistent with the values of the entire group of student project directors – and that could be subsequently sustained in the face of potential opposition from other entities on campus. The specific strategy being proposed – that of distributing condoms on campus - - was the controversial starting point of our effort to build consensus and community.

There was wide diversity of thought at the beginning of this effort. Many student directors felt that distributing condoms was not at all controversial, while others felt that to do so was an affront to the deeply held values of many students within and outside the Bennion Center. The idea that such differing viewpoints could come together was foreign to most of us, but we were committed to the dual goals of addressing this important problem and to doing so in a way that strengthened our community over the long term. Guided by the values of respect and honesty, the group engaged in several months of very difficult and challenging dialogue. We sought the advice of experienced consensus builders from the local Quaker Meeting and from Utah Peace Test. We learned that true consensus is much more than a negotiated compromise. We learned to really listen to and understand those who see the world in ways that are different from our own, looking for ways to build on common ground. Perhaps most importantly, we didn’t give up when it was difficult (which it always was) or when it seemed impossible (which it never was).

In the end, the group came to consensus – and in so doing identified a better approach than anyone had envisioned at the beginning. It was my participation in this process as a Bennion Center student leader almost 20 years ago that sustains my belief that we can transcend the political differences that are so divisive today. I have no doubt that by building the kind of inclusive community embodied in the values of the Bennion Center, we can solve any problem.
Memories of the Bennion Center

By Paul Christenson, Former Bennion Center Student Leader

I returned home from my LDS Mission just a few weeks before school started in the fall of 1992. Between the time I returned and school started, I attended the missionary farewell church service of Andrea Pinnock, a long-time family friend. The service was full of references to the Bennion Center and the wonderful opportunities it provided students. I knew that I wanted to make the Bennion Center a part of my college life so I went to the center and enrolled in the Volunteer Corps. Each month’s service project gave me the opportunity to learn about different aspects of our community by helping organizations like Wasatch Community Gardens and the Utah Food Bank.

Within a few months I was asked to be the chair, which meant I was invited to the weekly leadership meetings. I was intrigued with what I saw. Never before had I seen the concept of consensus be used in an organization of students. I enjoyed watching the process very much because it taught me to value the opinion of others. The bonding that occurred as we tried to reach consensus on a subject was also wonderful to experience.

While my commitment to serve others sprang from deep conviction of belief in the importance of service that I shared with many other Bennion Center students, my political views tended to be more conservative than many of the other volunteers. For the first time in my life I was in a minority. Indeed, one time I received a badge at a retreat that said, “Our token Republican.” Despite being one of the few people in the group with conservative political leanings, I never felt threatened or discriminated against. When we discussed the issues facing the Bennion Center and broader political topics, I always felt like people were interested in my perspective. This also helped me develop an appreciation for the thought processes used by others and helped me realize that when consensus is used appropriately to solve problems, a compromise can be reached that will take the best aspects of many approaches. What I enjoy about the acceptance I felt at the Bennion Center was that it helped me to feel even stronger and more comfortable with my own beliefs. The unconditional respect that pervades the Bennion Center’s philosophy can’t help but make someone feel more confident in their ideas, no matter what origin.

I will always be grateful for the experiences given to me by the Bennion Center. I learned to lead a diverse group of people in a volunteer setting. The importance of reaching out to help those less fortunate was indelibly seared into my mind. But most importantly, the culture of consensus not only taught me how to communicate with others of different perspectives but to learn to bridge the gaps so the best possible solution could be reached through give and take. In my profession as a lawyer, I see so many people who jump to conclusions or try to make things worse than they are by being confrontational. If only everyone could experience a world like the Bennion Center where mutual respect was taught, not only in precept but in example (Irene Fisher was and is the best example of this), I think the communication in our world would be much better.
Volunteerism – Scholarship – Leadership

By Jonny Murdock, Bennion Center Student Leader

Over the past three years, as my level of involvement with the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center has continuously increased, so too has my understanding and vision of what the center actually is. The Bennion Center is a truly unique organization in that it provides those it serves with the knowledge and resources they need to establish sustainable community-led service initiatives, while it brings to the University of Utah and its students tremendous opportunities for volunteerism, scholarship and leadership.

I first walked through the Bennion Center’s door in May of 2007 with the intention of getting involved at the University as a volunteer. I knew little about the structure, reach and purpose of the Center, but soon learned that it provided students with opportunities to volunteer in dozens of different programs, each addressing a specific issue in our community. Through volunteer work with the Bennion Center, students develop a passion for community service while simultaneously refining and developing a deeper enthusiasm for their educational and professional goals. My own goals have not only become clearer, but my dedication to their fulfillment has strengthened through the rich experiences I have enjoyed as a volunteer in this organization. Volunteering with the Bennion Center inevitably unearths two other opportunities that, if taken advantage of, act as aids in achieving such goals; I am speaking of scholarship and leadership.

Whether through direct volunteer work, Bennion Center-sponsored learning events, or service-learning courses, the center’s student volunteers are engrossed in opportunities for scholarship that can lead to a broader, more diverse education. I have benefitted a great deal from utilizing such opportunities as they have provided me with the ability to draw on an increased understanding and awareness of issues within our community while in school and work settings, the result of which has been the attention of my superiors. Involvement in such opportunities results in students who stand out due to the unique qualities inherent in the experience and education tied to this involvement. Students who enroll and graduate as service-learning scholars especially benefit as their degrees represent a one-of-a-kind college career marked by service, involvement, and leadership.

Volunteer and scholarship opportunities with the Bennion Center enhance students’ leadership skills and ability to assume broader roles in the ongoing effort to better the community. This experience gained will be utilized again and again throughout their academic and professional careers and it is often a unique highlight in their resumes or interviews for work and school. I have been afforded many remarkable opportunities as a result of my leadership experience with the Bennion Center.

Though I do not have a perfect understanding or vision of exactly what the Bennion Center is, I do know that it is an organization through which University of Utah students and the general community grow and become better. I also know that the Bennion Center provides students with opportunities to enhance their college experience and increase their ability to set and achieve meaningful goals with respect to education and career.
In the Bennion Center’s Fifth Anniversary Reflection publication, the director, Irene Fisher, wrote: “I can visualize a continually growing number of Bennion Center alumni spread across Salt Lake, throughout the country, and even throughout the world. These seasoned community leaders and volunteers, in concert with others, can be expected to have an impact on the lives of our people and communities. We’ve already begun to see the beginning of that impact as alumni write us about their service-related careers or about the ways they have engaged in service around the edges of other responsibilities.”

That same publication quoted Lowell Bennion, who told students: “I have discovered one thing: that life is meaningful to the extent that it is purposeful. We get meaning out of life by the goals that we pursue, by the purposes we choose to follow. . . My second little notion is that your purpose ought to be defined in terms of people. The most important thing in life is human beings and what is going on in their lives.”

At about the same time as the Bennion Center was celebrating that fifth anniversary, the authors of Common Fire: Lives of Commitment in a Complex World asked three questions: “What are such people (people who live a commitment to the common good) like?” “What keeps them going in spite of inevitable discouragement?” and “What can be done to encourage this kind of citizenship to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century?”

The Bennion Center generally shares the hopes and sense of purpose expressed by Fisher and Bennion. These hopes still exist, but they are not supported by strong data. So the center still searches for answers to questions quite similar to the “common good” authors. “Does the Bennion Center successfully encourage active citizenship to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century?” “Are we helping to prepare citizens with a commitment to the common good?”

The answers that have developed over the first 20 years have been almost totally anecdotal. Although several dissertations, master’s theses, and other surveys have been conducted to try to identify the impact of Bennion Center experiences on alumni, there is remarkably little quantifiable data. Mark Hamilton sought answers about the impact of service on Bennion Center participants in an M.A. statistics paper in 1991-92. Mark, a Bennion Center student leader, surveyed 200 student volunteers in the fall and then again in the spring. His findings showed that service participation made students slightly more pessimistic about being able to make community change and simultaneously made them more likely to consider a service occupation in the future. Connie Della-Piana, a Ph.D. candidate in communication, did not directly ask questions in her dissertation about the impact of service on students, but in conversations held in 2009, Connie recalls her
amazement at student leaders’ passion for service, their willingness to risk, their commitment to “their” issues, and to making the Bennion Center work.

Organizational Strategies to Maintain Contact with Alumni

The center has maintained contact with as many alumni as possible since 1991, with more staff time devoted to that work since 2006. Through both formal and informal connections with alumni, the Bennion Center is at least partially aware of the community involvement, occupations, values, and goals of many alumni. Several characteristics alumni share can be grouped as shown below, although no causal relationship between these characteristics and Bennion Center involvement is now possible.

Alumni Engaged in Full-Time Community Work

Many Bennion Center alumni are engaged in full-time community work through government, education, non-profit, or even for-profit corporate employment. Gina Cornia, for example, directs the non-profit group Utahns Against Hunger, John Pingree is Vice President for Community Partnerships with Intermountain Health Care, Lisa Nichols directs the Ogden Community Health Center, Bill Crim is Vice President for Community Impact and Public Policy at the United Way of Salt Lake, Zach Frankel created and served as founding director of the Utah Rivers Council, and Emma Wharton works with a children’s organization in Flagstaff that she created herself. Some of these alums comment about the Bennion Center network that can help get things done in areas of mutual interest. Many alumni have completed graduate degrees in social work, public administration, and other service-oriented fields.

Alumni Who Seek Ways to Include Community Service in Non-Service Careers

An early Bennion Center student leader, Don Zarkou, went to work for a local bank after graduation with a degree in business. One day, Don was confronted with a challenge that caused him to call the Bennion Center for advice. He had a young homeless couple in his office who wanted a loan to buy a house. He was unable to help them with that request but didn’t want to send them away without some advice and idea about how to secure housing. Don’s way of seeing his job was different because of his community service orientation. Other alumni have talked about using their law degrees to serve low-income people. Still others have tried to change corporate governance practices to meet public or employee needs. These people have seen that opportunities to serve are possible in almost all situations.

Alumni Who Desire to Involve Their Young Children in Service

One creative Bennion Center alumnus sent short surveys to friends to ask them if they had found ways to impact their children’s views of service. With his youngest child not yet school age, he was already thinking about ways to develop an ethic of service. The annual service events sponsored by the Bennion Center often find whole families among
those present. Those who choose this approach find they can strengthen their family ties while serving others and often have a good time doing it.

**Alumni Who Find Themselves Feeling Guilty**

During college, Bennion Center student leaders often spend significant time and energy engaged in community service. Students’ lives are often busy, but despite this busyness, the college years can offer a flexibility that no longer exists when alumni are engaged in graduate school, jobs, and caring for young families. Significant involvement in community service becomes much more challenging with these competing demands. The single most frequent comments that former director Irene Fisher hears from alumni are expressions of guilt about not doing more service. This comment is so prevalent that Fisher has developed a concern with the potential impact of this negative feeling related to service.

**Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas**

- Maintaining contact with alumni is an important part of the center’s mission, yet little is known about the impact of Bennion Center involvement on alumni either during or after their college years.
- Bennion Center leaders have often talked about offering pre-graduation programs, discussions, seminars, etc. to discuss issues of “service/life after graduation” in order to more directly help students consider options for how they will integrate the Bennion Center’s and Lowell’s lessons into their lives. To date, this has not been done.
- Center leaders have long been aware that it would be valuable to measure the impact of center involvement on student participants. Here again, no action has been taken.

**Unanswered Questions/Continuing Challenges**

- Little research has been done to understand the impact of college involvement in community service or service-learning on university students in general or at the U of U specifically. What recommendations could faculty and student leaders make about useful questions to ask and effective ways to engage researchers in study of these impacts? More knowledge of the long-term impact of certain types of involvement could prove useful for planning purposes and for future funding.
Reflections from a Bennion Center Alumna

By Andrea Pinnock Ferguson, Former Bennion Center Student President

One day I taught a group of 8-year olds about the Bible story of the Good Samaritan. The children had been so good that we decided to have a Good Samaritan Party. We identified a wheelchair-bound woman, Arlene, who had MS and would benefit from a visit. She had moved into a nursing home in the past two months.

When the party day arrived, I talked with the children about the sights, smells and sounds that they would experience at the nursing home. The children learned that rather than feel uncomfortable with the unknown, they could keep a smile on their faces and say hello or good morning to the residents there. Each child wrote a question to ask Arlene about her life or her disease. They also prepared a couple of songs to share.

We had a delightful visit, not lacking in questions and small talk. The children even smiled and conversed with other residents along the way, just as we had practiced. After the visit each child shared what they liked best while devouring a plate of cookies.

How does this relate to my association with the Bennion Center beginning 20 years ago? In almost every way. I worked with the Volunteer Corps for a few years where we involved a lot of people for one-time projects. The well-run projects included identifying a need, orienting volunteers, serving with compassion, and reflecting over a doughnut. In the course of a year, we tried to serve as many different areas as possible and were successful in exposing many people to a lot of needs.

My time working with service-learning taught me that the most profound learning takes place as we bring our knowledge, experience, and talents to the community to serve, and in return, the intellectual lessons we are trying to grasp come alive as we learn first-hand.

When I graduated from college and eventually became a full-time mother with a very busy husband, I often felt a tremendous amount of guilt that I wasn’t “serving” full-time any more. Eventually I was able to understand that if I deeply nurtured and taught my children, they in turn will bless those around them. I also remembered that I didn’t need to be at formal service projects to involve others in recognizing needs and serving. A family project or a small class service excursion is so valuable. As we have come up with these service moments, so many lessons learned at the Bennion Center come into play, and our experience is enriched from the quality that it brings.

Lowell Bennion used to repeatedly say, “Life is meaningful to the extent it is purposeful.” I have found that so true in my family’s life. As we find purpose through looking beyond our needs, our life has taken on a beautiful meaning. We have been so fortunate to make many dear elderly friends become adopted grandparents or elderly uncles. It is so rewarding to watch my children look out for the handicapped child and feel comfortable interacting with him or her.
Perhaps one of the most significant purposes that we have found as a family is my husband Rob’s selection of work. Several years ago, he decided that he wanted to become a plastic surgeon who could help children born with cleft lip and cleft palate. During his many years of training, it was easy to become disenchanted with the whole experience. Every time we reminded ourselves of the service goal, we were able to accept the long hours and stresses easier. Although I didn’t attend medical school, we have felt like this is a joint effort, and that we would eventually go on medical missions together.

Two years ago this month, we went on our first medical mission to Ecuador. On the Sunday before the operating days began, we attended a local church. As the service began, the congregation began to sing (in Spanish, of course): “Because I have been given much, I too must give.” We both sat there weeping. I thought of how much we did have. I felt my deep desire to serve in a unique and profound way, and I felt a love of Hispanic people and the Spanish language. I thought of my husband’s talents and hard work and saw that it all came together to do a big thing.

I am reminded of a day at the Bennion Center when we met a panel of people who were doing great things. For me, the most significant part of the panel was to hear about one woman’s contribution: she worked as a beautician who visited the homeless shelter regularly to clean and cut the homeless women’s hair to prepare them for a job search. I was touched that this woman had found a way to use her interests and talents to serve in a very specific way.

As I listened to her speak, I learned that more importantly than what career an individual decides to pursue is how that person chooses to use time and talents within that sphere of influence.
Musings on My Bennion Center Years
By Gina Cornia, Former Bennion Center Student Leader

It seems too dramatic to say that the Bennion Center changed my life, but it did. I do what I do today because of the Bennion Center.

My experience at the Bennion Center changed the way I look at the world and gave me a place to shape and discover what I care about. I have to admit that I can’t point to a defining moment or a specific experience that I pin this on, but rather a series of lessons learned and conversations had with other students.

I got involved with the Bennion Center because I needed a place to perform service. I felt really proud of myself for serving others, but what I learned for myself was that while service is valuable and important it also gives us a glimpse of what doesn’t work in our system. As I served soup to men and women at the Salvation Army soup kitchen, it made me feel worse rather than better. It made me start asking why these folks were here in the first place. I didn’t feel good that our response to their particular hunger was a bowl of soup and a soggy sandwich. What I learned was that it wasn’t about hunger at all but equity and access. I began to question the charitable response to issues. While critical to meeting the immediate need, serving a bowl of soup wasn’t doing anything to address the need for better jobs, more affordable housing and improved access to programs. I made a decision that if I felt like this was unacceptable that I needed to do more than just complain. An advocate was born.

I can’t say that all of these experiences were easy or even positive at the time. I think one of the most difficult experiences for me was the consensus process. The specific experience that I remember was the issue of making condoms widely available on campus. I’m not even sure I have that detail right. But I remember sitting in a circle and listening to people expressing their opinion about whether it was appropriate to have condoms available. I felt strongly about my opinion and felt like it was ultimately a health issue. Not everyone felt the same way. I thought they were wrong and wanted them to know I thought they were wrong. But the consensus process required me to look outside my own point of view. I learned how to be a better listener, and really listening, not preparing my argument based on what I thought they were going to say. I still have to work on being a good listener, but my experience with consensus taught me to ask critical questions and even ask myself why I think I’m right about an issue. It helps me consider policy options and solutions that maybe I wouldn’t otherwise.

The students and staff at the Bennion Center taught me that reasonable people can disagree and still be respectful and work together toward a common solution. The students I shared my time with at the Bennion Center inspired me with their passion and sense of social justice. I had never thought much about racism, heterosexism or any ism for that matter. I saw glimpses into experiences that I will never fully understand yet allowed me to let go of assumptions. For every push there was push back and someone to help us think about what we were saying and doing. I also learned that if you want to
make a difference, you can’t care about credit and have to work pro-actively to change the world you care about.

It has been 17 years since I was a student at the Bennion Center. I imagine that the energy and passion that fueled the Bennion Center when I was there hasn’t changed. I know it will go on changing the lives of students who deliberately seek it out and those, like me, who had the happy accident of finding it.
Personal Perspective

By John Pingree, Founding Student President of the Bennion Center

The Bennion Center builds character.

Shortly after the creation of the Bennion Center, we organized a late summer training session for new project directors and other student leaders. At that time, Dr. Bennion was still living and in adequate health. We invited him to speak to all of us. His message to us as service leaders was simple: “Of all the virtues, love and integrity are most fundamental.”

Why are these virtues so important? They are essential character traits of effective service leadership.

Love is the heart of service. Service can be done for many reasons: recognition, duty, a sense of responsibility, etc. However, love is the highest and most productive motivation. I remember a time when Dr. Bennion asked me to give him a ride to visit a widow. I helped him into my old Volkswagen Dasher. He did not say much during our drive. After 20 minutes, we arrived and I helped Dr. Bennion into the woman’s home. The widow embraced Lowell and a friendly discussion ensued. Dr. Bennion brought no presents nor made magnificent declarations. No cameras were there to witness the event. He listened, chatted, and spent time with this woman. She felt his sincerity and his love.

If love is the heart of service, then integrity is the mind of service. Integrity keeps our motivations in check. It allows us to recognize, not ignore, the stark inequities in the world. Recently, I stood at the border between El Paso and Juarez. The two cities are divided by a river. On one side, freedom exists, relative affluence is apparent, and opportunities for education are open. On the other side, drug cartels rule the streets, poverty is rampant, and health services are sparse. Though close in proximity, they are worlds apart. Integrity requires thoughtful, deliberate, and effective change.

At the risk of adding to Dr. Bennion’s wisdom, I would like to include another virtue critical to service leadership—humility. It’s not about us. Humility helps us recognize that we are only “influencers” in others’ lives. Humility teaches us to respect the dignity of others and to honor their choices and self-determination. Humility also gives us hope and an ability to deal with difficult things. Drew Peterson was the first chair of the Bennion Center board. He was a capable leader, intelligent, personable, and very humble. I came to appreciate this virtue in him after he was involved in a freak accident that rendered him wheelchair bound. He remained cheerful and hopeful despite the physical and emotional toll imposed by his condition. Humility gave him the strength to allow others to serve him and to then express sincere appreciation.

The Bennion Center—with its associated people and experiences—helped me to become something more than I would have been. I am grateful for its character-building capacities.
My Involvement with the Bennion Center

By Clifton Uckerman, Former Bennion Center Student Leader
And Bennion Service House Resident

It was the fall of 2004 and I was an incoming transfer student from the Salt Lake Community College. Throughout my studies, I was always the type of person who wanted to get involved. At SLCC, I attended Leadershape and was involved in other service projects through the Thayne Center. Those experiences added so much to my college life and helped shape my perspective on life.

I am so grateful that the University of Utah had a similar outlet for students to get involved, perform service and shape their perspectives. The Bennion Center was a place I found just by looking at flyers in the cafeteria as I was seeking opportunities to better myself and my community. Although I was already involved with M.E.Ch.A, a student group for young activist Chicanos, I wanted more in terms of diversity and service opportunities.

I signed up for the Alternative Spring Break (ASB) and for a whole week found myself with ten other diverse students in Los Angeles working with AIDS Project Los Angeles. It was so neat to learn about the amazing social and health issues outside of Utah and for me it was a chance to reflect on my privileges and capacity to make choices that would not only positively impact me but others as well. The service component for the organization was not the only great memory I have of that trip; we had so much fun strolling Hollywood Boulevard and going to places like the beaches and even getting into the audience of Jimmy Kimmel, a late-night talk show host.

Once I returned from that journey, I knew I would stay with the Bennion Center in whatever capacity I could because it helped me grow so much as an individual and increased my value for diversity. The following year, I applied for and was accepted as a site leader for the same ASB in Los Angeles. I took another ten students and provided them with the same experience I had and even more. I have made some amazing friends and have had memorable experiences with the Bennion Center.

Throughout my initial involvement as an ASB participant and then as a site leader, I have been to retreats near the Teton Mountains and on ranches in Wyoming with the Bennion Center. I was even one of the first twelve to live in the newly founded Bennion Center Service House. The Bennion Center continues to have a place in both my personal and professional lives. After graduating with my Bachelor of Social Work degree, I obtained a great position as director of YouthWorks at NeighborWorks Salt Lake, and we partner with the center on several community service events.

My next goal as a Bennion Center alumnus is to plan and implement the first reunion for the Service House so that I might reconnect with people who have had great influence in my life.
Theme Eight:  

Both the Bennion Center and the national higher education world evolved their views, understanding, and practices of civic engagement during the years from 1987 to 2007.

Focus on Co-Curricular Community Service: 1985 - 1990

It is commonly recognized within higher education circles that the birth of the modern interest in higher education and community service began in 1985, with the birth of both Campus Compact and the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL). Campus Compact is an organization of college and university presidents who support community service within higher education. It was originally housed at Brown University, home of one of the three founding presidents. COOL is a national student group initiated by several Harvard graduates who created the organization by walking from campus to campus on the east coast, challenging students to engage in service to their communities. At the same time, Stanford founded a highly visible public service center with strong presidential support and visibility. The Bennion Center was born in that first wave of interest, with a focus on involving students in co-curricular community service, consistent with the national movement. The co-curricular student leadership component of the Bennion Center emerged during this period.

Focus on Curricular Service-Learning: 1990 - 2000

In the early 1990’s, Bennion Center students and staff began to see opportunities for linking community service with academics. This recognition coincided with a national focus on service-learning as a way to build civic education into the heart of higher education and to engage faculty in the effort. During this era, U students created the Service-Learning Scholars Program, and service-learning courses began to appear in many departments with encouragement from the Bennion Center and support from the University administration. Nationally, Campus Compact sponsored work with national academic disciplines to promote service-learning, and other campuses began to create service-learning centers, all aimed toward preparing students for active citizenship.

Broader Focus on Civic Engagement 2001 - 2008

In the late 1990’s, Campus Compact, other national higher education organizations, and, simultaneously, the Bennion Center began to discuss and act on the belief that higher education could play a role in revitalizing communities while simultaneously strengthening education for citizenship through civic engagement in teaching, research, and multiple other strategies. Penn State made multi-million dollar commitments and harnessed students and faculty in work with their surrounding neighborhood. Other
institutions in deteriorating neighborhoods saw the need to join with community efforts to gain mutual benefit.

The gradual broadening and deepening of the potential linkages between higher education institutions and their communities is visible in the language change from *community service* in the first era, to *service-learning* in the second, and then to *civic engagement* in the most recent. Language to describe different forms of civic engagement is still evolving and includes such descriptors as *co-curricular service-learning, academic service-learning, citizenship education, community-based research, and civically-engaged scholarship.*

Evidence of this deepening of understanding and action is visible on the University of Utah campus. It is also visible at a national level through the huge rise in membership in Campus Compact to 1,000 colleges and universities. The number of state Campus Compact organizations has grown to 31, including a Utah Campus Compact founded in 1996, with all Utah’s campuses as members.

**Tangible Links between the U of U and the National Scene**

To many involved in the Bennion Center, it appeared that the campus and the national evolutions occurred similarly but independently. While both evolved through the experience and learning of those involved, the local and national changes were intertwined. University of Utah President Chase Peterson became a member of Campus Compact the same year the Bennion Center was born. President Arthur K. Smith led the effort to create the Utah Campus Compact, and Irene Fisher served as the first volunteer director of the state organization. Linda Dunn, the 2008 director of the Bennion Center, served as the first paid full-time Utah Campus Compact director. President Bernie Machen served as the national board chair of Campus Compact during his tenure in Utah.

Bennion Center students attended each national COOL Conference beginning in 1987. The 1987 student attendees came back to campus with the slogan “Ain’t nothin’ to it but to do it,” an idea that was much-quoted as students struggled to learn by doing in those initial years. In 1999, the Bennion Center and the University of Utah hosted the national COOL Conference and housed two COOL staff planners throughout an entire academic year of pre-planning.

Throughout its first 20 years, Bennion Center staff and U faculty contributed articles, book chapters, research findings, conference presentations, and a soon-to-be-published book to the national field. With Bennion Center leadership, the U of U hosted several important national events including a western regional conference of community service directors, a national community service directors summit, and a 2003 service-learning research conference.

Truly, both the U and other campuses across the country are learning together how to build civic engagement within higher education in connection with national organizations and academic disciplinary associations. Utah shares an interest with other research
institutions in learning how civic engagement can be effectively integrated into a research institution, a task that varies significantly from other campuses such as small liberal arts colleges.

The Bennion Center has been recognized nationally by U.S. News and World Report for its service-learning program annually since 2000.

**Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas**

- Through the early years of the Bennion Center’s development, skeptics, especially among the faculty, suggested that higher education’s involvement with communities was a fad which would soon disappear. As of this time, this “fad” has continued for 20 years and appears to remain strong with visible successes and a growing number of campuses and academic disciplines involved. According to Campus Compact, “The Carnegie Foundation, as part of its ongoing work in classifying colleges and universities, recently completed a pilot project to develop a classification for community engagement. In a second phase of its work, institutions will participate in a voluntary documentation effort that will form the basis of the new classification.”

- Even with 20 years of progress, the integration of civic engagement within higher education, especially in research institutions, is still fragile and incomplete. Faculty rewards still emphasize research over teaching and teaching over community (or other) service. Advocates of civic engagement on individual campuses and in national disciplinary associations still grapple with ways that civically engaged teaching and research can be evaluated and valued within higher education.

- Both the Bennion Center and the national movement for civic engagement have changed dramatically over the past 20 years, and both must find ways to further institutionalize this work if it is to be lasting and effective.

- The Bennion Center has benefitted by learning through experience on the ground. It has also gained, and should continue to gain, by playing an active role in national and state efforts to build civic engagement.

**Unresolved Issues/Challenging Questions**

- The Bennion Center, as a leader in civic engagement in higher education, needs to continually ask itself how it can contribute to the national and state efforts, since future success at this institution is tied to the national field. What has the Bennion Center learned that could be of value to our national and state colleagues? How can it best be shared?

- See additional thoughts in the section on *Embedding Civic Engagement within the Institution*. 73
There’s an old saying: “fish don’t know they’re in water.” I think this adage applies to students, staff, and faculty who work with the Bennion Center. For over 20 years, we’ve gone about doing community service, service-learning, and civic engagement simply as part of the center’s mission. It’s who we are and what we do. Those doing the work were focused on the work, largely unaware of the attention it had garnered. We didn’t realize other students, faculty, professionals, and institutions were peering into the “fishbowl” wondering how we did what we did. With this increased awareness came the important role of sharing what we knew and did with colleagues around the state, country, and the world. An important part of academic culture is to disseminate new knowledge. This process ranged from simple conversations around the big table in the Bennion Center to publishing articles and books to hosting national and international conferences. The Bennion Center itself became a good citizen by sharing with others as well as making a splash as a respected leader in the field. Early on, Irene Fisher was sought out as an exemplar, often speaking at local and national workshops and conferences. She also wrote chapters for widely read books in the field of service-learning.

One of the earliest events took place in 1999 when the Bennion Center hosted college students from across the country for the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) conference. Like-minded students from around the country converged on our campus to share information and ideas on community service with each other. Many of those attending returned to their own campus inspired by the level of leadership and empowerment of Bennion Center student leaders that was so evident.

In 2003, the Bennion Center and the University of Utah hosted the 3rd annual International Conference on the Advances in Service-learning Research. The theme of the conference was “Service-learning As Civically Engaged Scholarship” with over 300 scholars from around the world attending. Out of the conference came a book entitled New Perspectives in Service-learning: Research to Advance the Field. The conference included a tour of the Bennion Center in which over 50 scholars clamored aboard U of U campus shuttle buses to get a first-hand look. I was having an informal dinner conversation with John Saltmarsh from the National Campus Compact one evening during the conference. We talked about how so many directors of college community service centers, especially those new to the field, needed basic knowledge on how to incorporate theoretically based best-practices to ensure quality experiences for students, faculty, and community partners. Out of that discussion came the idea to host professional development institutes for community service directors (CSDs). Once again, the Bennion Center took the lead by helping in the planning and actually hosting the first institute at Fort Douglas in 2004. Nearly all of the 50 participants wanted to see the legendary Bennion Center, so we built in a tour one afternoon as part of the week-long institute. One of the attendees of the institute was a woman from Ireland who was single-handedly trying to incorporate service-learning in her country. She returned to Ireland and integrated what she often refers to as the “Utah model” into her own institution. We
often received calls from the U.S. State Department asking if we would host a
conversation with small groups of international delegations of educators interested in
knowing more about service, service-learning, and civic engagement. It was a common
sight to see a dozen or so international guests with a translator gathered around the big
table in the Bennion Center coming with many questions and leaving with red Bennion
Center bandana do-rags as gifts of friendship.

The euphemism “publish or perish” is not merely a worn-out cliché, it is a reality at a
research university. Knowing this, the Bennion Center has always taken an active role in
assisting faculty members report on their service-learning and civic engagement at
professional conferences, journal articles, and books. From a disciplinary perspective,
this is a critical way for scholars to make valuable contributions to their respective fields,
showing how service-learning can be an effective teaching and learning tool. Likewise,
the caliber of their work attracts attention to the Bennion Center and the University’s
commitment to service-learning and civic engagement. For example, Dr. Nancy Nickman
from the School of Pharmacy won the Ehrlich Award as an outstanding professor in
service-learning. A group of faculty from the University of Utah has published a book
about their commitment to service-learning and civic engagement. The book, co-edited
by Marissa Diener and Hank Liese, is titled Finding Meaning in Civically Engaged
Scholarship: Personal Journeys and Professional Experience. This is yet another example
of the Bennion Center’s outreach and impact beyond campus as scholars around the
country read the book.

But this type of teaching and learning is not always readily accepted by faculty or
administrators due to misconceptions and preconceived notions. To address this
challenge in research university settings, the Bennion Center was present at a gathering of
elite Research I institutions of higher education at Tufts University. From this discussion
of nearly 20 universities came an important document entitled New Times Demand New
Scholarship – Research Universities and Civic Engagement: Opportunities and
Challenges. Once again, the Bennion Center at the University of Utah was asked to be a
prominent voice in a national dialogue of scholars.

It is important to remember that publishing and presenting is certainly not limited to
faculty. Many student leaders of the Bennion Center have made significant contributions
in this regard. Service-learning scholar Ashley diAna was nationally recognized as an
outstanding student change-agent by receiving National Campus Compact’s Swearer
Award. Student leader Will Chatwin essentially served as a consultant to Oklahoma
Campus Compact, providing insight and strategies on how to empower students with
leadership roles in community-service centers. He and his fellow student Anne Looser
were co-authors of a chapter describing the birth of the Bennion Center’s Service-Politics
and Civic Engagement or SPACE program in Campus Compact’s national publication,
Students as Colleagues: Expanding the Circle of Service-learning Leadership. Paul
Arnold, student president of the Bennion Center in 2002-2003, conducted and published a
sophisticated quantitative study on factors that predict student leadership. Another
Bennion Center student president, Kirstin Davies, co-authored two chapters with me, and
other student leaders have been co-presenters with me at national and international
conferences. National Campus Compact featured Will Chatwin and Noella Sudbury as exemplars in an invited presentation with me at a conference on civic engagement hosted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in Washington, DC.

Friends of the Bennion Center tend to think of the center’s work as providing direct service to those in need. That’s true and is certainly part of Lowell Bennion’s legacy. But I think all of the examples presented here also illustrate some of the ways the Bennion Center has served others indirectly as well. The ripple effect of this important and generally unseen outreach exponentially and indirectly touches the lives of many by sharing with other students, administrators, and faculty who continue to do this work in their own respective institutions and communities. I guess you could say the Bennion Center has made quite a splash in the world of community service in many ways.
The cover of the Bennion Center 1989-90 Annual Report happily proclaims “From heart to hand together we can,” the student-selected slogan for that year. That slogan anticipated the title of subsequent reports from 1998-99 to 2006-07: *Partnerships*. These titles advertise the Bennion Center’s realization that its mission could best be achieved through collaborative work with other on- and off-campus organizations at a local, state, national, and global level. Just as individuals in the Bennion Center learned to offer their own strengths in shared work, the center itself partners with other entities to meet shared missions and goals. The whole becomes more than the sum of the parts. This works especially well when no one individual or group needs to assume the credit.

**Key Bennion Center Partnerships**

**Local community organizations** such as schools, non-profit groups, governmental units, and nursing homes have been central to the center’s work since the beginning. Most student-directed programs linked with one of these groups that already worked with a given community need or service. When faculty began creating service-learning courses, they linked with community partners that could support and benefit from their students’ involvement. And when service-learning scholars designed their community projects, they were almost always accomplished with a community partner. Some of these groups have been partners for the entire 20 years. Others come and go as mutual needs are identified. The Community Services Council that Lowell Bennion directed for several years after his “retirement” has been a strong partner, especially through its food bank program. Crossroads Urban Center, local public schools, Odyssey House, Neighborhood House, Guadalupe School, and The Road Home have, among others, been long-time partners.

**On-campus student groups** have joined with the Bennion Center in shared service work, especially through major service programs such as Project Youth, Special Olympics, Alternative Spring Break, Community Service Action Week, and Into the Streets. Some of these programs would have been impossible without collaborators. All were strengthened through the partnerships and enabled the Bennion Center to extend its service mission more broadly across the campus. ASUU has been an especially important partner, providing a $40,000 initial funding gift to the endowment in 1988-89, joint work to create the Service-Learning Scholars Program, annual financial gifts, and active participation in many programs.

**Other on-campus offices** partnered with the center to carry out work that neither could have done alone. The Financial Aid Office, for example, received federal funds to place low-income University students as tutors in local Title I schools, enabling them to earn
funds for college. The Financial Aid Office passes funds through America Reads to provide a Bennion Center staff person to manage this program, aiding both tutors and pupils. The U’s Alumni Association and the Bennion Center jointly created and funded the Summer Service Fellowship Program, placing selected U undergraduates in full-summer service within communities with a U alumni chapter.

In 2001, **University Neighborhood Partners (UNP)** was created and placed organizationally within the office of the U president. Physically located in a remodeled home in Glendale, this program nonetheless shares part of its mission with the Bennion Center. It also offers special collaborative opportunities and challenges. In 2004, Marshall Welch, then director, augmented this collaboration by creating a unique multi-disciplinary seminar for graduate students from nursing, law, occupational therapy, linguistics, and more who served side by side in a west Salt Lake apartment complex serving recent immigrants and refugees. The current directors of both offices are exploring further collaborative possibilities as well as planning to avoid unintentional conflict or confusion. The directors and a staff member from UNP and the center recently wrote a chapter for an international publication describing their collaborative initiatives and future possibilities.

As the Bennion Center broadened its scope to include statewide, national, and global service, partners in other geographic areas became involved. Navajo and Goshute partners provided opportunities for service trips within their areas. The mayor of Myton, Utah, welcomed students to re-roof city hall while learning about challenges in Utah’s small communities. Each Alternative Spring Break trip coordinator and each Summer Alumni Fellow worked collaboratively with on-the-scene service providers, mostly in the western US. Similarly, each international service project such as the one in Ajoya, Mexico, was organized with a local partner, in this case Project Projimo.

In 1996, with leadership from Student Affairs Vice President Norm Gibbons, the Bennion Center reached out to **service groups at other in-state colleges and universities** to learn together through joint service projects, summer retreats, and faculty gatherings. These simple collaborations grew first into the Serving Utah Network (SUN), founded in 1996, and eventually into the Utah Campus Compact. This brought all the Utah campus presidents together into a supportive network promoting community service and service-learning. Encouraged by the collaboration, several Utah campuses initiated and/or expanded service and service-learning programs.

The Bennion Center has been an active participant in the **national Campus Compact** from its beginnings, adding the center’s strengths to the effort to build civic engagement within higher education across the country. The Bennion Center’s contributions to the national field have included writing book chapters and articles, hosting a Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) national conference, hosting two national gatherings for community service directors, and hosting a service-learning research conference in 2003. Both former directors, Irene Fisher and Marshall Welch, were invited to do presentations at regional or national conferences and on individual campuses seeking to advance civic engagement.
In limited instances, the Bennion Center worked with for-profit businesses on collaborative projects. Mervyn’s, for example, gave money and employee time over several years to co-sponsor holiday parties for low-income children. General Electric’s employee service group, the Elfun Society, was an active participant in the creation of Bend-in-the-River. Groups of GE employees cooked elaborate lunches for campus and community volunteers at Bend work days.

**Characteristics of Successful Partnerships**

The term partner has been used by the Bennion Center, as said above, for many years. The center’s understanding of the term has definitely evolved and continues to change through experience. At this stage, it is agreed that partnerships must be founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values, be beneficial to the partnering organizations, build interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect, and include the voices of those impacted by community work in the decision-making processes. More is yet to be discovered about how the power imbalances often associated with the university and low-income communities can be negotiated to benefit all.

**Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas**

- Successful partnerships require identifying shared goals and engaging in careful thought, clear communication, and continuous nurturing. The center must help employees in partner agencies understand the varying forms service from the campus may take, i.e. co-curricular volunteers, student-directed program volunteers, and service-learning volunteers. Also, since campus and community environments differ, a deeper understanding of key elements of those differences could strengthen both sides. For example, most students and faculty have little idea of the daily crisis mode in which many non-profits operate, while many community agencies lack the reflective time to understand the learning needs that accompany campus volunteers.

**Unresolved Questions/Continuing Challenges**

- Many of the Bennion Center’s partnerships with community groups are limited to one semester, one year, or even one day. These time limits make sense for university purposes, but it has long been recognized that community needs do not conform to the university calendar. How can the Bennion Center meet campus needs while providing more continuity of support to partner agencies?
- The center continues to attract few ethnic minority students and non-traditional students. It must strengthen partnership possibilities with campus groups that support these students in order to enrich the experiences of all students involved.
- With the birth of University Neighborhood Partners in 2001, the U of U created a strong campus partner which shares, in part, center goals. How can these two entities best utilize
their respective strengths to achieve the goals of both? What organizational structures and processes should be put in place to assure continued collaboration?
Bennion Center and Guadalupe School: A Community Partner Perspective

By Inga Chapman, Former Guadalupe School Volunteer Coordinator

Guadalupe School is situated on the west side of Salt Lake in a predominantly minority neighborhood. It has four separate programs, two of which involved the Bennion Center. Bennion had volunteer tutors in the ESL evening classes for adults and the Early Learning Center (ELC) for eighty-five at-risk children from kindergarten to grade three. I was the reading tutor coordinator for the latter program for twenty years.

We were fortunate to have many long-term volunteers from the community. And with the help from the Bennion Center we were able to meet our goal of providing one-on-one tutoring for every student at least three to four times weekly. It was in the mid-nineties that we built the strongest relationship with the Bennion Center thanks to Rachel Day, who offered to write a proposal to make ELC a project at the Bennion Center. Rachael became the first student director who would recruit tutors and take responsibility for scheduling and training. Among the directors I especially remember David Sidlow, a student in elementary education who now teaches grade one at Rowland Hall. He recalls that he went to many education classes at the U to recruit tutors. He had a real passion for teaching reading and an interest in how children learn.

My observation was that the student volunteers generally were enthusiastic and idealistic. Most of them were “burning the candle at both ends,” squeezing volunteering between classes and a paid job. Understandably, the first thing to give when overextended is the volunteer time. Because of this pressure, and the short-term commitment of a semester or at most a year, my attitude was always that every hour that Bennion Center students were able to come to Guadalupe was a gift to our students. I arranged for Bennion students to work mostly with the kindergarten class because of a more flexible schedule. For many of the students at Guadalupe, English is a second language and often the children are somewhat language-delayed. Having an adult’s undivided attention for 15-20 minutes is a real benefit, especially when the child is educationally at risk. During that time the tutor would (1) read an age-appropriate book to the student, (2) engage the student in an educational game or in some rereading skill, or (3) just listen and chat. The tutors always interacted with the same four to five children so that they could build a relationship. The students would frequently say, “When is my tutor coming?” or “Why didn’t so and so come today?” Our Guadalupe students always seemed to bond easily with the university volunteers.

Finally I want to express that I am a big fan of service-learning and, like my husband who works at the university, believe that the Bennion Center is one of the very best enterprises at the University of Utah.
Theme Ten: 
Awards, Scholarships, and Fellowships

The Bennion Center’s first instinct has been to recognize and value the efforts of every person involved in center-sponsored community service. Yet there are times when it has proved beneficial to single out actions of individuals as models for the values and ideals participants strive to live. Usually recognition is given for work already done; in other cases, recognition is given to enable students, faculty, or community partners to carry out proposed high-value service work with financial support.

The awards, scholarships, and fellowships described below vary in some ways. They also share several important characteristics that may be worth noting as other forms of recognition are created. The names of all give honor to a person who has, in the opinion of the award’s creator, lived one or more of the shared values or forms of service esteemed by the Bennion Center. Only the Borchard Fellows are named for the donor, at the request of the Borchard Foundation trustees.

Many of the monetary awards are funded through an endowment, theoretically assuring that the funds will be available to continue the gifts indefinitely, although additional infusions may be required to keep up with inflation or as economic downturns reduce endowment income.

The summaries below include the annual awards, scholarships, and fellowships created by the center and its friends. They are discussed in the order in which they were created.

Helping Hand Scholarship Endowment

In the first months of the Bennion Center’s existence, the Salt Lake Rotary Foundation gave funding for eight year-long internships for the students who created the first student-directed programs. By the following year, there were more students who wanted to direct programs than the funds allowed. Student leaders decided that program directors should serve without compensation and the Rotary Foundation funds used to provide financial support to those who most needed it to carry out commitments. They determined that the funds should be advertised as available each fall, given at the discretion of the director, and kept private. This practice continued for five years, while Rotary funding was available. After that time, an anonymous donor continued the practice of quietly funding what became known as service scholarships. When Irene Fisher retired in 2001, all funds given in her honor were placed in a center endowment to continue these quiet but important scholarships that are called the Helping Hand Scholarships.
Public Service Professors

Initiated in 1989-90, the Public Service Professor awards were designed to provide released time to faculty members selected to carry out a community project. The purpose later changed to create a service-learning course. Professorships are still awarded in spring semester for the following year. Recipients are recognized at commencement and often in their college convocations. Past recipients’ pictures are on display outside the Crimson Commons in the Olpin Union. The awards are intended to facilitate and encourage faculty involvement in developing service-learning.

Dan Wendleboe Continuous Service Award

In 1989-90, the Bennion Center Board of Advisors, with advice from Lowell Bennion, created the Continuous Service Award to recognize an individual who had carried out exceptional service work. After the 1991 death of Daniel Layne Wendleboe, a nursing student who was killed while on a Bennion Center service trip to assist people with disabilities in Ajoya, Sinaloa, Mexico, the award’s name was changed to recognize Dan’s service. Since that time, the Dan Wendleboe Continuous Service Award has been given to a student, employee, faculty member, or alumna/us who is active with the Bennion Center. A memorial library within the center also bears Dan’s name.

Chelsea Anne Hale Creative Leadership Award

In 1989-90, the Bennion Center Board of Advisors, again with Lowell Bennion’s advice, created the Creative Leadership Award. This recognized an individual who had shown outstanding leadership in addressing community needs in a way consistent with Bennion Center values. In 2001, after the accidental death of Chelsea Hale, the award was renamed the Chelsea Anne Hale Creative Leadership Award. Chelsea was an honors student with a passion for serving others. She had volunteered with the Edison School, in Kenya as part of a CHOICE expedition, and with the Bennion Center’s Special Olympics. Her mother, Karen, has since served on the advisory board and has been an active participant in center service events.

Bennion Center–Alumni Association Summer Fellowships

From the time of the center’s birth, the U’s alumni association has found many ways to be involved in its activities. In 1990-91, the Bennion Center and the alumni association created an important program which gave selected student leaders a chance to engage in community service full time for a summer in a city where the association has an active chapter. Students selected as summer fellows live in the home of an alumni chapter member when possible, serve full time in a community organization, and meet several times with alumni chapter members. The University Alumni Association and the Bennion Center jointly provide a modest stipend to cover other costs of the fellowship. Fellows have served in Washington, D.C.; Boston; San Francisco; San Diego; Dallas; New York; and elsewhere.
Service-Learning Scholars

Since 1994, a small but amazingly committed group of students has been recognized at commencement for their 400 hours of documented community service, 10 hours of service-learning courses, and completion of a culminating project that leaves a tangible continuing benefit in the community. More about the program is included in this document.

Borchard Service-Learning Faculty Fellow

Since 1994, the Borchard Foundation has funded released time for a faculty member to carry out carefully identified work to advance service-learning and civic engagement at the University. This work varies from year to year and is agreed upon between the selected fellow and Bennion Center administrative staff. The recipient is invited to serve in the position by service-learning staff.

Barbara L. Tanner Community Service Fellowship

In 1996, Barbara Tanner’s family committed to fund an endowment sufficient to pay a living allowance to a graduating student; the student commits to work full time for a year in a non-profit organization in Salt Lake with the purpose of leaving a lasting benefit to the community. Applicants must have community service experience as an undergraduate and must identify and gain cooperation from the non-profit prior to applying. The award provides community experience to the fellow and needed support for the organization. Several awardees have continued to work with the organization after their fellowship year. All have left a legacy honoring Barbara Tanner. Barbara’s daughters presented her a plaque describing this fellowship on her 80th birthday. Barbara’s reaction was that so many of her friends’ children begrudged them donating to the community because it reduced their inheritance; she was pleased that her daughters were willing to give of their own resources to create the award.

Telitha Ellis Lindquist Scholar

This financial award, instituted in 1998 by the family of Telitha Ellis Lindquist (Barbara Tanner’s sister-in-law), provides support to a student who is exceptionally active and effective in service and leadership. It pays for a year’s tuition, fees, books, and other school expenses, enabling the recipient to give up employment in order to devote additional time to service. Students apply in the spring for the following academic year. Mrs. Lindquist’s daughter has served on the advisory board and as its chair beginning in 2009.

Distinguished Faculty Service Award

In spring 2000, the first Distinguished Faculty Service Award was given at commencement to recognize the lifetime significance of a faculty member’s contribution to the community over a sustained period of time. The award is made possible through an
endowment created by Dr. David M. Jabusch, professor emeritus of communication, and his wife, Susan, both of whom are heavily involved in community service. Dr. Jabusch realized in 1999 that special awards were given at commencement to recognize faculty research and teaching, but none was given for service. He created this award to remedy that situation.

Service-Learning Awards

In March, 2005, the Bennion Center held its first annual service-learning awards luncheon and gave awards for outstanding service-learning contributions to a student, a community partner agency, and a faculty member. These awards have been given annually since that year to recognize individuals who are helping to build service-learning at the University.

The Merle Colton Bennion Personal Learning Through Service Fellowship

Established in 2000 to honor the community service of Lowell’s wife, Merle Colton Bennion, this fellowship creates a one-on-one opportunity for both a caregiver and a care receiver. The fellowship exists to advance two ideas: 1) that the charity model of service, in which one partner gives and the other receives, masks the reality that both parties in a person-to-person service interchange almost always give and receive in a mutually beneficial learning and caring relationship, and 2) that those involved in this type of relationship can help others expand their knowledge of service and their understanding of life lived with significant physical disability. The care receiver is a person who has been affected by quadriplegic paralysis later in life as a result of accident or disease and is selected by the Spinal Cord Injury Program at the University Hospital Rehabilitation Center. The Fellow is selected by the Bennion Center through an open application process and serves for a period of one year with a stipend of $8,500. The fellowship was initiated after the motorcycle accident of Drew Petersen, founding chair of the Bennion Center Advisory Board, who served as the first service recipient and who helped to frame its unique values.

Elmo R. and Frances Bennion Morgan Fellowship

This fellowship was created by Tony Morgan and family in honor of his parents to recognize their service to the community. Tony’s mother, Frances Bennion Morgan, was Lowell’s sister. The fellowship offers a $5000 stipend to be paid over the course of one academic year to an upper-level student who is dedicated to bringing people closer to the natural world. The student works with the Bend-in-the-River for an average of 18 hours per week.

Helen C. Boshard Memorial Endowed Scholarship

Helen C. Boshard was known to her five children as a woman who was continually engaged with her community and who had a special passion for education and children. Beginning in 1979, Helen’s family honored her by providing a scholarship endowment to
partially support a non-traditional female student through the University’s Women’s Resource Center. In about 2001, during the period in which Helen’s daughter, Cynthia, served as chair of the Bennion Center Advisory Board, the endowment was moved to the Bennion Center to partially fund tuition and educational expenses for a student with financial need who engaged in service through the center. Funds are awarded when the expendable portion of the endowment reaches about $1000 per year.

Service House Scholarship(s)

Initiated at the creation of the Service House, this scholarship supports one or more service house residents. The scholarships are awarded annually through an application process in varying amounts and are based on need.

Lessons Learned – Take-Away Ideas

• In some instances, the annual awards may need to be suspended until interest income accumulates to an adequate level to fund the award. It might be wise to stipulate this possibility in the agreement creating endowed awards.
• The endowments that support different forms of recognition do not include revenue to administer them, which may eventually cause hardship for the Bennion Center, especially in tight funding years.
• Presentation of awards, scholarships, and fellowships needs to be done with verbal reminders that these forms of recognition are given to a few people who represent the good work of many.
• The method of giving Helping Hands scholarships assures that students really value the leadership position for which they have been selected, since they have to apply and be accepted as a student leader before becoming eligible. But this method lessens the possibility that lower-income students will feel they can even apply for leadership positions. The center may want to consider stronger outreach efforts or other changes to overcome this latter problem.

Unresolved Questions/Continuing Challenges

• At the time each of these awards was created, there was a clear purpose attached. The Bennion Center may well need to ask periodically if that purpose is still best served by continuing the award, scholarship, or fellowship, or if some kind of change would be beneficial.
• Some of the awards, fellowships, and scholarships have not yet been named for a specific person. At an appropriate time, naming possibilities might be considered as a way to recognize a person or group that embodies the values of the award.
Reflections from a Tanner Fellow

By Shannon Huff Wilson, First Tanner Fellowship Recipient

There’s something magical about being a student. The word implies that a mentor, teacher, someone who guides and instructs is also involved in the equation. The Barbara Tanner Fellowship allowed me to prolong that student status. It helped me to firm up my convictions, explore my opportunities, and continue the path that I had begun as a student at the University of Utah and a member of the Bennion Center community. Making the leap to adult with a “real-life” job was too much for my twenty-two year old self, but the Tanner Fellowship stretched my learning and growing safety net. It allowed me to continue building my connections and my values and led me to the place where I am today.

I began my fellowship in the fall of 1997 at Horizonte Instruction and Training Center, a non-traditional school in Salt Lake City which serves high school age youth, young parents and their children, adults returning to earn a high school diploma, and new immigrant and refugee adults learning English. My task was to create a service-learning program, finding ways for these unique learners to connect their curriculum to real life and provide opportunities for them to become more involved with their communities. In conjunction with the teachers and administrators at Horizonte, we had students involved in nearly every facet of the community, working with the environment, the elderly, the Utah Food Bank, younger students, students with special needs, local police agencies, and museums. Projects were completed in all of the core courses and many electives from drama and music to law enforcement. We saw students grow in so many ways, and using authentic experiences to reinforce their classroom knowledge was a way to draw them into the curriculum. Because of our work, Horizonte was named as a National Service-Learning Leader School in 1999, and many projects that were started over ten years ago are still continuing today.

Additionally, I was committed to involving students who were taking service-learning courses at the University of Utah, Salt Lake Community College, and other local high schools with the educational opportunities at Horizonte. Making connections with professors and students put me in the powerful position of introducing others to the unique and diverse student body at Horizonte. By engaging in reflections about the people they were meeting and the time that they were spending helping these individuals to improve their lives, many stereotypes were destroyed and great friendships based on shared understanding were forged. Working with a number of University courses including psychology, economics, pharmacy, and writing allowed us to have experiences from a variety of perspectives. A substantial number of these partnerships have also been maintained.

Many good things in my own life grew out of the opportunities afforded by the things I learned at the Bennion Center and afterward through the Tanner Fellowship, including my employment at Horizonte until I finished my master’s degree in educational psychology at the University of Utah in 2007. I was selected as the first fellowship recipient and, as such, was invited to be involved with subsequent fellows. Because my
personal project involved creating a service-learning program at Horizonte, I became familiar with a number of service agencies in Salt Lake City and was able to engage my students in community learning opportunities as well as provide necessary services for those students. Compassion, creativity, and organization were skills I developed as I learned about my commitment to education as a career. Currently, I am working at West High School as a counselor and educational specialist for the gifted and talented middle school magnet and International Baccalaureate programs utilizing everything I put into my repertoire at Horizonte. Reflection became a daily event both in the classroom and in my own life. The people I met and relationships I developed still impact me today.

Having the Bennion Center staff available to me as I wrestled with my experiences and sought to fit them into my identity was crucial. With the support of others I found myself. Thank you to the Tanner family for providing this magical time in my life and to the Bennion Center for agreeing to support this creative and most generous gift.
My Experience as a Summer Fellow

By Leslie Warner, Former Bennion Center Student President

From The Bennion Center’s First Five Years of Caring

As a Bennion/Alumni Association Summer Fellow at the Women’s Lunch Place in Boston, my experience was both rewarding and exhausting. The Women’s Lunch Place is not a shelter but a lunch room and resource center for homeless and poor women and their children. My responsibilities included working in the laundry room to assist women with their laundry, preparing and serving food, and occasionally advocating for women who needed help with something like applying for social security or getting a bank account.

The great lesson I learned was that people in situations requiring a service from others are always waiting, and they get tired of it. I learned that in a place where a person can come to expect to be treated with dignity and respect, patience is often worn thin. I wondered why people were angry with me until I realized that many people didn’t have the energy to wait any more. It was easier to try to remedy situations so people didn’t have to wait so much.

I benefitted personally from my experience regardless of how many lives I was able to touch. I was able to feel a sense of belonging there. The fellowship was a great opportunity for me to see that I do indeed want to pursue my goals of becoming a social worker and an advocate for poor and homeless people. This opportunity to further realize my goals and augment my education was invaluable.
Appendix


Bennion Center Annual Statistics, 1987–2007

Lowell L. Bennion Quotes


The initial mission statement was created by the Center’s advisory board in 1987. Its breadth and detail were especially helpful in those formative years. The second was written by the board in a 2000 summer retreat because participants felt a shorter one would be more useful. The statement of purpose was created by student leaders in 1992 and presented first to the Salt Lake Rotary Foundation, who helped fund the center for the first five years. This commitment was also printed on a large wooden wall-hanging and dedicated to all the center’s founders including Dick and Sue Jacobsen, the center’s initial donors. When Dick was told that this pledge was being given to the Rotary Foundation and was asked if his name could be included, he said, “Just make me a dot in the right hand corner.” That dot is visible on the plaque, which still hangs in the center.

The 1987 Mission Statement

“The Lowell Bennion Community Service Center seeks to involve University students, faculty, staff, and alumni in service to the communities in which they live locally, nationally, and globally. Inspired by the enduring example of Lowell Bennion, whose life-long devotion to the well-being of others guided both his personal and professional affairs, the Center engages all participants in identifying community needs, exploring possible solutions, and particularly, offering enlightened humane service. The Center promotes understanding of the nature of human communities, the benefits of cooperative effort, and the rewards found in the relief of suffering or the banishment of ignorance and fear. In a society of material plenty, those who participate in the Center’s activities and projects will find meaning through community service and pleasure in the improvement of life around them.”

The 2000 Mission Statement

“The Lowell Bennion Community Service Center fosters lifelong service and civic participation by engaging the University with the greater community in action, change, and learning.”

1992 Service Pledge to Our Community

“Because we recognize a gap between our society’s values and our current reality and because we believe that when one person is hurting, we all suffer; then we, as participants in the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center, pledge ourselves to engage in effective action and thoughtful reflection in order to find solutions to our communities’ problems, narrow this gap, and build a better future.”
Creative Leadership Award
Richard M. Jacobson
Thomas Warburton
Bill Walsh
Dr. Carl Inoway
Faye Iverson
Virginia Parmalee
Vaughn Lovejoy
Kathy Klotz
Roz McGee
William Roper
Linda Hilton
Cynthia Bourne
Fraser Nelson
Abdi Mohamed

Distinguished Faculty Service Award
Carol M. Werner
Kazuo Matsubayashi
Dr. Robert Huefner
Dr. Cheryl Wright
Carol M. Werner
Dr. Barbara Brown
Linda Smith
Bob Young

Service-Learning Awards
Noella Sudbury
Erica Shields
Daneen Adams
Vaughn Lovejoy
Dr. Harris Sondak
Lin Eugster
Keith Bartholomew
Mira Locher
Jennifer Jensen
Sarah Moyer

Summer Alumni Fellowships
Dan DeGooeyer
Bill Crim
Bradley Weischedel
Leslie Warner
Solmaz Shotorbani
Christine Carr
Doug Larson
Kade Finnoff
Ryan Russell
Vanda Sinha
Stephanie Adams
Robin Davis
Jonathan Jensen
Paul Maynard
Curt Larsen
Ashley DiAna
Brandy Brock
Anne Looser
Angelina Chan
Amanda Wilson
Noella Sudbury
Shannon McOmber
Leigh Mangum
Nicholas Daniels
Alexandra Parvaz
Jonathan Kinnaird

Elmo R. and Frances Bennion Morgan Fellowship
Lisa Harris

Barbara Tanner Fellowship
Abby Bird
Mark Wride
Sander Seaman
Monika Tapuskova
Brian Emerson
Melinda Meier
Tiffin Brough
Lindsay Clark
Breanne McConkie
Katie Batazzo

Telitha Ellis Lindquist Scholarship
Amy Bosworth
Saphu Pradhan
Chaitna Sinha
James Ford
Kevin Petersen
Lis Jacques
Kirsten Davies
Henry Tran
Kate Bradley
Katy Christiansen

The Merle Colton Bennion Personal Learning Through Service Fellowship
Becky Murphy
Jason Urry
Quotes from Lowell L. Bennion

“I am very proud to be associated with this Center at the University. People think that I had something to do with its founding; that it is my program. I am honored to have my name associated with it, but I didn’t establish it, I was just one of several that worked on the organization of the Bennion Center. They thought that rather than just have an abstract name, they ought to tie something to it, so they chose my name for some crazy reason.

But, I am proud of what is being done by the Center, by you students and by Irene Fisher and her colleagues in the office. I think that it is remarkable. I think you’re the liveliest group on campus.

I think that you worked out procedures very well. I attended the annual meeting of the board last week, and we got pages of procedures that you follow. Very creative. So I wonder what I could say today that would be very different, that you haven’t already put into practice.

Let my try a few basic simple notions on you. I discovered one thing: that life is meaningful to the extent that it is purposeful. We get the meaning out of life by the goals that we pursue, by the purposes we pursue.

I had a little sister at the University when I was at the Institute and she complained a great deal about a lot of things. Life was boring to her. University life. She met a young man from Utah State who fell in love with her, and she with him. You should have seen the change in the meaning in her life. After that, she lived towards marriage and had a boyfriend, a peach of a guy that she later married. Life is meaningful to the extent that it is purposeful.

If some of you haven’t chosen a major yet, if you get excited about a major, you will find that student life becomes more meaningful to you. I think that we understand people’s behavior, when we understand their purpose in life, or in their activity. So I think, that, number one. . .I understand you’re directors of programs, is that right? Most of you anyway. You need to define your purpose, and remind yourself of it regularly. It will be meaningful to the extent that it is purposeful.

My second little notion is that your purpose ought to be defined in terms of the people. The most important thing in life are human beings and what is going on in their lives, and so you should define your purpose in your project in terms of how your program is going to affect people - what people? And how is it going to influence or affect them or what’s it going to do for them? Think in terms of people, the people you are trying to reach through your program, either directly or indirectly. I don’t know any way that is as good to measure your program, the value of it or the purpose of it except in terms of people. Do you think in terms of people, in terms of who is going to be affected in what ways by your project? I maintain that it is meaningful to the extent that it affects people, meets some of their needs. Some very specific people.

We need to define the needs that people have in any area we are interested in. We need to spell out in our minds and together, need to spell out what the needs of people are. Our purpose ought to be to satisfy human needs of one kind or another. I guess you’ve done all this, have you?
Found your purpose? Know whom you’re serving? And in what way you are serving them?

I think people have tangible needs and intangible. Tangible needs are very concrete, should be concrete, very visible. For example, elderly people, elderly widows. Do you know that there are hundreds of people in the Salt Lake valley, elderly people who live alone who have neither spouse nor children, who face old age and death alone. And they have concrete needs. Some of them have weeds in their yards, their walls need washing, their house needs cleaning. Some of them need to have somebody come in and prepare lunch for them or do their laundry.

I called on an eighty-three year-old lady the other month, and she said she had a neighbor who came in every day, who made her bed, fixed her lunch, helped her shower. A fifty year-old lady who... spent an hour or two a day meeting the very desperate needs of this little lady so she could live in her own home and have freedom and privacy and live inexpensively because of the help that this neighbor provided.

I am especially interested in the elderly and handicapped because I am there. I can’t use my arms, I can’t drive, can’t put on a shirt or coat without help. I am not asking for any sympathy, I am just telling you I know what these practical needs are. My wife is going to outlive me. She is good enough to help me get dressed and undressed a couple of times a day. I don’t know what I’d do without her. Yet there are hundreds of little old ladies in the Salt Lake valley that have neither husband nor children to do things for them. They face life alone.

In planning your work, I would suggest that you think in terms of very concrete terms: what are the needs of the people you are trying to serve? Do they have some tangible, practical needs? I think that it would be very satisfying -- I know it is -- to meet these concrete needs that people have.

Now, people have intangible needs. I have reduced them to four. I think that every human being has three or four very basic psychological needs or human needs. I the first is to be accepted by other human beings warmly. To give and receive and love, if you will. To give and receive affection and security. Feeling that they are wanted and respected and loved. That’s the most pressing basic universal psychological need that human beings have. I’m sure you’re aware of that.

I took a box of food on the way home to a lady once, to a widow. We had a nice visit. When I left, I wished her well, and she said, “Mr. Bennion call again, will you, if only to say ‘hello’.” She said it with tears in her eyes. She missed somebody, anybody even speaking to her.

Do you know, it’s remarkable to me that Jesus made love the most central basic virtue of his teaching. And it’s the most basic psychological need. My interest in religion, in the Gospel, is because it meets human needs better than anything else. If we understood love as Jesus understood, as the Hebrew prophets understood it. Do you follow me? The most basic human need it to love and be loved, and the heart of religion at it’s best, at least the Christian religion and Jewish faith, is to express love. Now if you are not religious by nature or by affiliation, you can do it just as a human being. You can know that people need to be accepted and loved. What I am suggesting is that when you go out to do a project, for instance, if you are cleaning up
a yard for an elderly widow, make sure that you not only clean up the yard, but that you give her a feeling of love and acceptance. You talk with her and show her affection. Show interest in her. Take turns, keep one of the group visiting with her all the time -- not the same one!! Don’t let anyone escape the pleasure of work. Visit with her, show an interest. Realize that she needs to feel your love as much as she needs the weeds to be dug up out of her yard.

Anyway, that’s the most basic psychological need. We developed a program when we were at the community services council. We called it “Befriending an Elderly” -- Befriending. We recruited families and couples and a few individuals who would adopt one of these lovely widows and become a real friend. This is not once a month, but once a week. Telephone them occasionally, remember them on their birthday, and at Christmas time. Become a very genuine friend, working at the relationship gradually, so that these people knew that at least they had one family or one friend who really shared an interest in them.

The second basic psychological need, I think, is to be productive, to be creative. We need love and acceptance, but we need to be productive to feel that we deserve and merit this acceptance. You need to try and find ways for people to be productive that you serve. And creative.

I remember visiting an aunt of mind when she was about ninety-six years old. She had rheumatoid arthritis in her knees. She was in a wheelchair. She had reared eleven children, been active in the church and in the community, had a wonderful life. She complained to me because she couldn’t do anything now with her bad knees and being confined to a wheelchair. I said to her, “You don’t know how much your presence means to your children and other people like me. We just love you, being in your presence. We enjoy your company. We like to listen to you.” And she went on and talked about her courtship days. I knew her husband. He was my uncle. She had a great time recounting her courtship days that were productive, creative and very rewarding. I gave her a chance to talk, to recollect, to feel, to remember that she had won this fine man as a husband and had a family of eleven children, all of them able, bright, interesting people.

So don’t just clean up yards. Give them a chance to talk and recollect and express their accomplishments out of the past. If you are working with younger people, see if you can give them ways to help them be creative and productive.

I think that the third basic psychological need is self esteem and sense of one’s worth. You’ve heard about that so much, I’m sure. Dean Gibbons just mentioned it: you need to love yourself before you are free to love other people. Somebody said that if you love your neighbor as yourself and you hate yourself, woe unto your neighbor. My experience is that people who don’t love themselves, accept themselves, have poor relations with other people. They’re not free to give of themselves. So, we all need to have a feeling of our own worth. We need to cultivate that in the people we serve, whether it be elderly or young people.

When I ran a boy’s ranch for twenty-five years, I had two thousand boys come to me for a few weeks. We had them work good and hard in the morning. In the afternoon, they learned to ride horses and play sports and fish. In the evening, we made them think. We had debates and discussions, and tried to get them to express themselves. We had twelve year old boys stand on
their feet and talk in favor of this or that. Our whole purpose was to make these boys feel proud of themselves. If you have a good feeling toward yourself, you’ve got it half made. If you don’t, you’re in trouble, I believe.

So those are the three basic psychological needs: acceptance, productivity, and self esteem or sense of worth. This sense of worth comes largely from the first two, from being productive and from feeling wanted and loved and accepted and needed.

I think a fourth need is to find meaning and purpose in life as a whole. That comes largely from these other needs. What I am suggesting to you is that when you are going to clean up a yard for a widow, that you be conscious of her basic psychological needs, show her a lot of love and attention, acceptance. Get her talking her creativity and productivity. Let her know that you have a high regard for her. Meet her human needs along with her tangible, concrete yard or house needs or whatever might be...

It doesn’t take extra time as much as it does reflection and thoughtfulness to meet these human needs as well as achieving your concrete goals of your program. I think that every program ought to have some very concrete needs that you’re trying to meet. Trying to help kids succeed in school or teaching the illiterate to be literate, the hungry to be fed. You need these concrete goals to justify the existence of your program. But along with the concrete tangible, have in mind these intangible needs that people have, and try to meet them along with the concrete.

I’ve had the privilege of being chauffeured once a week by one of the students from the Bennion Center. It’s been a very rewarding experience. This summer, I had a young man come up -- I forget his name -- I had him cut lawn for a widow that I know. While he cut the lawn, I hugged her, and we met her needs, psychological and tangible. It was a fine experience for everybody.

By the way, you not only need to meet these intangible [needs] of the people you serve, but you need to be aware of the volunteers who work with you. They have these needs, too. How can you give your volunteer co-workers a feeling of acceptance? How can you make them more creative and feel productive? How can you raise their self-esteem.”

“Frequently, noticing the problems of others makes us uncomfortable . . . we need to be patient with our discomfort so we can truly help the suffering person.”


“All of us have the power to forge creative relationships. All we need is sincerity and interest in the welfare of others.”
“We need to save the heart and mind for creative things, for fine human relationships, for playing or listening to good music, for conversation, for reading, for visiting the sick and afflicted . . . This will give us a sense of control and purpose in living.”
“Our only access to the future, and the best way to determine in some measure its character, is by what we do today.”
“From the cradle to the grave, all people need someone to communicate with, someone to listen to them, hold their hands, show an interest in them . . . There is no substitute for love in life, either in giving or receiving.”
“If we thought of life as a gift, we might not demand nearly as much from it. And if we lived more graciously, giving of ourselves more freely to the well-being of others, many of our personal concerns would disappear, & life would become easier for all.”
“Doing things for their own sake is a richer experience than acting to please others . . . We should concentrate on the rightness of our actions, on the value and meaning of what we are doing, and not look to the approval or praise of others for our reward.”


"A value which can and should permeate all other values is creativity. A creative person is one who rejoices in his own individuality, his uniqueness, and expresses it."
"Creativity does not lie in the product itself as much as it does in the process. What is thrilling and fulfilling is creative self-expression, whether anyone else recognizes or values our work or not. This is not to negate the importance of recognition. Human response to another's creativity confirms the feeling and also stimulates creative moments in one who appreciates it…"
"The act of creation is the highest expression of creativity…this is possible for most of us simple, unsophisticated persons if we face life with courage, with affirmation, dare to do our own thinking, and trust the work of our own hands."
"How shall we give vent to this tremendous urge to live? Shall we fill our days with trivialities, routine, daydreaming? Or can we learn to express our natures more significantly by engaging more often in creative living?"
"Each of us has a great need to be creative. Creativeness satisfies our hunger and thirst for meaning. It brings joy. It is a quality that can enter into and enhance anything we do with our hands, hearts, and minds. It is a worthwhile goal to consider and pursue."
"Creativeness is a matter of attitude more than circumstance"
"Creativeness has one basis, then, in education and hard work. The rest of it is perhaps a matter of faith, attitude, and imagination. Even these, however, can be cultivated. The imagination can be quickened by reflection, observation, reading, and conversation.”

“Make something, do something with your hands, with your imagination, with your mind, with your soul, with your fellow men. Do something in their interest.”

“The quality of our human ties determines the quality of our lives more than any single value.”

“I find all persons I meet interesting, even those who seem obnoxious. I rejoice in the great diversity among human beings - young and old, of every shade and color, of diverse patterns of thinking. I am pleased to associate with youth and the elderly, with professionals and nonprofessionals, with men and women, with “sinners” and “saints”. There is nothing that fascinates me quite as much as a human being - myself and others. There is no higher value on earth, it seems to me, than fine human relationships.”

“Life goes on and will continue. Let it be in search of meaning. Let it be for the things that matter most.”

Educating the Good Citizen for the Twenty-First Century: Service-Learning in Higher Education*

Introduction

This document presents a proposal for enhancing the educational experience offered at the University of Utah by introducing Service-Learning into the curriculum on a broad scale. After reviewing the ways that higher education in America has changed over the last centuries, the document discusses the three types of knowledge that universities seek to instill: Foundational Knowledge, Professional Knowledge, and Socially Responsive Knowledge. It focuses on how Socially Responsive Knowledge has become extremely important in contemporary society, and how that form of knowledge can be instilled through Service-Learning. The document concludes by proposing a plan of action for developing the Service-Learning curriculum at the University of Utah, and discusses the role of the Bennion Center in accomplishing this effort.

As we near the twenty-first century, higher education is at a crossroads. At few moments in our country's history have so many questioned the importance and relevance of higher education to contemporary society. Politicians and average citizens alike often share a view of the American university as a bastion for privileged intellectuals, not attending to social problems, teaching irrelevant (and irreverent) subjects, too little concerned

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* This document was prepared by the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Lowell Bennion Center of the University of Utah, 1995. The members of the Committee are: Irwin Altman, Psychology; Margaret Brady, English; Don Brown, Mechanical Engineering; Claire Clark, Family & Preventive Medicine; Mary Duffy, Nursing; Ted Eyering, Chemistry; Jack Geisler, Meteorology; Jim Gosling, Division of Continuing Education; Xan Johnson, Fine Arts; Don Kauchak, Educational Studies; Terry Kogan, Law; Karol Kumpfer, Health Education; Hank Liese, Social Work; Kazuo Matsubayashi, Architecture; Nancy Nickman, Pharmacy Practice; Debra Scammon, Business. Ex officio members include: Ramona Adams, Associate Dean, Student Affairs; Normand Gibbons, Vice President/Dean, Student Affairs; Reba Keele, Dean, Undergraduate Studies; Jack Newell, Educational Administration. In addition, Bennion Center staff members Irene Fisher, Linda Bonar, and Bill Crim were instrumental in preparing this document.

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products and services, as well as by the increasing technological complexity of the world.

States and the federal government poured enormous resources into research programs, fellowships and stipends, loan programs, buildings, laboratories, and other forms of support to encourage higher education to contribute to the well being of the nation, and to the development of the student as a citizen able to meet the growing complex challenges of our society. At the same time, issues of diversity and civil rights resulted in educational programs that expanded the curriculum to include ethnic studies, women's studies, and cross-cultural programs.

**Two Fundamental Questions of Higher Education**

Each era in American higher education has involved a continuing dialogue between universities and the communities in which they are situated. These exchanges occur at national, regional and local levels and are aimed at addressing two questions:

What are the current goals of higher education in light of the perceived social needs of the community?

How can colleges and universities best teach and prepare students to become "good citizens" to serve their community?

In responding to these fundamental issues, institutions of higher education have, on occasion, been out of "synch" with changing social needs, as those needs are understood by the larger society. The process whereby a university comes to appreciate the needs of its surrounding society is a gradual one; such needs often become evident only after a period of time. Moreover, like other institutions, universities are prone to inertia and tend to change slowly. Thus, there is often a disjunction between what the members of a university community perceive as the goals of higher education and what persons in the larger society perceive those goals to be. In particular, this disjunction often relates to the attributes of the "good citizen" that institutions of higher education should be developing. Do we seek only "liberally educated citizens", "technically skilled citizens", or "citizens with a sense of social responsibility," or some combination of these?

Given this tendency to be out of synch with the larger society, universities must maintain a strong commitment to an ongoing dialogue with the communities in which they are situated, and must be willing to challenge regularly their current responses to the two fundamental questions of higher education.
The Present State of Affairs

As illustrated by the number of books and articles calling for various reforms of colleges and universities, American higher education is currently in a state of great uncertainty and disagreement in providing contemporary answers to the fundamental questions of higher education. In addition to the uncertainty being experienced by those in the university, expressions of dissatisfaction are also emerging from legislatures and from the national government, which tend to focus on budgets and teaching loads and voice vague concerns about the values being fostered by modern colleges and universities. But the disturbing message being sent is clear: Society is not getting its money's worth from its institutions of higher education. Faculties need to work harder, be more efficient, stop doing so much research, do more teaching, etc.

Rather than ignore these statements as mere cacophonous rantings, we in American higher education should view these disturbing statements as an invitation to re-engage in an important dialogue over the two fundamental questions concerning higher education, and welcome this as an opportunity to articulate a vision for the role of the university in preparing the "good citizen" for the twenty-first century.

A Conceptual Model

There are three types of knowledge that may be appropriate in American society in the present and future decades.
Foundational Knowledge refers to knowledge of the basic concepts and substance of a traditional discipline. Professional knowledge refers to the substance and skills of what students learn in “vocationally-oriented” fields, including medicine, business, engineering, architecture, and law. Professional Knowledge aims at teaching the student to be a professional, with the practical ability to do certain tangible activities. To a great extent, American colleges and universities during the post World War II era viewed their role in society as instilling foundational and professional knowledge in students.

The “good citizen” that institutions of higher education sought to turn out was broadly educated, steeped in foundational knowledge in one or more disciplines, and fit the image and identity of “an educated person.” Some members of the student population prepared to fulfill their roles as “good citizens” by being trained as professionals who could contribute immediately to societal needs in science, engineering, business, teaching, or other areas. Universities considered it important that these students be exposed not only to the professional knowledge necessary to enable them to pursue their careers, but also to foundational knowledge. By requiring professional students to take liberal education classes, universities have viewed their role as producing a well-rounded “good citizen,” one who is not merely a specialist in his or her professional sphere.

In imbuing Professional Knowledge, institutions of higher education historically have used classrooms, laboratories and community settings (clerkships, practica, internships) to educate students. The goal has been to teach students to fulfill roles as “good professional” citizens. To a large extent, Fundamental Knowledge has been taught by universities and colleges in classrooms, laboratories, and “on-campus.” Students emerge from these settings as “educated citizens.” In neither instance do these educational systems view service to the community as a central feature of the educational process.

A fundamental change, however, is occurring in higher education as we approach the twenty-first century. People are beginning to realize that a new kind of knowledge, Socially Responsive Knowledge, is necessary if colleges and universities are going to be successful in preparing our students to assume the duties of good citizenship in the future. This newly evolving knowledge includes teaching students a sense of community; a sense of responsibility to others; sensitivity and aspirations to help resolve problems of society; a feeling of commitment and obligation to become involved in community affairs; and a general commitment that extends beyond one’s self, one’s family, friends, colleagues, and immediate reference groups to the
broader concern for one's society. Although some features of this type of social knowledge have been implicit in certain aspects of higher education, historically universities have encouraged individuals to seek more self-focused foundational knowledge and professional skills.

Why does the task of educating our students to be "good citizens" now require that we pay more attention to socially responsive knowledge? To begin with, the needs that now challenge society are significantly different than those that have faced us in the past. Large scale problems of the physical environment, health, homelessness, and underemployment have taken the forefront of our attention as never before. Moreover, changes in the demography of the nation and attendant issues of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, changes in family structures and lifestyles, and the globalization of the economy, and political systems force us as academicians to no longer assume that we can perform our teaching role without paying close attention to the impact of that role on the communities that surround us. And these questions simply cannot be addressed only by instilling traditional and professional knowledge in our students. New generations of students must be taught to accept social responsibility if they, as the "good citizens" of the future, are to make a meaningful contribution to the resolution of these newly emerging social problems.

Accordingly, colleges and universities must expand and enhance their curricula in order to offer new educational experiences for coming generations of students. Many students around the nation have already begun this process on their own through volunteer service activities. For example, the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center at the University of Utah currently sponsors more than 50 projects involving 5000 students per year, who devote thousands of hours of service to community causes. Yet simply providing opportunities for volunteer service will not enable universities to meet the social demands of the coming decades. The transmittal of Socially Responsive Knowledge needs to be integrated broadly into the entire educational enterprise. To take one example, the "good citizen" of the future needs to understand homelessness from a societal, cultural, family and individual perspective. He or she needs knowledge of the root causes of homelessness, knowledge of potential social policy actions, and knowledge about possible legislation to address these issues. Equally important, students need to understand their roles in attacking the problem and how they are part of any solution. Such knowledge cannot be instilled in the classroom alone. It requires that the classroom experience be conjoined with the experience of providing frontline services to homeless people.
Service-Learning as a Way of Teaching Socially Responsive Knowledge

Joining of classroom experience with frontline community service experience is the foundational basis for the Service-Learning concept which has been introduced at the University of Utah by the Bennion Center. Service-Learning provides students with an interplay of acting, thinking, reading, and discussing the social issues of the era. Service-Learning will provide students of the future with a blend of academic and action experiences necessary to develop an understanding of the issues facing our larger community, giving them the knowledge, skills and tools necessary for dealing with emerging social issues. Service-Learning does NOT supplant the teaching of Foundational or Professional knowledge. Rather its goal is to enhance and capitalize on the teaching of that knowledge by coupling it with Socially Responsive Knowledge.

Understanding community and societal issues and one's relationship to those issues requires active participation and involvement in community experiences. To gain Socially Responsive Knowledge, a student needs an experience that enables her to sense that she a not merely a one-time observer on the periphery. By the time of graduation, the student needs the experience of having been in the midst of the community, assisting professionals and consumers act on and contribute to the resolution of societal problems. Service-Learning seeks to make such contributions while at the same time developing a deeper understanding of those problems at a personal, professional and conceptual level. It aims to develop a sense of responsibility, skills, and a substantive understanding of the specific societal problem being investigated and tackled. As a result, when students graduate from the university, they are far better oriented and more inclined to becoming "citizens of the community" with broad knowledge and leadership potential, in addition to serving as "professional citizens" and "educated citizens."

Service-Learning fosters the development of personal and interpersonal knowledge grounded in an interdisciplinary perspective that illuminates self-understanding, and provides the basis for effective teamwork. Service-Learning encourages students to be more self-reflective about who they are, what they value, and the reasons for their values. It promotes the development of interpersonal and communication skills related to effective and cooperative problem solving. This interdisciplinary approach to self-understanding and interpersonal understanding can 1) tap into and strengthen the interdisciplinary connections at the University (Liberal Education, Ethnic Studies, Environmental Studies, Women's Studies, etc.); 2)
help the community to understand the value of the University of Utah and the relationship between the University’s strong interdisciplinary-based curriculum and community problem solving; and 3) enable faculty to better understand the relevance of their own discipline to community problem solving, and to appreciate the interconnection between their own discipline and other disciplines in tackling community problems.

Adding Service-Learning to the university curriculum does not require homogenizing higher education. The way that Service-Learning is integrated into a student’s academic program will vary greatly depending on the discipline in which the student is focusing. But regardless of major or discipline, we encourage the university to expand and enhance its educational mission to respond to society’s emerging needs if we are to fulfill our role in educating the “good citizen” of the twenty-first century.

Key Elements of Service-Learning

1. Service-Learning involves foundational and/or professional knowledge that is combined with “experience in” and “action on” community needs.

   In a Service-Learning experience, students learn about community problems first hand, study foundational concepts and knowledge about the issue, develop professional skills, and participate in solving actual social problems and formulating social policy for the future. Students not only learn about social issues, study and discuss fundamental concepts in a discipline, and/or learn professional skills, but they combine these knowledge bases, apply them, and put them into action to address real problems in their own community.

2. Service-Learning combines traditional classroom and laboratory experiences with significant experiences in field placements where pertinent social issues are being played out.

   A part of the Service-Learning experience must occur in community sites such as shelters, hospitals, neighborhood social service agencies and social centers, and in homes. Absent such active participation at off-campus sites, students cannot hope to gain insight into and understanding of how the ways in which so many of our citizens are challenged by numerous difficulties in their daily lives. But it is also essential that Service-Learning involve some combination of university-based classroom, media, and/or laboratory settings in order for students to gain essential foundational and professional skills. An important aspect of learning in community settings is that students will necessarily interact with and work directly with professional
service providers and consumers whose everyday lives are confronted by the difficult challenges posed by our complex society.

A fundamental aspect of Service-Learning is offering students an opportunity to step back and reflect on their first-hand experiences in various community settings, and to consider their role and responsibilities as a citizen of that broader community. Students need to develop the skills and insight necessary to identify community problems; they also need to develop the sensibility to ask how they can be a part of the solution to those problems.

3. Service-Learning requires a special tri-partite partnership between students, faculty, and the community.

Faculty must be willing to develop partnerships with community groups, spend time in community settings, and work in an often unpredictable and shifting milieu—as the demands of a community issue change, as opportunities and barriers arise, and as circumstances shift. Service-Learning is often fluid and dynamic, and requires a reflexive orientation to teaching and instruction.

In addition, faculty must conceive of themselves as team players in Service-Learning, and as co-teachers and co-students with students, community professionals and community consumers. All parties are both knowledgeable and often uninformed about different aspects of a Service-Learning venture, and everyone must be capable of assuming varied roles at different times.

Students must also be willing to shift their often traditional role of passive learner to that of active participant, as they learn content and concepts, develop professional skills, and use their learning to understand and undertake problem solving actions on community issues. Thus students must learn to relate to faculty as teachers, consultants and co-students.

A student must come to consider community professionals and consumers as an equally important group of teachers in the Service-Learning educational process. Faculty must engage these community members in defining and refining course goals, in identifying potential experiences for students, in training and supervising students, and in evaluating student performance.

This tripartite partnership, an essential ingredient of Service-Learning, is challenging but essential, and is an opportunity to forge essential links between the university and the citizens it serves and educates.
The Role of The Bennion Center in Implementing Service-Learning at the University of Utah

Integrating Service-Learning into the curriculum at the University of Utah cannot be done casually or as a simple add-on to existing responsibilities of faculty and administrators. It will require a significant investment of planning time and finances to reshape and restructure existing and new courses, and ultimately to test and revise these new forms of instruction. In order for an academic department to take seriously this new educational challenge, the investment of time to rethink an entire curriculum or even parts of a curriculum will be even greater, an endeavor that reasonably can be expected to extend over several years.

1. The Bennion Center’s Past Accomplishments in Service-Learning

The Bennion Center, its Faculty Advisory Committee, and its Faculty Mentor have played a major role in developing Service-Learning at the University of Utah. Over the past five years the Bennion Center, with support from many sources, has:

- awarded eleven Public Service Professorships which have enabled faculty members to develop simultaneously Service-Learning courses and projects that service the community;
- worked with faculty to develop 45 Service-Learning courses in 23 different departments, as of May, 1995 (These courses are identified for students in the class schedule with a “SL” notation);
- created a Service-Learning Scholars program in which students must work with a faculty advisor to complete 15 credit hours of Service-Learning courses, 400 hours of community service and a major capstone project that integrates the students’ service and academic interests. Projects must meet a community need. Seven Service-Learning Scholars graduated in 1994-95, and 60 are currently enrolled.
- collected and analyzed data that document the learning outcomes of Service-Learning classes;
- funded 23 Bennion Center Teaching Assistants trained in community service methodology to assist faculty teaching Service-Learning courses;

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created a Faculty Mentor award which enables an experienced Service-Learning faculty member to help other faculty who desire to teach Service-Learning classes.

To date, these programs have engaged more than 1,800 students and more than 50 faculty members, all of whom have contributed more than 30,000 hours of service to our local community, while strengthening the undergraduate learning environment. The Bennion Center has raised more than $330,000 to create and support these Service-Learning programs since 1991.

2. Student Perspectives on Service-Learning

In the minds of students who have taken Service-Learning classes at the University of Utah, the experience has been a significant academic and civic success. During the 1993-94 school year, and the first two quarters of the 1994-95 school year, 503 student evaluations of Service-Learning were completed in 21 separate classes. The results show overwhelming support among students for more experiential, Service-Learning opportunities throughout the University. Also, results indicate that, in the perception of students, both academic and civic learning outcomes are greatly enhanced when service is joined with traditional class work.

Eighty-nine percent of students felt that the service they performed helped them to see the relevance of the course work to their everyday lives. A similarly high percentage (84%) felt that the service opportunities helped them to better understand class lectures and readings. Only nine percent felt that they would have learned more if more time had been spent in the classroom. Ninety-two percent felt that they were able to experience "real learning" through the Service-Learning class because it had helped them to integrate the learning from the class into their own behavior.

The Service-Learning experience also bolstered students' sense of civic commitment. Over eighty percent reported that the class had made them more interested in performing community service than they were before. Only twenty-six students out of more than five hundred (under six percent) reported that they would not be doing community service after the class was over.

It seems safe to say that from the perspective of students, Service-Learning is tremendous success. The overwhelming majority of students find that Service-Learning courses provide a kind of learning experience that is not only exciting and provocative, but one which accomplishes more effectively the learning goals of individual courses. Students not only report increased learning, but improved retention from the practical "real life"
experience. So great has been the effect of these courses that over ninety percent felt that more courses at the University should combine service and learning. Many, in fact, commented that Service-Learning courses should be available (even required) in all disciplines.

3. The Bennion Center’s Future Role in Service-Learning

The Bennion Center can continue to play a major role in assisting faculty and administrators in redesigning and creating new education offerings aimed at integrating Service-Learning into higher education. The Center can make readily available the wealth of experience that it has developed in assisting individual faculty members to successfully integrate Service-Learning into their courses. The Center can use its impressive network of community contacts to help departments identify appropriate community agencies and organizations, and to suggest ways that a service experience can be added as a rigorous component to an existing educational offering. In addition, the Bennion Center has the expertise to help academic units to identify potential federal, state, and foundation funding sources to aid in developing new classes.

In essence, the Bennion Center can serve as resource for educational change at this university. The existing expertise and knowledge of Bennion Center staff, student leaders, Faculty Advisory Committee (consisting of representatives from every college at the University of Utah), and Community Advisory Board, coupled with this group’s enthusiasm for Service-Learning, can provide an important talent pool in the university.

A Proposed Plan of Action

Systematically incorporating Service-Learning into the university curriculum requires actions and initiatives at all levels—individual faculty, departments and colleges, other academic units, e.g., Liberal Education, Honors and others, and the university central administration, notably the President and Vice Presidents.

1. Individual faculty

The Bennion Center has worked with individual faculty for several years, resulting in almost four dozen Service-Learning classes being offered during the 1994-95 academic year. In this “bottom-up” approach, the Bennion Center staff, with financial support from the university and outside sources,
has assisted faculty in developing courses, providing TA assistance, and working with the instructor's department for release time and support.

We recommend that this grass roots, one-on-one approach be continued as one part of a multi-pronged effort to incorporate Service-Learning in the university curriculum. But this is not enough. Indeed, if this is all we do, the concept will wither, because Service-Learning ultimately requires a fundamental philosophical commitment of university departments, colleges and the administration.

2. Departments, colleges and programs.

Most instruction is organized around academic departments, colleges, and other academic programs. Any educational change must, therefore, eventually involve these units. If Service-Learning is to gain any significant role in the university these units must be involved in an integrated and systematic way. The University administration needs to encourage, stimulate, and "require" these units to begin moving in this direction.


For several years, the Bennion Center Staff, Faculty Advisory Committee, and students have been engaged in an ongoing discussion with individual faculty members about the role and development of Service-Learning at the University of Utah. In light of the powerful momentum that this discussion has engendered, this process of legitimation from the ground up will continue.

Now that a grass roots movement is in place, the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Bennion Center believes that the next stage of momentum must come from the "top" — that is, from the President and appropriate Vice Presidents of the University. We believe that these leaders must now play an active role, announce their commitment to Service-Learning as an integral part of the university of the future, and openly commit resources to the development of such an initiative. With visionary leadership articulated at the highest levels of the university, and with their call for movement in this direction, coupled with some financial resources to do the planning, curriculum revision, evaluation, and fine tuning, we foresee dramatic progress in the enhancement of our educational activities.

To be specific, the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Bennion Center recommends that the President and his Cabinet, Academic Vice President, Health Sciences Vice President and Vice President for Student Affairs publicly endorse the philosophy and plan outlined in this document (perhaps
jointly with the Faculty Advisory Committee if so desired), state a
commitment to provide resources for pilot programs, and encourage deans,
department chairs, program directors and faculty to prepare initial proposals.
As a next step, the Faculty Advisory Committee anticipates meeting with the
Council of Academic Deans, the Academic Senate, and the Associated
Students of the University of Utah in order to gain additional input and
support for the expansion of Service-Learning at the University of Utah.

The Bennion Center Staff and Faculty Advisory Committee are
prepared to assist in whatever way is deemed appropriate. One possible
model is for academic units to consult with Bennion Center staff and Faculty
Advisory Committee prior to preparing brief preliminary proposals. The
Bennion Center staff and Faculty Advisory Committee are also willing to
advise the President and Vice Presidents regarding possible expanded
proposals from some units, and suggestions regarding financial needs for
various proposals. In essence, one possible model involves the Bennion
Center and its Faculty Advisory Committee serving as an “honest broker”
between academic units and the university administration, and assisting all
parties in a reflexive process.

We ask for a good faith commitment by the administration to
publicly support the introduction of Service-Learning in the
university, and to provide "reasonable" resources as faculty units
commit to constructive evolution of their educational programs. At
the same time, the Bennion Center staff and Faculty Advisory
Committee are willing to act in good faith to stimulate curriculum
change, and to work with the administration to achieve a process that
is reasonable and realistic regarding resource requirements.

Given the exigencies of budgets and resource issues, the Faculty
Advisory Committee is willing to join the university administration as
partners in communicating the general plan proposed here to the university
community, including the gradual and iterative process to be followed in
developing socially responsive learning opportunities.

It is not possible to be more specific at this time regarding the ideal
scope of Service-Learning at the University of Utah, the rate at which the
process will proceed, and the exact configuration of Service-Learning in the
curriculum of various departments and academic units. Nor is it to be
expected that the university administration and specific colleges and
departments can specify exact resource requirements and exact resources
available at this time. What we now need is a good faith commitment, and a
step by step process that proceeds in an open and flexible fashion, with an
opportunity for everyone to be partners in reshaping and enhancing education at the University of Utah in the present and future decades.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you, are prepared to provide models of unit financial costs, and to invest our energies in launching a campus wide initiative.
The Bennington's Institutional Context

The service-learning program at the Bennington College is an integral part of the college's educational philosophy. The program aims to integrate service and learning opportunities, enabling students to apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings. The program emphasizes the importance of experiential learning and community engagement, fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and to develop critical thinking skills.

Over 2,000 students—20% of the student body—participate in the college’s service-learning programs. The programs range from community-based projects to international service trips. The college has partnerships with local organizations, including non-profit agencies, community centers, and educational institutions.

We Make the Road by Walking

At the University of Utah, a student-faculty-based community service program is open to all undergraduate students. The program's mission is to provide meaningful service opportunities for students to engage in community-based projects and to develop leadership skills.

In and Out of the Curriculum

Building Service-Learning

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Conference—"say nothin' to 'il but to do it." conference—say nothin' to 'il but to do it. An" conference that spring and received determined to live the theme of the conference that spring and received determined to live the theme of the conference. The conference, which was held on April 15, 1995, featured keynote speakers, panel discussions, and interactive workshops. The theme of the conference was "Stepping Up: Innovative Approaches to Student Success". The conference was sponsored by the National Conference on Student Development and included sessions on strategies for improving student retention, engagement, and success. The conference examined the latest research and best practices in student development and provided opportunities for attendees to network and share ideas. The conference was attended by over 250 participants from institutions across the country.
Student Training and Summer Service Programs

We Make the Road by Walking

Curricular Student Leadership Development

Successful Service-Learning Programs
We Make the Road by Walking

Volunteers

Successful Service-Learning Programs

Several other options transform traditional service activities into the

The Center's Organizational Structure

The Bowen Center for Community Service, under the leadership of Ken McCain and the community, has made significant strides in developing community service programs. The Bowen Center, through its Organizational Structure, focuses on the development of programs that promote community service and engage students in meaningful service learning experiences.

The Bowen Center's mission calls for the improvement of university

Bowing Center Programs for Other Communities

The Bowen Center is committed to serving all communities, not just those in the university. The Center offers a variety of programs for other communities, ensuring that their needs are met.

The Bowen Center's focus on community service is evident in its programs. The Center's efforts are aimed at building strong partnerships with community organizations, providing students with opportunities to engage in meaningful service learning experiences.

The Bowen Center's programs are designed to be flexible and adaptable, allowing students and community partners to tailor their experiences to their specific needs.

The Bowen Center's success is measured by its ability to provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage in community service. The Center's programs are designed to be inclusive, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to participate in service learning experiences.

The Bowen Center's commitment to community service is reflected in its programs, which are designed to be innovative and engaging. The Center's success is measured by its ability to provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage in community service.

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The Bowen Center's mission calls for the improvement of university

Cocurricular Organizational Structure

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We Make the Road by Walking

Curriculum-Based Learning: The Growth Area

Finding the Center Point

Successful Service-Learning Programs

Public Service Professorship Award

We Make the Road by Walking

Curriculum-Based Learning: The Growth Area

Finding the Center Point

Successful Service-Learning Programs

Public Service Professorship Award
Service-Learning Course Development

The course development process begins with a clear understanding of the learning outcomes desired. The course objectives are typically aligned with the university's overall goals and the specific needs of the service-learning opportunity. Faculty members are involved in this process, ensuring that the course content is relevant and meaningful. The course design includes a mix of classroom lectures, discussions, and service-learning activities to ensure a well-rounded learning experience.

Successful Service-Learning Programs

The successful implementation of service-learning programs requires careful planning and execution. Faculty must be committed to the goals of service-learning and be prepared to guide students through the process. The program should be well-structured, with clear expectations for both students and the service partners.

Center's Coordinator's Program

The Center's Coordinator's Program is designed to support faculty in the development of service-learning courses. The program includes support for course design, implementation, and assessment. Faculty members receive training and resources to help them integrate service-learning into their courses effectively.

Revised and enhanced, the courses again focused on their own well-being and perspectives. The courses, with the service component embedded, aimed to help students develop a more holistic understanding of the impact of their actions on others. The first year of the grant, which was used to develop a service component in the course, resulted in students participating in community service projects. The second year of the grant, which focused on the enhancement of the service-learning component, led to the development of a more integrated curriculum. This second-year project provided an opportunity for the faculty to engage in meaningful service-learning activities and to explore new pedagogical strategies.

Another significant step in creating the foundation for curriculum-based service-learning courses is the creation of a service-learning program. This program is designed to support faculty in the development and implementation of service-learning courses, ensuring that they are well-planned and effective.

Service-Learning Scholarship Program

The Service-Learning Scholarship Program provides students with an opportunity to engage in meaningful service-learning experiences. The program supports students in the development of skills and knowledge that are relevant to their academic and professional goals. The scholarship is designed to encourage students to take an active role in their education and to contribute to the broader community.
In the second year of this initiative, the Zurn Award for Academic Excellence includes a set of courses that provide students with academic support. The center is designed to support students in their academic endeavors, fostering a community of learners who can support each other in achieving their academic goals. The program also includes workshops and seminars focused on study skills, time management, and career development.

The center works closely with faculty and administrators to identify students who may benefit from additional academic support and provides them with a dedicated space to work on their coursework. The center is open to all students, regardless of their academic background or current challenges.

Successful Models for Service-Learning Programs

In recent years, service-learning programs have become increasingly popular in higher education. These programs provide students with the opportunity to engage in community-based projects while learning about their field of study. The success of these programs often depends on the quality of the partnership between the university and the community partners.

Examples of successful service-learning programs include those that involve students in research projects, community service, or mentoring programs. These programs are designed to provide students with a deeper understanding of the issues they are studying and to help them develop important skills that will be valuable in their future careers.

In conclusion, the center is committed to providing students with the resources and support they need to succeed academically. Through its various programs and initiatives, the center aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters academic achievement and personal growth.
The current definitions of service-learning are being reevaluated in light of the form of program that involves student participation in community service projects. The model, which combines curricular and community service, is described as an effective way to integrate learning with community service. This model is also referred to as the "servic-learning" model, which is designed to complement traditional educational experiences.

The core of the service-learning program is the identification of the problem and the design of the service project. This process is known as the "service-learning cycle." The cycle consists of four main stages: planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation. Each stage is designed to help students gain a deeper understanding of the issues they are addressing and to foster personal growth.

Planning: In the planning stage, students work with community partners to identify a need and develop a service project that addresses that need. The project should be designed to meet the needs of the community partners and to align with the course objectives.

Implementation: During the implementation stage, students carry out the service project under the guidance of a faculty member or mentor. This stage is important for gaining hands-on experience and for developing skills in working collaboratively with others.

Reflection: After completing the service project, students reflect on their experience through a variety of methods, such as journals, discussions, or presentations. Reflection helps students to make connections between the service project and the course content and to develop critical thinking skills.

Evaluation: Finally, the service-learning program is evaluated to determine its effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes. This evaluation process includes self-reflection, peer review, and feedback from community partners.

By combining academic coursework with community service, service-learning programs provide students with a unique learning experience that enhances their critical thinking skills, enhances their understanding of community issues, and builds their professional and personal skills.

Service-Learning Initiatives

Benefits and Trends of Joint Curriculum/Curricular

Service-Learning programs are designed to helpincoming new students, develop a broad vision of the field, and prepare them for their future careers. This approach provides students with the opportunity to experience the real-world impacts of their studies and to make meaningful contributions to the community. By integrating service-learning into the curriculum, students gain a deeper understanding of the issues they are addressing and develop skills that are valuable in the workplace.
but is still visible.

Creating such positive energy early on is very important. After all, this is what we want our campus to look like. We have to make sure the doors of the future are open for these children, and we want them to feel welcome. The first step was to create a feeling of community. The second was to support the student's decision to stay. The third step was to develop a strong and positive action plan. The fourth was to develop a strong and positive action plan. The fifth step was to develop a strong and positive action plan. The sixth step was to develop a strong and positive action plan.

Encouraging Leadership Among Students

Taking action and making up the rules along the way did in the past. It has always been the culture's capacity to say "no" to whatever is requested. In this instance, however, the need for growth is not just about the culture. It is about the culture developing a strong and positive action plan. It is about the culture developing a strong and positive action plan. It is about the culture developing a strong and positive action plan. It is about the culture developing a strong and positive action plan.

Initial Planning

The central idea is to help the student make the best possible use of time. The central idea is to help the student make the best possible use of time. The central idea is to help the student make the best possible use of time. The central idea is to help the student make the best possible use of time.

Key Factors in the Development of a Service Center

The students themselves are the ultimate judges of what they believe is important. They have the right to make decisions about their own lives. They are entitled to make decisions about their own lives. They are entitled to make decisions about their own lives. They are entitled to make decisions about their own lives.
We Make the Road by Walking
We make the road by walking.
“The Rabbi’s Gift” from
The Different Drum by Scott Peck

There is a story, perhaps a myth. Typical of mythic stories, it has many versions. Also typical, the source of the version I am about to tell is obscure. I cannot remember whether I heard it or read it, or where or when. Furthermore, I do not even know the distortions I myself have made in it. All I know for certain is that this version came to me with a title. It is called “The Rabbi’s Gift.”

The story concerns a monastery that had fallen upon hard times. Once a great order, as a result of waves of antimonastic persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of secularism in the nineteenth, all its branch houses were lost and it had become decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age. Clearly it was a dying order.

In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a little hut that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage. Through their many years of prayer and contemplation the old monks had become a bit psychic, so they could always sense when the rabbi was in his hermitage. "The rabbi is in the woods, the rabbi is in the woods again," they would whisper to each other. As he agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to the abbot at one such time to visit the hermitage and ask the rabbi if by some possible chance he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of his visit, the rabbi could only commiserate with him. "I know how it is," he exclaimed. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and quietly spoke of deep things. The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. "It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these years," the rabbi said, "but I have still failed in my purpose for coming here. I have nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?"

"No, I am sorry," the rabbi responded. "I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you."

When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask, "Well what did the rabbi say?" "He couldn't help," the abbot answered. "We just wept and read the Torah together. The only thing he did say, just as I was leaving - it was something cryptic - was that the Messiah is one of us. I don't know what he meant."

In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the rabbi's words. The Messiah is one of us? Could he possibly have meant one of us monks here at the monastery? If that's the case, which one? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone, he probable meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation. On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Thomas is a man of light. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people's sides, when you look back on it, Elred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. But surely not Brother Phillip. Phillip is so passive, a real nobody. But then, almost mysteriously, he has a gift for somehow always being there when you need him. He just magically appears by your side. Maybe Phillip is the Messiah. Of course the rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me. I couldn't be that much for You, could I?

As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah. An on the off, off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery to picnic on its tiny lawn, to wander along some of its paths, even now and then go into the dilapidated chapel to meditate. As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed this aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place. There was something strangely attractive, even compelling, about it. Hardly knowing why, they began to come back to the monastery more frequently to picnic, to play, to pray. They began to bring their friends to show them this special place. And their friends brought their friends.

Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks. After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another. So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order and, thanks to the rabbi's gift, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm.
Recommended Readings


