



**Community Service-Learning Program  
Annual Evaluation Report: Fall 2005 - Winter 2006**

**November 2006**

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## Highlights

This report provides a summary of findings from evaluation of the first year of formal implementation of the Community Service-Learning (CSL) Program, based in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. CSL was integrated into 13 Arts courses in Fall 2005 and Winter 2006, involving 136 students, 12 instructors in 7 departments, and 42 partnering community organizations.

As an integral component of CSL, two main evaluation strategies were carried out: a) administration of surveys to participating and non-participating students, instructors and community partners, and b) focus groups with student participants and community partners.

Findings indicated that, overall, students, instructors and community partners had positive impressions of CSL and were interested in the possibility of continuing their engagement in CSL. They identified two main challenges: a) time constraints, and b) implementation logistics, including the need for streamlined processes, more information about what was expected of CSL participants, and more communication among the stakeholders. Findings thus provide direction for program improvement in two key areas: a) streamlining implementation processes to address time constraints, and b) more effective integration between community learning and course material to maximize potential for sustained interest in, and positive impact of, the CSL Program. In a nutshell:

### ***Student findings***

- CSL participants more likely to be female and have more education than non-participants
- Positive experiences with community partners
- More likely to rate CSL useful for encouraging participation in the community, improving communication skills, understanding the community, developing critical thinking skills, and helping to make important personal connections & social contributions
- Less likely to rate CSL useful for understanding course material

### ***Instructor findings***

- CSL useful to students' learning generally
- Less likely to rate CSL useful for developing students' leadership & research skills
- CSL useful to themselves and their courses, especially for developing relationships with students & enhancing classroom interactions
- Less likely to rate CSL useful for developing potential new research opportunities
- Importance of CSL to linking course content to the community

### ***Community partner findings***

- CSL useful to students' learning in some areas, but 1/3 neutral about CSL's contribution to students' learning overall
- More likely to rate CSL useful to themselves and their organizations for learning new forms of community engagement, developing relationships with students, and developing volunteer mentoring skills
- Less likely to rate CSL useful to developing relationships with the University
- Extensive positive comments on overall experiences, student participants, & resulting projects, and importance of community service-learning in fostering civic engagement

## Introduction

The Community Service-Learning Program was integrated into 13 University of Alberta Faculty of Arts courses in Fall 2005 and Winter 2006, involving 12 instructors in 7 departments, and 42 different partnering organizations. Twelve courses were offered in either fall (4) or winter (8) term, while one spanned both terms. Student participation in the CSL Program was optional in 6 courses and an integral required component in seven. In two courses, all students were required to do a community service placement, but were not required to do it through the CSL Program. All students (230) registered in the 13 courses were exposed to CSL when they attended classes.

Approximately 59% of the registered students participated in a CSL placement during fall or winter term. In courses where CSL was not a requirement, participation ranged from 25% to 64%, depending on the course.

CSL was integrated into an additional 4 courses during Spring and Summer 2006 terms. Data for these courses are being analyzed and will be reported at a later date.

Program evaluation consisted of the following strategies:

- Surveys at the end of each course, completed by participating students, instructors and community partners, and non-participating students
- A focus group during each term, one with students and one with community partners

In all, one hundred and seventy-one (171) students completed surveys, a 74% response rate: 108 CSL participants (79% of all CSL participants) and 63 CSL non-participants (67% of all non-participants). Nine instructors and 10 community partners also completed surveys. The Evaluation Coordinator facilitated two focus groups: Six students, all of whom were CSL participants, attended one group, while six community partners participated in a separate group.

This report summarizes survey results of CSL participating students, instructors, and community partners, as well as student and community partner focus groups. Student survey results for 11 single-term (fall or winter) courses are included. Except for selected descriptive statistics contained in the first section of the report, non-participating students' results are being analyzed and will be available at a later date.

# Students' Results

## Survey Results

This section provides a statistical overview of selected student characteristics, and their perceptions and experiences of CSL-involved courses implemented during Fall 2005 and Winter 2006 terms. Qualitative comments in response to open-ended survey questions are also summarized.

### 1. Selected Characteristics of CSL Participants and Non-participants

- a. **Age:** Participants were on average older than non-participants:
  - i. Average age CSL participants: 25 years
  - ii. Average age non-participants: 24 years
- b. **Education:**
  - i. CSL Non-participants had, on average, fewer years of post-secondary education
  - ii. 28.4% of participants had 5 or more years of post-secondary education compared to 18% of non-participants.

Years completed		Participant	Non Participant	Total
0	# %	1 1.1%	0 0%	1 .7%
2	# %	6 6.5%	8 13.1%	14 9.2%
3	# %	30 32.6%	20 32.8%	50 32.7%
4	# %	29 31.5%	22 36.1%	51 33.3%
5	# %	10 10.9%	5 8.2%	15 9.8%
6 or more	# %	16 17.4%	6 9.8% 18%	22 14.4%
Total	# %	92 100.0%	61 100.0%	153 100.0%

- c. **Sex:** Females were over-represented among CSL participants: 80% of participants were female and 57% of non-participants were male
- d. **Ethnic Affiliation:** Similar proportions of CSL participants (29%) and non-participants (27%) self-reported their ethnic affiliation as Anglo / Caucasian or similar.
- e. **Paid work:** Similar proportions of CSL participants (31%) and non-participants (34%) did no paid work during the term. However, among those students who did any paid work, non-participants were slightly more likely to be working 16 hours or more per week: 29% of participants worked 16 hours or more per week and 34% of non-participants worked 16 hours or more per week

Paid hours per week planned		Participant	Non-Participant	Total
0	#	29	21	50
	%	31.2%	34.4%	32.5%
1-5	#	10	7	17
	%	10.8%	11.5%	11.0%
6-10	#	12	3	15
	%	12.9%	4.9%	9.7%
11-15	#	15	9	24
	%	16.1%	14.8%	15.6%
16-20	#	11	9	20
	%	11.8%	14.8%	13.0%
21-25	#	11	8	19
	%	11.8%	13.1%	12.3%
26 plus	#	5	4	9
	%	5.4%	6.6%	5.8%
Total	#	93	61	154
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## 2. CSL Student Participants' Perceptions and Experiences

- a. There was a moderate relationship (Correlation = 0.72) between students' overall impressions of CSL and their overall experiences with the community organization.

Impression of CSL		Experience with community organization					Total
		Very negative	2	Neutral	4	Very positive	
Very negative	#	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.1%
2	#	1	2	1	0	0	4
	%	33.3%	66.7%	10.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%
Neutral	#	1	1	4	4	3	13
	%	33.3%	33.3%	40.0%	13.8%	6.1%	13.8%
4	#	0	0	5	19	14	38
	%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	65.5%	28.6%	40.4%
Very positive	#	0	0	0	6	32	38
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	20.7%	65.3%	40.4%
Total	#	3	3	10	29	49	94
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- b. There was a weak to moderate relationship (Pearson correlation = 0.48) between students' overall impressions of CSL and their level of confidence in their ability to integrate the community-service learning component into the overall goals of the course.

Table 4. Overall impression of CSL by level of confidence about integrating CSL (N=94)

Impression of CSL		Level of confidence					Total
		Not at all	2	Somewhat	4	Very	
Very negative	#	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.1%
2	#	1	1	1	1	0	4
	%	33.3%	16.7%	4.5%	3.0%	.0%	4.3%
Neutral	#	1	1	6	4	1	13
	%	33.3%	16.7%	27.3%	12.1%	3.3%	13.8%
4	#	0	2	10	15	11	38
	%	.0%	33.3%	45.5%	45.5%	36.7%	40.4%
Very positive	#	0	2	5	13	18	38
	%	.0%	33.3%	22.7%	39.4%	60.0%	40.4%
Total	#	3	6	22	33	30	94
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- c. There was a weak to moderate relationship (Pearson correlation = 0.48) between students' overall impression of CSL and the extent to which they agreed that they had learned a lot in the course.

Table 5. Overall impression of CSL by learned a lot in the class (N=94)

Impression of CSL		Learned a lot in the class					Total
		Not at all	2	Somewhat	4	Very much	
Very negative	#	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.1%
2	#	0	1	0	3	0	4
	%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	10.3%	.0%	4.3%
Neutral	#	0	0	2	9	2	13
	%	.0%	.0%	20.0%	31.0%	3.8%	13.8%
4	#	0	2	10	15	11	38
	%	.0%	33.3%	45.5%	45.5%	36.7%	40.4%
Very positive	#	0	0	7	12	19	38
	%	.0%	.0%	70.0%	41.4%	36.5%	40.4%
Total	#	2	1	10	29	52	94
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- d. More specifically, students were asked about the usefulness of CSL for learning in particular areas. As the Table 6 shows, four areas stand out as those which more than 2/3 of the students thought CSL was most useful: encouraging participation in the community (81%); improving communication skills (72%); and understanding the community (69%); and developing critical thinking skills (68%). The area in which students rated the usefulness of CSL least well was the understanding of course material. Only a little over half (54%) the students rated CSL useful in this area.

Two-thirds of the students also felt confident about their ability to integrate CSL into the overall goals of the course.

These findings may suggest that, while CSL exposes students to community organizations or extends their connections with the community, requires them to communicate in a non-academic environment, and calls upon their critical thinking skills, something else may be required to increase the capacity for CSL courses to link community-service learning and course objectives. In the long-term, this may be important in sustaining students' interest in such courses.

Table 6. Students' perceptions of CSL usefulness to learning and confidence in ability to integrate					
Usefulness of community service-learning for:		Scale: 1 Not at all useful to 5 Very useful			
		1-2	3	4-5	Not sure
understanding the community (N=94)	# %	9 9.6%	20 21.3%	65 69.1%	0 .0%
understanding the course material (N=93)	# %	15 16.1%	27 29.0%	51 54.8%	0 .0%
contributing to social change (N=94)	# %	12 12.8%	19 20.2%	57 60.6%	6 6.4%
developing leadership skills (N=94)	# %	14 14.9%	22 23.4%	56 59.6%	2 2.1%
improving communication skills (N=94)	# %	3 3.2%	23 24.5%	68 72.3%	0 .0%
developing critical thinking skills (N=94)	# %	7 7.4%	21 22.3%	64 68.1%	2 2.1%
improving research skills (N=93)	# %	15 16.1%	18 19.4%	59 63.4%	1 1.1%
encouraging participation in the community	# %	6 6.4%	9 9.6%	76 80.9%	3 3.2%
Linking CSL with course goals:		Scale: 1 Not at all to 5 Very confident			
		1-2	3	4-5	Not sure
How confident do you feel that you were able to integrate the CSL component into the overall goals of this course? (N=94)	# %	9 9.6%	22 23.4%	63 67.0%	0 .0%

\*3 was a middle or neutral position, i.e., "Somewhat useful" and "Somewhat confident"



- e. There was a moderate positive relationship (Pearson = 0.57) between students' impressions of CSL and the extent to which they looked forward to taking another CSL course.

Table 7. Overall impression of CSL by looking forward to taking another CSL course\*(N=78)

Impression of CSL	Looking forward to taking another CSL course						Total
	Not at all	2	Somewhat	4	Very much		
Very negative	#	1	3	1	0	0	5
	%	100.0%	75.0%	10.0%	.0%	.0%	6.4%
2	#	0	1	2	2	1	6
	%	.0%	25.0%	20.0%	6.5%	3.1%	7.7%
Neutral	#	0	0	1	10	7	18
	%	.0%	.0%	10.0%	32.3%	21.9%	23.1%
4	#	0	0	5	11	8	24
	%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	35.5%	25.0%	30.8%
Very positive	#	0	0	1	8	16	25
	%	.0%	.0%	10.0%	25.8%	50.0%	32.1%
Total	#	1	4	10	31	32	78
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

\* Those whose response to "Are you looking forward to possibly taking another course that includes a service learning component?" was "Graduating, so can't take CSL again" were set to missing and a correlation between the two variables was then calculated.

- f. There was no clear relationship between students' impressions of CSL and the number of volunteer positions they had taken in the three years prior to the course.
- g. Four of the variables examined above were entered into a linear regression. Controlling for the extent of agreement about learning a lot, confidence in ability to integrate service-learning, and gender, there remained a relationship (Beta=. 59) between students' overall experiences with their community organizations and their overall impressions of CSL.

Students' qualitative comments provided feedback about what made their experiences with the community organizations positive or negative (see next section). Future work on these aspects of CSL appears to be one of the most important ways to increase students' overall impressions of CSL.

Table 9. Regression: Factors affecting overall impression of CSL

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	Std. Error	Beta
(Constant)	.653	.358	
Overall I think I learned a lot in this class	.188	.083	.186
How confident do you feel that you were able to integrate the service-learning component into the overall goals of this course?	.114	.071	.133
How would you rate your overall experience with the community organization?	.530	.070	.591
Dummy male	-.105	.153	-.047

a Dependent Variable: What was your overall impression of CSL?

### 3. Factors Affecting Amount Learned in the Class

- a. The great majority (80%) of the students who were very confident that they could integrate community service-learning into the overall goals of the course agreed “Very much” that they had learned a lot in class. At the same time there was only a moderate linear relationship (Pearson = .49) between these variables indicating that students’ level of confidence in their abilities to integrate the service-learning component into the goals of the course was only moderately associated with the extent to which they thought they had learned a lot in the class.

Table 10. Learned a lot in class by confidence about integration of service-learning component (N=94)

Learned a lot in class		How confident					Total
		Not at all	2	Somewhat	4	Very	
Not at all	#	1	1	0	0	0	2
	%	33.3%	16.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.1%
2	#	0	0	0	1	0	1
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	3.0%	.0%	1.1%
Somewhat	#	0	2	4	3	1	10
	%	.0%	33.3%	18.2%	9.1%	3.3%	10.6%
4	#	2	3	9	10	5	29
	%	66.7%	50.0%	40.9%	30.3%	16.7%	30.9%
Very much	#	0	0	9	19	24	52
	%	.0%	.0%	40.9%	57.6%	80.0%	55.3%
Total	#	3	6	22	33	30	94
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- b. We may expect that students who did a great deal of paid work would have less time to study and therefore may learn less in any given class. In the CSL classes there was no clear relationship between how many hours of paid work students reported and the extent to which they thought they had learned a lot in their CSL classes.

Table 11. Learned a lot in class by # of paid hours per week planned (N=93)

Learned a lot in class		# Of paid hours per week anticipated							Total
		0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26 +	
Not at all	#	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
	%	3.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	9.1%	.0%	2.2%
2	#	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	9.1%	.0%	.0%	1.1%
Somewhat	#	3	2	1	0	1	2	1	10
	%	10.3%	20.0%	8.3%	.0%	9.1%	18.2%	20.0%	10.8%
4	#	9	3	5	5	1	4	2	29
	%	31.0%	30.0%	41.7%	33.3%	9.1%	36.4%	40.0%	31.2%
Very much	#	16	5	6	10	8	4	2	51
	%	55.2%	50.0%	50.0%	66.7%	72.7%	36.4%	40.0%	54.8%
Total	#	29	10	12	15	11	11	5	93
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

#### 4. Qualitative Feedback from CSL Participating Students

Students were asked what would make it easier for them to participate fully in future CSL opportunities as well as whether they had any other comments about CSL. Their input is summarized below.

- a. **Overall positive comments.** Many overall comments students made about CSL were positive. Some just liked the idea of CSL because it was, for example, “fun, rewarding, and made me feel good!” or because they liked the concept of getting credit for volunteer work. Some were more specific in their positive assessments of CSL, indicating that it makes important personal connections and social contributions. For example, students mentioned that CSL gave them an opportunity to connect with a community or experience to which they felt an attachment (e.g., specific immigrant communities). One student commented:

“I think it's a great idea to include CSL within course study - it reminds us that as university students at a provincially funded school we have an obligation to society and the community.”

Others commented that CSL contributed to integrating their community learning and course material, or extending their interest in the community or a specific topic. For example:

“CSL really gave me the experience to interact with material in a different way. That being said I would discourage students from this experience if they don't want to put a regular effort in.”

“Language, can back arguments with cited work.”

“... Led me to read more about participatory action research methodology - difficult to pursue in context of 20 hr placements.”

“This experience made me fully understand the CSL and some communities' organization.”

Still others commented that involvement in community service-learning had broadened their interests or made them think about what they are interested in for the future.

“I am much more focused on a field of interest I didn't even know interested me - media and culture - due to GVFF and linkages to the class I have newfound research interest.”

“This class has helped me think more about my future and what I believe for spirituality and religion and how it ties into what I think about death.”

“So many [comments], I see good change coming.”

Among students who liked the idea of CSL, some qualified their positive comments. For example:

“CSL is great if you want to volunteer to do it (which I did) however, it should never be compulsory, mainly for reasons of time and economic stability (of the student). If it were ever forced on me personally, I would hate it and probably drop said class. But it wasn't, I did, I liked it.”

“That I would like to have more time and energy for volunteer activism, but I don't.”

**b. Challenges and Suggestions.** Beyond these positive comments, the main themes represented in students comments were: i) time constraints in balancing course components; ii) need for more information and clearer understanding about CSL and placement expectations; iii) more knowledge about and communication with community organizations; iv) suggestions for improving the CSL Program; v) ideas for enhancing the integration of community and course learning; and vi) expectations of the CSL Program. Each of these themes is presented below.

- i. **Time.** Students' most frequent comments were about time, with 37 students referring to it. Overall, a key concern of students was how to balance the demands within this course—course work—the CSL component and integration of the two, other courses, and personal and work commitments. Students found the course time-consuming, especially around mid-term. One student commented that “CSL is very time-consuming. Sometimes it was overwhelming...” A number of students said they wanted and needed more time, including more time in the day, for example: “Please add 2 hours to the 24 hour day.”

While the biggest concern was about time constraints, some students also indicated that the time in the community component of the course was insufficient. Comments included: “Having more time to participate in even more volunteer hours at the organization,” and “I think having more time to actually volunteer is a very important asset and also a consistency with the organization I am volunteering with.”

On the other hand, some students expressed that too much time was required in the community placement.

One factor that seemed to contribute to some students' perceptions of the time constraints was how the different course components were assessed. For example, students commented that there was a need for more academic reward (credits) for more time spent in a community placement, a different marking system (pass/fail for the community component), or a smaller proportion of the final grade allocated on the basis of the volunteer commitment.

Students also made suggestions for overcoming the time constraints and achieving a better balance between components in the course. For example, comments included:

“More time, if it was a full year course (less pressure over such a short period of time).”

“Have more flexible times; not just once a week times.”

“Less class room time; more out of class time, which I had little of this semester.”

“If CSL incorporated lectures as part of the time.”

“I would like to see other activities during class time. The field trip was very worthwhile.”

“More time/less volunteer hours or less course readings.”

“Allowances from time to time to be excused would be nice.”

Other things that would help make the course seem less onerous included: closer facilities; less time spent on the initial set up to get into a CSL program (ex. criminal checks etc); and another time period set aside. For example, students commented:

“It was difficult to manage activities that were not held within class time although there were not many.”

“Perhaps more coordination of meetings.”

“Setting up placements PRIOR to commencement of the term; arranging with agency types of work to be done, and all other administrative arrangements so student can begin volunteering ASAP.”

- ii. **Information about and understanding of CSL.** Some students wanted more knowledge about CSL, including community service-learning, community involvement, and the CSL Program specifically. Some commented that they would have liked an understanding of the background of CSL, a better sense of the bigger picture, and a clearer articulation of the relationship between the community engagement component and the course requirements. Comments included:

“More knowledge about the program and more debriefing about the background.”

“Help with links between CSL theory and community work. Classes with a more specific goal, i.e. Qualitative Research, make the jump/link easier.”

“Flow chartish break-down of CSL requirements and how integrates with course.”

“Precisely explain what will be done with the organization.”

“To know more about what we are supposed to do in the CSL settings, what the main goals are in more detail.”

With regard to the CSL set-up, students said there was a need for “more advertisement and encouragement from CSL,” and “a clearer description of what CSL really is at the start of the term.”

- iii. **Knowledge about and expectations of community organizations.** In addition to information about CSL, students commented that they would have liked more information about the community organizations or a larger range of project options from which to choose. Students seemed to be striving for a good fit between their interests and the community organizations and projects. Their comments suggested that having more choices of community organizations would have helped with finding a good fit. For example, students commented:

“Resources - knowing what is out there, what is of interest to me.”

“I would like to have more information about other projects.”

“More background info. I am certain I made the right choice in my placement but I sense others were not so sure about their choices.”

“I would not recommend for future CSL participation with the community I was in.”

“More organizations to choose from.”

“I think more resources or background from CSL would have made things a little easier.”

“Next time I would want to work more closely with coordinators in the CSL end to better lay the groundwork for the project.”

“A more detailed organization (maybe a CSL fair?) would be useful.”

Alongside these comments, there were also positive comments from students: “It is well set up.” A great program - lots of potential - some bugs to iron out yet.”

Once linked to their community partners, some students commented that they would have liked more information from the community partner about the work the organization does, what exactly the student placement would involve, and feedback on their performance in the placement. Some students also experienced some difficulty with making the first contact with the organization. Others commented that they felt that the community organizations needed to be flexible. Comments included:

“The community organizations need to be more involved. Hard to do collaborative work when staff does not provide feedback on projects.”

“Instead of preparing a [project] on our own, possibly have more involvement from [the organization].”

- iv. **Expectations of CSL program staff with respect to the community organizations.** Students’ comments seemed to indicate that they thought there was a need for greater clarity about expectations between the CSL Program and the community partners. For example, students looked to CSL to ensure that community organizations have a clear understanding of CSL and clear and reasonable expectations of students. Comments included:

“Get the organization to have a better understanding of CSL.”

“Greater education for the CSL volunteer sites - in terms of expectations, course topic, etc,”

“Bring up some more interesting variety of activities that could be done by students.”

“Coordinators and supervisors having more knowledge about CSL [would have been helpful].”

“I think that as CSL becomes more prominent, the 'quirks' will work themselves out. But I think that the contacts for the organizations need to have a better understanding of why we are participating in the CSL program and really aim at helping the learning process. The semester is very short and to get a 'full experience' with CSL, it needs to start early so that the individual can choose to volunteer more hours if they do not feel that the learning or experience is complete.”

“I understand the CSL program is new, and I think it's a fabulous idea, but I do think there needs to be better communication of what CSL is, and its goals, to the organizations hosting CSL students.”

Some thought that CSL program staff needed to research the organizations carefully to, for example, “make sure the time frames are feasible.” Some thought that the expectations for the community work were too vague, and suggested the need for guidelines for the community projects. Comments included:

“I think that the job descriptions given for CSL were too vague and that we should have more specific duties/guidelines.”

“An explanation to the organization of what is expected of them.”

“Client wanted a product beyond our means which made it difficult.”

“There was a lack of structure that leads to many problems. The scope of the work was too large before it was altered.”

Only one student specifically mentioned the instructor's role in the CSL-community partner relationship:

“More required meetings. Stricter guidelines by both the [organization] and the prof; more communication between the students, [the organization] and the prof.”

One student commented on a need for more resources for carrying out community projects.

- v. **Ideas for improving the CSL experience.** Students had ideas about what would improve their learning experiences with the community organizations. For example, students highlighted the importance of hands-on experience in their placements:

“Hands-on volunteer experience, although I did think the training was excellent and worthwhile.”

“Make sure that you are able to communicate or observe the participants somewhat. Talking about their issues to you or observing them, because I was not able to do this in my program.”

A couple of students commented that a more in-depth placement would be helpful:

“Possibly a more in depth placement, that is one that required more entrenchment. As it was, the level of participation worked well for me.”

Students also shared ideas for enhancing their abilities to integrate their community learning with their course material. These included:

“Set days to meet at least once/month to meet outside class.”

“More discussion with other CSL participants about what they are doing - what's working/isn't working.”

“I think if we had less classes ... maybe a month dedicated in doing CSL without classes like Oct but Sept, Nov + Dec will be dedicated to seeing how CSL fit into class.”

## Student Focus Group Summary–Winter 2006

Six students participated in a focus group in winter 2006, all of whom had participated in the CSL component of a course.

The students were pleased with their placements in that they:

- Learned about each other and different issues
  - Students thought that they gained insights from their placements and listening to information from their colleagues who were in different placements.
- Had an opportunity for reflection on issues and theory
  - Rethinking one's influence in placement situations, reinforces idea of contributing to community in future, CSL makes education more valuable to students.
- Were positive about CSL in general
  - Glad to have been part of CSL and think that it is positive and will grow.

On the other hand, they also raised the issues of time constraints, relating placements to course materials, and administration:

“Time consuming, lots of reading and readings not always related to the work in the placements. Could class time be given for working at placements and perhaps pass/fail for CSL component requirements? Sometimes difficulties in contacting agencies, which stole time from placement.”



# Instructors' Results

## Survey Results

Nine instructors completed surveys during Fall 2005 and Winter 2006. All 9 rated their overall impressions of CSL as "Positive" (4) or "Very Positive" (5), and all 9 also said they would recommend participating in CSL to their colleagues who teach other courses. All but one of the instructors said s/he was looking forward to participating in CSL in another term, while one was "Not sure."

### 1. CSL Instructors' Perceptions and Experiences of CSL

- a. **Perceptions of usefulness of CSL to students' learning.** Instructors were asked to rate the usefulness of CSL to students' learning in particular areas. As the table shows, most instructors (N=8) thought that CSL was either "Useful" or "Very useful" to students' learning in most areas.

Table 12. Instructors' perceptions of CSL's usefulness to students' learning				
Usefulness of community service-learning to students for:	Scale: 1 Not at all useful to 5 Very useful			
	1-2	3	4-5	Not sure
understanding the community			7	1
understanding the course material		2	6	
contributing to social change		1	6	1
developing leadership skills		2	4	2
improving communication skills			8	
developing critical thinking skills			7	1
improving research skills		3	4	1
encouraging participation in the community		2	6	

- b. **Perceptions of usefulness of CSL to teaching.** Instructors were also asked to indicate how useful they thought CSL was to them or their course. As the table shows, most instructors thought that CSL was useful to them and their courses in most areas. An exception was CSL's contribution to the development of new research opportunities. It is interesting to note that all but one instructor indicated that involvement in CSL also at least somewhat changed the way they approach teaching.

Table 13. Instructors' perceptions of CSL's usefulness to themselves and their courses				
Usefulness of CSL to you and the course for:	Scale: 1 Not at all useful to 5 Very useful			
	1-2	3	4-5	Not sure
developing relationships with community organizations	1	2	6	
contributing to social change		2	6	1
developing potential new research opportunities	2	3	2	2
developing relationships with students		1	8	
developing teaching skills		1	7	1
learning new forms of pedagogy		1	7	1
enhancing classroom interactions	1		8	
Overall impact on teaching:		Scale: 1 Not at all to 5 Very much		
From your perspective, how much do you think CSL changed the way you approach teaching?	1	3	5	
Confidence in ability to integrate:		Scale: 1 Not at all to 5 Very confident		
How confident do you feel that you were able to integrate CSL into your course? (N=8)		2	6	

\*3 was a middle or neutral position, i.e., "Somewhat useful," "Somewhat," and "Somewhat confident"

## 2. Qualitative Feedback from CSL Instructors

Of the nine instructors who completed evaluation surveys towards the end of their fall or winter courses, most also took time to provide qualitative comments about their experiences of CSL. Some of these comments echoed those of students, indicating that time constraints were a challenge and that more information about CSL, including the range of possible community partners, relevant assignments and processes for connecting with community partners, would make participation easier. Several also commented on start-up delays at the beginning of the course and implementation logistics associated with the process of getting the students connected with their community placements (e.g., security checks, accessibility / transportation, difficulty connecting with the community organizations, etc). Although instructors mentioned that time was a real challenge for their students, only one explicitly identified time as an issue for him/herself. This instructor indicated that a teaching assistant with knowledge about and commitment to CSL would be helpful.

Instructors offered a number of comments pertaining to community partners. In making suggestions for improvement, one instructor identified the need for an appropriate range of community partners to ensure a good fit. One instructor also suggested that disorganization on the part of a community partner had interfered with the CSL experience, and hinted that it is important that community organizations be prepared for receiving students into their settings. Several comments expressed a desire for a stronger connection with the community partners with respect to monitoring students' engagement in the community and fulfillment of their commitments. For example:

"I wonder if it would be useful to get some kind of communication to the professor from the community partners mid-way through the term. After the students have completed, for example, half of their hours, we could get a summary of two or three items—what has the student been asked to do; what have they done so far; what remains and are there any concerns. Something like that could be a benefit that might be easy to get through an email, for instance..."

Interestingly, some instructors' comments seemed to indicate that they took an active role in fostering an understanding of the context of the voluntary community sector, by either advocating for a specific community partner or explaining why it might be difficult to get quick responses from them.

In commenting on why they would recommend CSL to colleagues, instructors commented on benefits for students and for themselves. For students, they commented that CSL really helps with linking course content to the community. For example, one instructor commented:

“Provides the students with very rich learning experiences and opportunities to apply their classroom learning in a ‘real life’ context.”

For themselves, several comments indicated that CSL is stimulating and rewarding. It is notable that a number of the instructors' comments expressed a desire and willingness to adapt their teaching style and / or content to enable them to integrate CSL more effectively. For example, instructors commented:

“Changes the whole meaning of teaching and experience of the classroom. If only I could have known more to develop a better classroom experience! I learned a lot as a teacher and will do better next time!”

“CSL made me more cognizant of trying to enliven course material and show its relevance by linking it to student experience.”

“It’s fascinating and productive for us all.”

“Learn more about specific classroom techniques to better my teaching.”

“I am still struggling with wanting to better integrate the course goals with CSL activities.”

“More information about partners – more input into students’ projects. I can then organize readings according to themes of partners.”

“More information on syllabus – assignments – how do other faculty recognize CSL component.”

“I need to revise assignments and scheduling to take into account CSL.”

# Community Partners' Results

## Survey Results

Ten community partners completed surveys during Fall 2005 and Winter 2006. All 10 rated their overall impressions of CSL as “Positive” (3) or “Very Positive” (7). All 10 said they were looking forward to participating in CSL in another term and also said they would recommend participating in CSL to their colleagues in other community organizations.

### 1. CSL Community Partners' Perceptions and Experiences of CSL

- a. Perceptions of usefulness of CSL to students' learning.** Community partners were asked to rate the usefulness of CSL to students' learning in particular areas. As the table shows, most community partners who completed surveys (N=10) thought that CSL was either “Useful” or “Very useful” to students' learning in most areas. However, a number of community partners also gave usefulness a “Somewhat” rating and some were “Not sure.” Community partners' ability to rate the contribution of CSL to students' understanding of course material may be limited unless there is significant engagement with the course and / or instructor.

Table 14. Community partners' perceptions of CSL's usefulness to students' learning				
Usefulness of community service-learning to students for:	Scale: 1 Not at all useful to 5 Very useful			
	1-2	3	4-5	Not sure
understanding the community		2	8	
understanding the course material		3	4	3
contributing to social change		3	6	1
developing leadership skills	1	3	6	
improving communication skills		3	7	
developing critical thinking skills		3	7	
encouraging participation in the community		3	7	

\*3 was a middle or neutral position, i.e., “Somewhat useful”

- b. Perceptions of usefulness of CSL to community.** Community partners were also asked to indicate how useful they thought CSL was to them or their organizations. As the table shows, CSL got the highest ratings from community partners for its usefulness to learning new forms of community engagement, developing relationships with students, and developing volunteer mentoring skills. Most also indicated that they were confident in their ability to integrate CSL into their organizations.

Table 15. Community partners' perceptions of CSL's usefulness to themselves and their organizations				
Usefulness of CSL to you and your organization/program for:	Scale: 1 Not at all useful to 5 Very useful			
	1-2	3	4-5	Not sure
networking with other community organizations	3	3	4	
contributing to social change		4	5	1
developing relationships with the university	4	3	3	
developing relationships with students	1		9	
developing volunteer mentoring skills	1	1	8	
learning new forms of community engagement			10	1
building organizational capacity	2	3	4	
Confidence in ability to integrate:	Scale: 1 Not at all to 5 Very confident			
How confident do you feel that you were able to integrate CSL into your organization/program? (N=8)	1	2	7	

\*3 was a middle or neutral position, i.e., "Somewhat useful" and "Somewhat confident"

## 2. Qualitative Feedback from CSL Community Partners

The themes included in this summary are suggestive of the nature of community partners' qualitative comments provided in responses to the following open-ended questions included in the Fall 2005 and Winter 2006 evaluation surveys:

- Do you have concerns around your participation in CSL?
- What would make it easier to participate fully in future CSL opportunities?
- Why would you (or wouldn't you) recommend participating in CSL?
- Do you have other comments about CSL?
- Why would you (or wouldn't you) participate in CSL in the future?
- What constraints were there on CSL working as well as you wanted?

Quotes are illustrative but not exhaustive.

- Unsure about how much direction to give the students
  - Recognize need for students to be engaged and directed in the organization
 

"Because it was our first experience with the CSL program, it was very difficult to gauge how much direction should be given to the student. We tend to be a very laid back organization where people get their job and run with it. We realized very quickly that the student needed to be engaged and directed a lot more than we anticipated. ..."
- Expectations need to be clear
  - Students need to understand what is required
  - Partners need to balance flexibility and fit with resource constraints

“That the students understand what is expected. That CSL and students are understanding the community requirements.”

“I think overall knowledge about CSL and how to effectively monitor and engage students. We really wanted the placement to fit the interests of the student and we were very flexible at first to enable them to explore areas that they were interested in, but were also a benefit to us. This flexibility was a challenge and we learned that things need to be more defined and focused.”

- Need for reflection
  - Desire for a way of assessing what students are actually learning through their experience with the organization
    - “... ‘Reflective time’ with the students, which could have been beneficial for both parties.”
    - “An “evaluation” or “final reflection sheet” would be helpful.”
- Need for a reporting mechanism from students back to the organization
  - “ We requested a written report or stories from the students in the x course – none were received though I contacted the students with my request.”
  - “Developing monitoring mechanisms such as reporting back dates ...”
- A good match is very important
  - Match between student and partner / project
  - Match between goals and objectives of a course and the community project
- Time is a concern
  - Amount of time allocated to the community project is very limited
  - Time is always a scarce resource in the organizations
- Very positive about CSL involvement
  - Contributes to the organization
    - “Overall, CSL gives organizations access to a pool of willing and capable short-term volunteers. However, the strongest benefit is that occasionally an outstanding student will arrive at the doors of your organization through CSL, one of those amazing volunteers that truly enhances programming.”
    - “Thank you more than words can ever adequately express for the opportunity to be involved with CSL! All of you and each of you as a team and as individuals contribute a competency, passion and graciousness that makes this endeavour a truly enjoyable, worthwhile and enriching experience.”
  - Important for students and community to learn from each other

“This program provides a linkage to our community.”

“This is a very good opportunity for a community to interact with students.”

“I think the CSL program provides an excellent networking opportunity for students and organizations; and I support its goals of trying to create a sense of community and encouraging civic engagement.”

- Experience provided learning helpful for future opportunities

## **Community Partners' Focus Group Summary–Fall 2005**

Six CSL community partners participated in a focus group in Fall 2005.

Overall, they were pleased with the program and plan to continue as partners in the future. In most cases, they viewed the experiences as positive for both the student and the organization. The administrative areas were working well generally. Exceptions included comments about not getting CSL up and running earlier in the term.

In addition, community partners identified a need for clearer parameters for the student placements, and suggested the following, based on their experiences:

- Allotted time for student participation—students had different interpretations of time to be spent with the organization. The hours ranged from 10-20 hours depending upon the course/instructor. There needed to be clarification as to the # of hours. Some students seemed confused as to what they should be doing with the organization.
- More information to students and to community partners as to the purpose of the placement and the communication requirements between student and organization.
- Organizations would like to see the final product of the student's assignment for this placement. This would mean seeing the final paper ensuring that information about their respective agencies was indeed correct. Organizations do not want to 'grade' any final products but to be able to make comments about the product. Student papers could possibly form part of the organization's website or history, etc.
- Asked for clarification of the role of the community organization – what role can the organization play – can lay out the expectations right at the beginning.
- Organizations would like to ensure that students do actually show up physically at the organization and that in some cases there is a much better response rate from students when contact is trying to be made. The work with the organization cannot be all on-line.