

# Community Colleges Broadening Horizons through Service Learning, 2006–2009

BY GAIL ROBINSON

The goals of *Community Colleges Broadening Horizons through Service Learning*, supported by Learn and Serve America and administered by the American Association of Community Colleges, are to build on established foundations to integrate service learning into the institutional climate of community colleges and to increase the number, quality, and sustainability of service learning programs in colleges nationwide.

Service learning combines community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility. Service learning programs involve students in activities that address local needs while developing their academic skills and commitment to their communities. AACC's *Horizons* project promotes the value of service learning not only to students and faculty, but also to college administrators and community members.

The *Horizons* project features model programs, national data collection and dissemination, and an information clearinghouse. In addition, *Horizons* provides professional development opportunities and technical assistance through regional workshops on service learning and civic engagement, chief academic officer summits, mentoring, presentations, publications, a Web site, and a consultant referral service.

Eight colleges were selected in a national grant competition in 2006 to become *Horizons* Mentee Colleges. They represent rural, suburban, and urban areas, and have student populations as small as 2,000 and as large as 13,000. Working in the areas of education, public safety, human needs, and the environment, the *Horizons*

Mentee Colleges are developing service learning programs that can be replicated at other institutions. The colleges focus on creating and delivering multilingual products and resources that meet the needs of students and community residents from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Each college works with a service learning advisory committee comprising students, faculty, administrators, staff, and community partners.

Experienced practitioners from four other colleges serve as a mentor team, providing hands-on assistance, advice, and training. The *Horizons* service learning programs involve more than 25 different disciplines and reach community members ranging from pre-school children to older adults. All *Horizons* colleges participate in a longitudinal study evaluating the impact of service learning on students' academic learning outcomes.

## **Horizons Mentee Colleges**

Baton Rouge Community College, LA  
College of Alameda, CA  
Laramie County Community College, WY  
Lorain County Community College, OH  
Queensborough Community College, NY  
Tacoma Community College, WA  
Trinidad State Junior College, CO  
Western Piedmont Community College, NC

## **Horizons Mentor Colleges**

Chattahoochee Technical College, GA  
Portland Community College, OR  
Salt Lake Community College, UT  
Western Technical College, WI

## BATON ROUGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Building Each Life through Language

Baton Rouge Community College's Building Each Life through Language (BELL) project is a prime example of the college's growing number of service learning initiatives. Developed as a result of Hurricane Katrina's effects on the refugee population in southern Louisiana, the BELL project provides daycare and child education services to non-English-speaking community residents seeking to take English classes. The local Catholic Charities center teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to the adults, with childcare provided for their children during class times. Psychology and Spanish students use materials specially crafted for children to assist them with homework and familiarize them with the English language as well. The BELL project illustrates Baton Rouge Community College's multi-role philosophy of education: effective instruction for students, an opportunity for service learning, and a practical program that strengthens the local community.

## COLLEGE OF ALAMEDA

### Alameda Communitas Alliance

The objective of the College of Alameda's service learning initiative is to introduce the culture of civic engagement to the community both on and off campus. Faculty workshops and site visits highlight partners' unique resources and geographic proximity. One partner, Alameda Point Collaborative, houses formerly homeless individuals and families and offers service opportunities in community gardening, bicycle safety, health care, life skills, and after-school programs. Service learning has focused on Alameda's diverse multilingual population with a keystone project in which advanced ESL writing students provide native-language translations of English-language documents sent home to parents in the K-12 school district. Other disciplines beginning to use service learning include communications, computer information systems, dental assisting, history, and sociology.



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### Project Highlights

- Emergency evacuation information translated into Spanish
- Community partnership development
- Faculty and staff development



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### Project Highlights

- Student and partner recognition events
- On-campus high school partner
- Faculty workshops

## LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Service Learning—Combining Curriculum and Community

Laramie County Community College is building on the work of faculty who have experimented with service learning by coordinating instructional efforts, bringing consistency to a definition of service learning, and providing training for additional faculty members who are interested in embracing this teaching strategy. The first students to participate come from three educational programs: dental hygiene, management, and political science. Students serve in a variety of agencies that support the social network of the community. Twenty-three community partners participate in service learning and communicate their needs through the development of “wish lists.” In addition to moving forward in the classroom, service learning is being integrated into residence life programming, while college club and organization funding is now based in part on the community service their members provide.

## LORAIN COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Building Sustainable Community through Service Learning

Lorain County Community College serves a culturally diverse community in northeastern Ohio. The college has a long-standing commitment to excellence, creating dynamic learning environments, inspiring individuals, and promoting partnerships, innovation, diversity, stewardship, and community engagement. Allied health, nursing, and urban studies students collaborate with faculty, staff, and area agencies to provide minority health fairs targeting Hispanic and African-American community members. The fairs offer educational presentations, displays, supportive services, outreach programs, health screening tests, and a student-developed community services resource guide. Efforts to incorporate service learning into every discipline and division include service learning faculty study groups, a community partner mentoring program, and networking with the college’s center for teaching excellence and faculty senate.

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### Project Highlights

- Residence life programming
- College foundation support
- Interactive service learning Web site

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### Project Highlights

- Partner-to-partner mentoring
- Faculty study groups
- Service learning library

## QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### QCC ExCEL: Excellence through Civic Engagement Learning

Located in one of the most culturally diverse counties in the U.S., Queensborough Community College's service learning program is designed to capitalize on this diversity while fulfilling multiple aspects of the institutional mission. Students provide multilingual services that assist non-native English speakers with navigating the educational, health, and employment systems of New York City. A math class for future elementary teachers works with NYU's Center for Immigrant Health on its tuberculosis prevention program database. Another group of math education students tutors low-income high school students to help them improve test scores and graduate. A service learning reading workshop trains students to improve their literacy skills as "para-tutors" by providing free English-language support services to immigrants. Upcoming projects include a Spanish class working with a state ESL technical assistance center to provide adult basic education in Spanish for new immigrants, and physics students tutoring in the college's mathematics and science learning center.

## TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Streams of Accomplishment: Stories in Service

Tacoma Community College, an urban institution cradled between the glacial streams of Mt. Rainier and the waters of Puget Sound, serves a large student body rich in cultural and ethnic diversity. With the largest adult literacy program in its county, the college is often challenged to engage these students in making meaningful progress toward certificates and degrees. The Streams project increases students' experience with service, engages them in citizenship activities, and provides new ways to celebrate their accomplishments by sharing their stories. Learning communities of two linked courses—ESL and service learning experience—create another stream of engaged learners. WorkFirst service experiences increase work-based learning opportunities for participants in the state welfare reform program. Tacoma Community College is embarking on a journey to expand its experiential and service learning opportunities in support of all its learners.



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### Project Highlights

- Faculty and staff development
- College-wide participation and support
- On-campus project development breakfast meetings with partners, students, and faculty



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### Project Highlights

- Adult basic education student speakers bureau
- Service learning and ESL learning community
- Partnership with campus center for adults in career transition

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## TRINIDAD STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE

### Integrate Service Learning

Trinidad State Junior College's Valley Campus serves the small rural communities of Colorado's San Luis Valley. The campus serves a diverse student body, of which more than 50 percent is Hispanic. To promote and expand service learning throughout the college, Trinidad State identifies specific faculty to receive training and mentoring to incorporate service learning and civic responsibility components into their course syllabi. Service learning began in the aquaculture technician program, which partners with the state's Native Aquatic Species Restoration Facility to help recover aquatic species in decline. Students work side by side with wildlife technicians and develop brochures on the nutritional value of a healthy fish diet. The brochures are translated into Spanish and distributed at area hospitals, clinics, and cultural events. Other disciplines using service learning include computer technology, cosmetology, massage therapy, and nursing.

## WESTERN PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Learning to Serve: Serving to Learn

In the foothills of North Carolina's Appalachian Mountains, Western Piedmont Community College is implementing service learning across campus through its Service Learning Leaders program. Instructors from all four academic divisions are selected to be primary resources to assist colleagues in implementing service learning in their courses. Accounting students and instructors work with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program by preparing and filing tax returns free of charge for low-to-moderate-income taxpayers. Students in Spanish courses tutor ESL students, with both groups benefiting from the exchange of information regarding cultures, campus life, and community events. Long-term institutionalization goals include incorporating service learning into the college catalog, designating service learning courses in the class schedule, and adding service learning hours to student transcripts. An annual awards ceremony recognizes all participants and highlights the various projects on campus, while a service learning blog will facilitate discussions by faculty, staff, students, and community partners.

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### Project Highlights

- Outreach to local Guatemalan community
- One-on-one recruitment and orientation
- Service learning library

## CONTACTS

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### Project Highlights

- Emphasis on Hispanic and deaf populations
- Student, faculty, and community orientation and recognition
- Faculty professional development

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## HORIZONS MENTOR TEAM

### Chattahoochee Technical College

Chattahoochee Technical College offers service learning in both general education and technical/occupational courses. Students participate in a variety of projects, which include helping the Center for Family Resources organize its annual food drive and distribution to 1,200 needy families, raising fresh produce for donation to a local food bank, hosting science and health fairs, tutoring students of all ages, collecting oral histories from immigrants, and preparing income tax returns for low-income individuals. The college's service learning office supports all service learning and volunteer activities on campus and provides training for students, faculty, staff, and community partners, in conjunction with the staff education resource center. Chattahoochee Technical College was recognized as a 2007 Bellwether Award finalist for its service learning efforts.

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### Portland Community College

Since 1994 Portland Community College has been growing its service learning program. Each term approximately 30 faculty members incorporate service learning into their courses, resulting in more than 1,200 students per year performing service around the Portland metropolitan area. Students serve at schools, environmental organizations, social service agencies, and on campus. Portland Community College is committed to service learning as a pedagogy for the preparation of students for success as individuals, members of a democratic society, and citizens of a rapidly changing world. Through the *Horizons* grant, the college is working to strengthen its program through faculty and community partner trainings. Portland Community College is recognized in the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

### Salt Lake Community College

Founded in 1994, the Thayne Center for Service & Learning unites Salt Lake Community College with the greater community through civic participation, service learning, and volunteerism. Faculty development initiatives include research- and project-based cohorts, a service learning faculty mentorship, grants for course designation, and trainings tailored for beginning, intermediate, and advanced practitioners. Partners in Service-Learning, created in 2004 by Salt Lake Community College and the University of Utah, is now a coalition of four institutions in Salt Lake City providing training to community partner organizations. Students may graduate with distinction through the Civically Engaged Scholars program. Salt Lake Community College is recognized in the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

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### Western Technical College

Western Technical College serves over 21,000 students annually. As part of the "essential experience" at Western, many program faculty use service learning as a method of helping their students not only to learn the course material, but also to understand the important role that they have in the community. Service learning continues to grow at Western through development of faculty, orientation of community partners, and communications designed to help faculty, administrators, and students be more aware of the important connections that students are making in the community. Service learning is on track to become an integral part of other college initiatives, such as a comprehensive first-year experience.

Western Technical College is proud of its involvement in the *Horizons* project, first as a mentee college, now as a mentor.

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## WEB RESOURCES

American Association of Community Colleges  
[www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning)

AmeriCorps  
[www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov)

Campus Compact  
[www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)

Center for Information and Research on  
Civic Learning and Engagement  
[www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health  
[www.ccph.info](http://www.ccph.info)

Community College National Center for  
Community Engagement  
[www.mc.maricopa.edu/engagement](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/engagement)

Corporation for National and Community Service  
[www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)

Educators for Community Engagement  
[www.e4ce.org](http://www.e4ce.org)

Effective Practices Information Center  
[www.nationalserviceresources.org](http://www.nationalserviceresources.org)

Higher Education Network for  
Community Engagement  
[www.henceonline.org](http://www.henceonline.org)

International Association for Research on  
Service-Learning and Civic Engagement  
[www.researchslce.org](http://www.researchslce.org)

International Partnership for  
Service-Learning and Leadership  
[www.ipsl.org](http://www.ipsl.org)

Learn and Serve America  
[www.learnandserve.gov](http://www.learnandserve.gov)

National Service Inclusion Project  
[www.serviceandinclusion.org](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org)

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse  
[www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

Points of Light & Hands On Network  
[www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org)

Senior Corps  
[www.seniorcorps.gov](http://www.seniorcorps.gov)

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