



**Community Service-Learning Program  
Evaluation Report: Fall 2006 - Winter 2007**

**October 2007**

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## **2006-2007 At-a-Glance**

### ***Overview***

- 15 instructors integrated a CSL component into 16 courses in 11 departments, compared to 12 instructors of 13 courses in 7 departments in 2005-2006
- 342 students were registered in CSL courses, compared to 230 students in 2005-2006
- 180 registered students (53%) participated in CSL, compared to 136 students (59%) in 2005-2006
- 57 community organizations hosted students, compared to 42 in 2005-2006
- 136 CSL students, 106 non-CSL students, 12 instructors, and 25 community partners completed course surveys
- 83% of non-CSL students reported lack of time as the main reason for not participating in CSL

### ***Satisfaction with CSL***

- Most students, instructors and community partners had positive impressions of CSL and would recommend CSL to their respective peers and colleagues.
- Most students, instructors and community partners reported an ability to integrate CSL into their coursework, teaching, and community organizations, respectively.

### ***The Difference CSL Made***

#### *For students:*

- A large majority of CSL students reported that CSL was useful in achieving the following learning goals important to the CSL Program:
  - understanding complexities of community issues (92%)
  - understanding the role of community organizations (92%)
  - increasing awareness about knowledge production (84%)
  - increasing empathy for particular populations (83%)
  - recognizing how their abilities can contribute to social change (82%)
- Nearly all instructors and community partners agreed that CSL was at least “somewhat useful” to students’ learning for:
  - developing critical thinking
  - contributing to social change
  - developing research skills
  - developing communication skills
  - developing leadership skills

#### *For instructors:*

- 58% of instructors agreed that CSL had contributed at least somewhat to changing their teaching approach, while a minority agreed that CSL had contributed to developing new teaching resources (42%) or enhancing their teaching skills (36%)

*For community partners:*

- Most community partners agreed that CSL had been at least somewhat useful to themselves and their organizations for:
  - developing volunteer mentoring skills (100%)
  - learning new forms of community engagement (96%)
  - building organizational capacity (92%)
  - contributing to social change (92%)
  - networking (88%)
  - developing relationships with the university (80%)
- In addition, community partners may benefit from the 49% of CSL students who said that they would consider continuing to volunteer with their community organizations

### ***Areas for continuing improvement***

- Findings point to a continuing need for:
  - more and better communication between CSL, student, professor, and partner to:
    - ensure a good match between course, placement, student, and particular tasks
    - clarify and monitor accountability of students
    - revisit placements and expectations of all parties
  - support to instructors' development of strategies for integrating CSL into courses

## Introduction

This report summarizes survey results of the following 16 undergraduate and graduate CSL courses taught by 15 different instructors in 11 departments in the Faculty of Arts during fall and winter 2006-2007, up from 12 instructors of 13 courses in 7 departments in 2005-2006.

The following CSL courses were offered in 2006-2007:

Anthropology 424/524: Visual Anthropology  
CSL 300: Theory and Practice of Community Service Learning  
Drama 407(A2)/507: Intergenerational Performance  
Humanities Computing 430: Project Design & Management in Humanities Computing  
Linguistics 324: Endangered Languages  
Middle Eastern & African Studies 400: Topics in the Study of the Middle East and Africa  
Modern Languages & Cultural Studies 473/573: Cultural Representations, World Media & Ethics  
Philosophy 265: Philosophy of Science  
Political Science 299: Citizenship for Democracy  
Sociology 352: Population, Social and Economic Development  
Sociology 369: Sociology of Globalization  
Sociology 418: Qualitative Methods in Social Research  
Spanish 300: Conversation & Composition in Spanish (taught twice)  
Swahili 112: Beginners' Swahili II  
Women's Studies 201: Introduction to Women's Studies

CSL was required in 5 courses and optional in 11; a community placement was required in 2, but did not have to be done through the CSL Program. In courses where CSL was optional, CSL participation ranged from 25% to 56%, depending on the course. Some instructors set a cap on the number of students who could participate in CSL.

Overall:

- 342 students were registered in CSL courses, compared to 230 students in 2005-2006
- 180 registered students (53%) participated in CSL, compared to 136 students (59%) in 2005-2006
- 57 community organizations hosted students, compared to 42 in 2005-2006
- 242 students (71% of those registered) completed surveys: 136 CSL students (76% of all CSL students) and 106 non-CSL students (65% of all non-CSL students)
- 12 instructors (80%) and 25 community partners (44%) completed surveys
- Most students, instructors and community partners had positive impressions of CSL and would recommend CSL to their respective peers.

## Description of participants

### Students

#### Age

- CSL students: average age 24.32 years (range: 19-58) (6 students were over the age of 37)
- Non-CSL students: average age 22.77 years (range: 18-37)

#### Sex

- 172 surveys were completed by females: 60% were CSL students; 40% were non-CSL students
- 66 surveys were completed by males: 48% were CSL students; 52% were non-CSL students

- 2 surveys were completed by others: 1 was a CSL student and 1 was a non-CSL student
- Instructors observe that females are overrepresented in CSL courses, and are more likely than males to opt for the CSL component of their courses.

*Post-secondary education completed*

- CSL students: average years completed 3.31 (range: 0-8)
- Non-CSL students: average years completed 3.21 (range: 0-8)

**Instructors**

*CSL experience*

- 12 instructors completed surveys: 5 had taught a CSL course for the first time; 7 had taught at least one CSL course before.
- Half the instructors were at least "somewhat" familiar with the concept of CSL prior to teaching CSL for the first time.

*Interest in experiential learning pedagogy*

- All instructors were at least "somewhat" interested in experiential learning pedagogy, of whom 7 were "very interested."

*Importance of teaching to social change*

- 11 instructors said teaching should be linked to social change at least "somewhat," of whom 6 said it should be linked "to a great extent."

*Personal involvement in social issues*

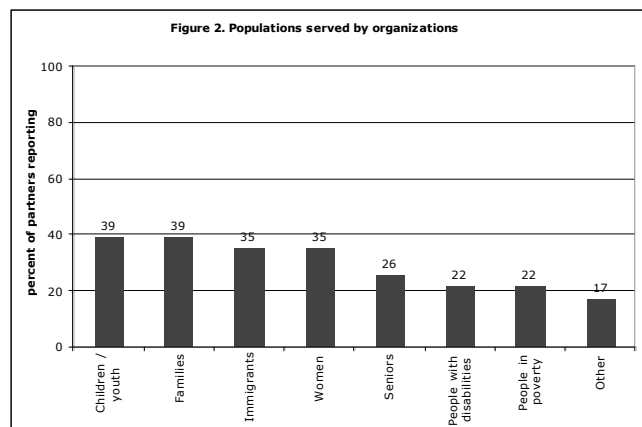
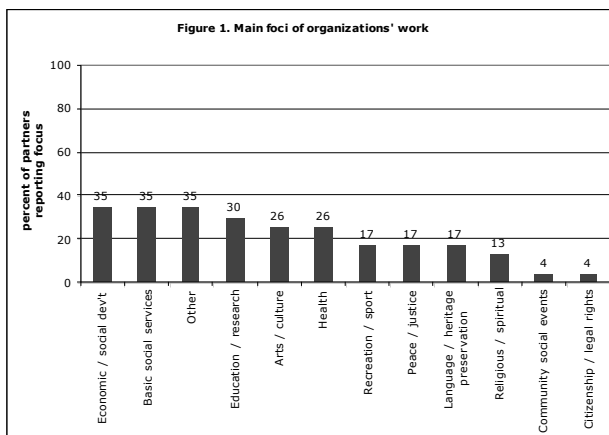
- 8 instructors said they were at least "somewhat" involved in social issues; 1 said "very much" involved.

**Community partners**

*Community organizations' work*

Figure 1 shows the main foci of community partners' work. Many respondents reported multiple foci. "Other" included: environment (5 partners), counseling and community development (1), employment, counseling, youth programs for immigrants (1), women (1).

Figure 2 shows the main populations supported by community partners. Many respondents reported multiple populations. "Other" included: students (3 partners), Aboriginals (1), general public (1), organizations that deal with seniors (1), refugees (1), men (1).



Overall, more than three-quarters (78%) of community partners reported that class is one of the main disadvantages that their organizations address; 35% reported race and age; and 30% reported gender.

*Community mentors' non-profit experience*

Community mentors reported considerable experience in the non-profit sector. 35% had been working in the non-profit sector for 1-5 years, 26% for 6-10 years, 13% for 11-15 years, and 26% for between 16 and 40 years.

*Experience with volunteers*

Community organizations varied considerably in the number of volunteers they had involved during the previous year (range: 5 to 1300 volunteers). 30% of community partners reported having fewer than 25 and more than 100 volunteers, respectively.

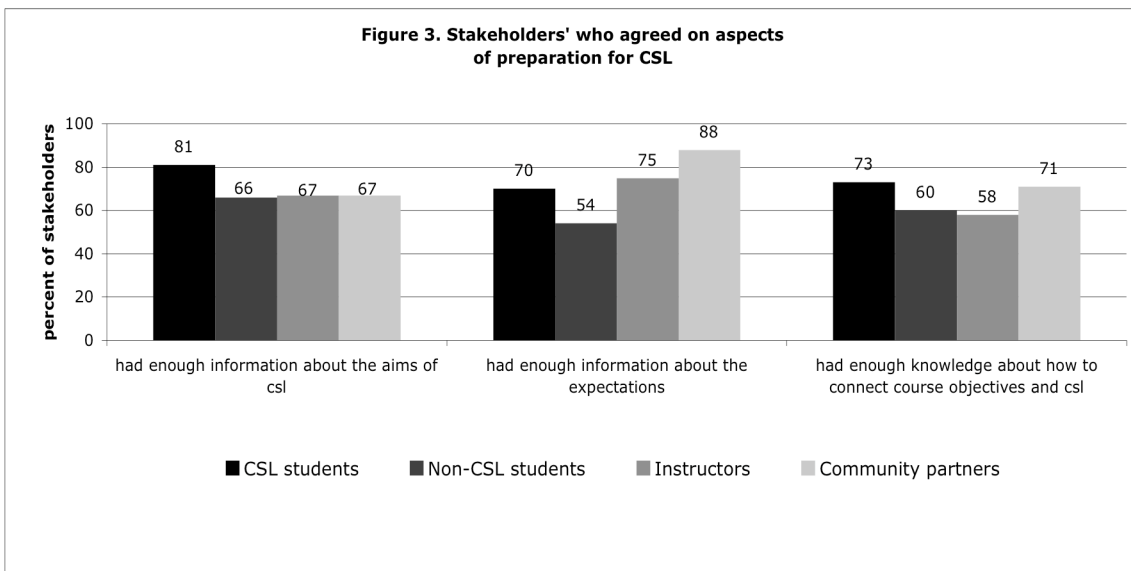
All but 2 community partners had experience with supervising volunteers (range: 1 to 100 volunteers). 36% had supervised at least 50 volunteers.

**Perceptions of preparation for CSL**

The CSL Program provides information about CSL, and support for participation, in a variety of ways, including:

- information sessions for instructors who want to know more about CSL before deciding to participate
- orientation workshops for instructors and community partners prior to the start of term
- beginning of term information to each class that has a CSL component
- information sessions about the non-profit sector for CSL students
- mentoring workshops for community partners who are hosting students
- syllabus building workshops for instructors intending to teach a CSL course
- information and assistance as requested by individual instructors, community partners, and students

Figure 3 shows that a majority of students, instructors, and community partners agreed that they had enough information about the aims of CSL, expectations of CSL, and how to connect course objectives and CSL.



Interestingly, much larger proportions of CSL students than non-CSL students agreed that they had enough information or knowledge in each area, even though all students hear about CSL at the same time in classes at the beginning of term. Possible explanations for this finding include the following:

- perhaps CSL students' perceptions are shaped by their positive experiences with CSL during the term
- CSL students may be more willing to tolerate uncertainty
- CSL students may be more inclined towards community involvement

In addition, compared to other stakeholders, a much larger proportion of CSL students agreed that they had enough information about the aims of CSL. Again, this result may be a reflection of their positive experiences with CSL during the term.

83% of instructors and 91% of community partners reported that the CSL Program had provided information or assistance that was helpful to carrying out their respective roles.

Compared to other stakeholders, a considerably larger proportion of community partners agreed that they had enough information about the expectations of them.

Compared to other stakeholders, a smaller proportion of instructors agreed that they had enough knowledge about how to connect course objectives to the CSL component of the course.

## **Ability to integrate CSL**

83% of instructors reported that they had been able to integrate CSL into their courses to at least a satisfactory extent.

Among those who had taught a CSL course before, 57% reported that their ability to integrate CSL had increased, while 43% said it had stayed the same. A couple of instructors commented that participation in CSL was a better fit with their own pedagogical preferences. Integrating CSL isn't always easy, however, and one instructor commented that it resulted in "a 2-stream program to accommodate CSL and non-CSL students."

Nearly all community partners (90%) reported that they had been at least somewhat able to integrate CSL into their organizations.

It is (therefore) notable that only 55% of instructors agreed that they had enough time to integrate CSL into their courses, while 83% of community partners agreed that they had enough time to integrate CSL into their work. Other possible explanations for the differences in perceptions between instructors and community partners include the following:

- perhaps involvement in CSL requires fewer changes in the ways that community partners usually work compared to instructors
- community partners may have a high level of confidence in their abilities to provide meaningful student placements
- community partners' perceptions may be influenced by their experience that students made tangible contributions to their organizations during the term (discussed later in this report)

70% of CSL students agreed that they had been able to integrate CSL into their coursework, while just 11% disagreed.

## **Satisfaction with CSL**

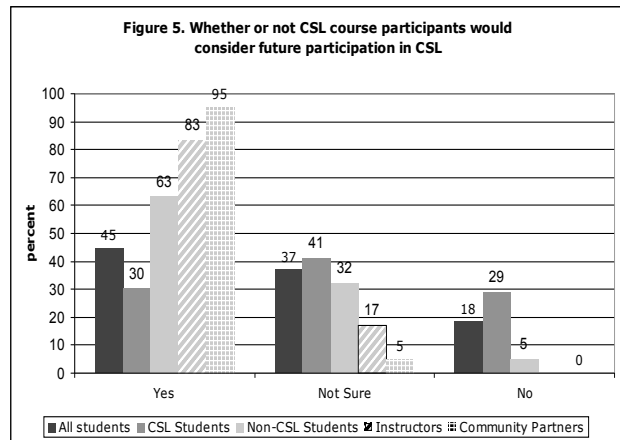
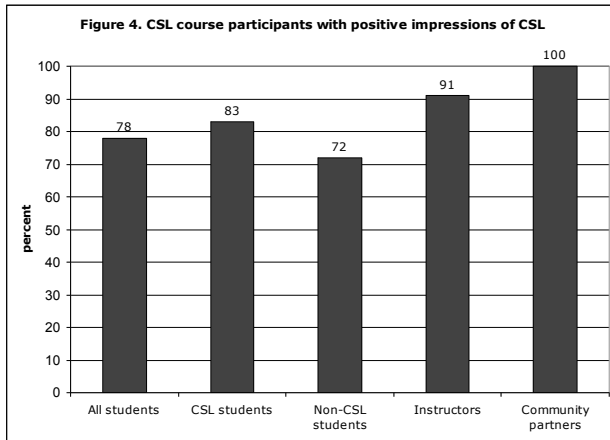
### ***Positive impressions of CSL***

Figure 4 shows that a large majority of participants involved with the CSL courses had positive impressions of CSL, including 72% of non-CSL students.



87% of CSL students and 83% of non-CSL students agreed that they had “learned a lot” in their CSL courses.

85% of CSL students reported positive experiences with their community organizations.



**Would consider another CSL course in the future**

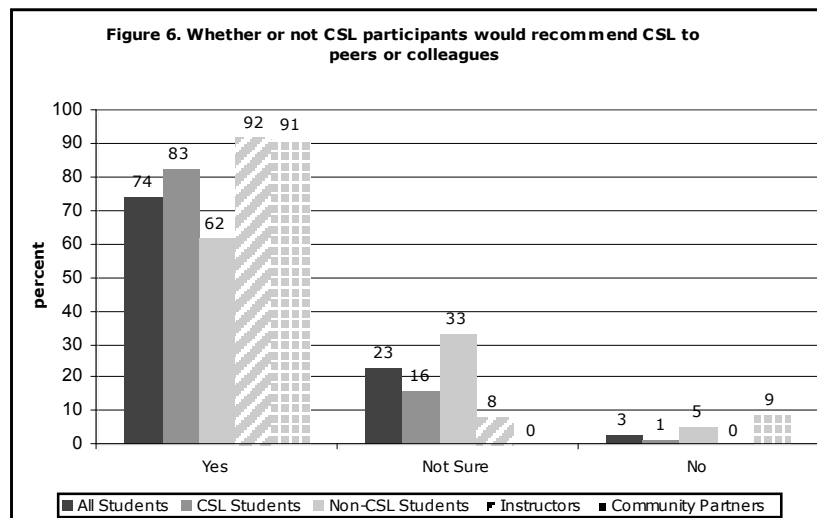
Figure 5 shows that a large majority of instructors (83%) and community partners (95%) who completed surveys would consider future participation in CSL.

Most non-CSL students (63%) also said they would consider future participation in a CSL course.

Less than a third (30%) of CSL students said they would consider future participation in CSL. However, 82% of CSL students who said “No” reported that they did not expect to have another opportunity to participate in CSL either because of constraints in their academic programs or because they expected to graduate. Of these 31 students, 3 also cited other reasons, and 6 specifically commented that they would have liked to take another CSL course or wished that CSL had been available earlier in their university programs.

**Would recommend CSL to peers and colleagues**

Figure 6 shows that a majority of participants involved with CSL courses said they would recommend CSL to their peers or colleagues, including 62% of non-CSL students.



Of the 11 instructors who said they would recommend CSL to their colleagues, 4 had taught a CSL course before, and 7 had not.

## Factors influencing participation in CSL

### Students

Among non-CSL students, the main reasons for not participating in CSL included the following:

- other time commitments
- logistics related to the set-up of CSL, e.g., joining a class late, missing the CSL presentation
- perceived lack of connection between CSL and course expectations or requirements
- lack of transportation to community organizations

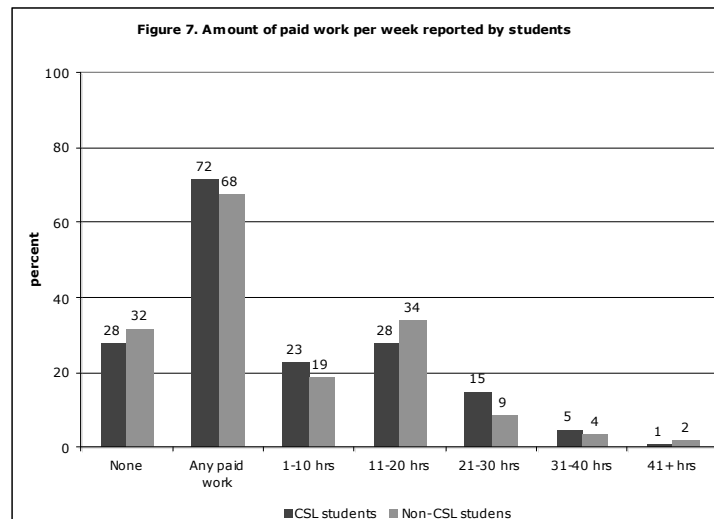
Among non-CSL students who identified time as the main influence on their decision, some were already involved in or committed to volunteer work elsewhere or in other CSL courses, or had their own ideas of what they wanted to explore beyond the projects available through CSL. For example, in two courses, a community placement was a requirement, but did not have to be carried out through the CSL Program.

Almost a quarter (22%) of non-CSL students regretted not participating in CSL, while more than half (55%) did not regret their decision not to participate, and 22% were neutral.

Non-CSL students' reasons for regretting that they had not participated in CSL included the following:

- CSL is "interesting"
- CSL is an opportunity to "learn about society"
- It's "a noble thing to do"
- CSL is an "enriching experience"
- not gaining the "practical experience" that CSL afforded

The amount of paid work students do during the term is conceivably one factor that influences students' decisions about participating in CSL. Interestingly, Figure 7 shows that a slightly larger proportion of CSL students (71%) than non-CSL students (68%) had at least some paid work during the term.



Students were pragmatic about their decisions about CSL participation, considering not only principles, but also personal circumstances. They also appeared to see their experience as a whole, not to dissect the parts or the relative contributions of different components to the overall experience: how does it all work together is what students appeared to be interested in. Accordingly, a considerable number of students indicated that whether or not they would consider taking a CSL course in the future "depends." It depends on some of the following factors:

- their time commitments

- relevance to the course and potential for integration
- placement options
- logistics such as accessibility of the placement

Among students who said they would consider taking another CSL course in the future, both CSL students and non-CSL students said they would do so for the following reasons:

- generally "a good experience"
- positive for integrating the academic, personal, and community
- a good way to make a contribution to the community

Among students who were unsure, or would not consider CSL in the future, their reasons included the following:

- CSL did not relate well to the course for integration
- CSL was too time consuming
- CSL did not feel mutually beneficial for the student and the organization

Students who said they would recommend CSL to other students based this primarily on the perceived relevance of CSL to the course, including the following:

- opportunity for integration of theory / practice or learning / experience
- belief in community engagement as part of a university education
- opportunity to contribute their skills
- opportunity to gain or practice new skills or build a resume

### ***Instructors***

Like students, instructors' decisions to participate in CSL were not based solely on their pedagogical commitments, but also on whether CSL was perceived to be a practical, relevant and feasible option for a particular course.

Instructors' reasons for considering teaching another CSL course in the future and for recommending it to colleagues included the following:

- academic and personal enrichment for students, including stimulation and student creativity
- experiential opportunity for students
- links theory and practice
- opens up new possibilities for teaching particular content

### ***Community partners***

Community partners' reasons for considering future participation in CSL included the following:

- good opportunity to integrate students into community
- community has lessons / knowledge to share
- students' enthusiasm promotes a positive working environment
- mutual benefits to students and organizations
- pragmatically, it offers extra hands, useful skills, and takes pressure off organizations

In addition to the reasons identified above, community partners said they would recommend CSL to their colleagues for the following reasons:

- bridges university and community

- agreement with the goals of CSL
- a proactive way to engage students in community

## What Difference CSL Made

### For students

Figure 8 shows that a large majority of CSL students perceived that CSL had made a positive difference to their learning in each of five key areas considered important to the CSL Program.

Instructors and community partners were asked about the usefulness of CSL to students' learning in particular areas considered important in community service-learning learning programs. Figure 9 shows that between 80% and 100% of instructors and nearly all community partners agreed that CSL was useful to students' learning in these key areas. (Community partners were not asked about usefulness to research skills.)

36% of non-CSL students also agreed that being in a CSL course had enhanced their learning.

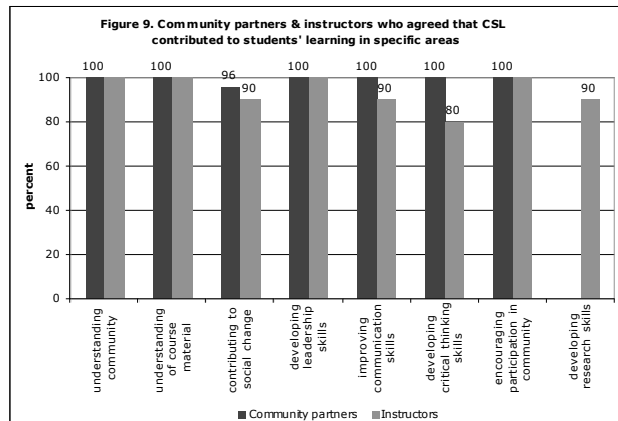
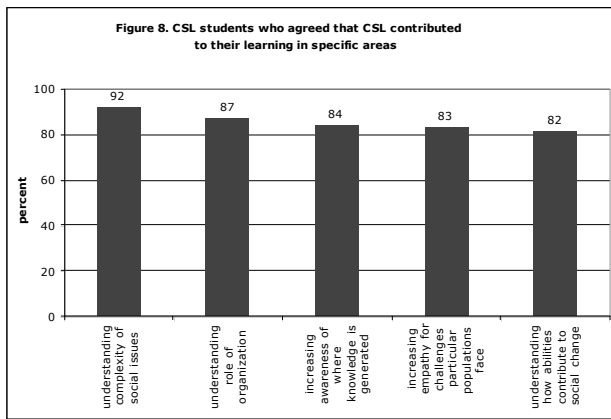
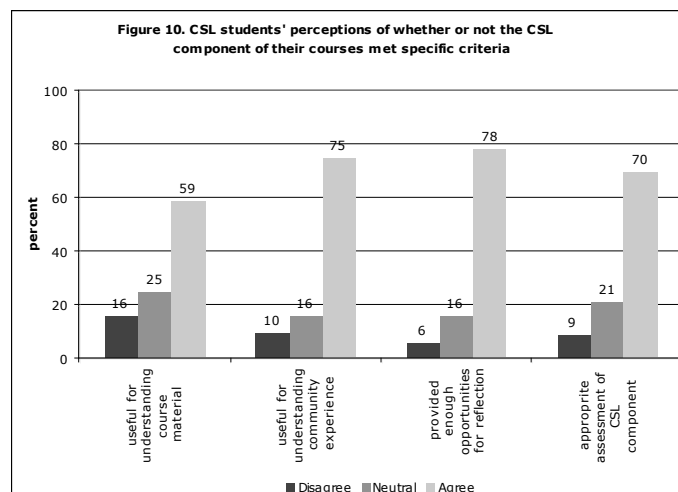


Figure 10 shows that a majority of CSL students agreed that the CSL component of their courses met several specific criteria that the CSL Program considers important. However, the proportion of students agreeing varied considerably depending on the criterion. Whereas 59% agreed that their community experience had contributed to understanding course material, 75% agreed that course material contributed to their understanding of their community experience.



In addition, 86% of CSL students reported having a positive experience with their community placement organizations, and only 5% reported having a negative experience.

The small proportion of students who reported negative experiences with CSL were discouraged by the following:

- perceived lack of relevance of the project to the course
- perceived mismatch between the requirements of the project and their capacities
- perception that the tasks to which they were assigned in their placements were mundane, e.g., database entry, envelope stuffing, office work

In addition, some students commented that there was not enough structure or clarity about the work to be done in the short time frame. Communication and timely responsiveness were therefore important to students. For example:

"I felt there wasn't enough structure within my role as a volunteer. The program coordinators were flexible, but didn't have specific things for me to do within my organization. With more planning between CSL and the organization ... we can make greater contributions."

On the other hand, students who reported having positive experiences with CSL pointed to some of the qualities of CSL that had contributed to this:

- relevance to course material, e.g., helpfulness to completing course assignments
- mutual benefit, e.g., a good balance between making a contribution and gaining something
- interactive, hands-on, meaningful work that made a difference
- broad exposure to the organization and how it works rather than a narrow task-oriented experience
- having a particular defined project and good guidance for completing it
- good communication with and accessibility of staff in the organization
- staff and supervisors who saw the placement as a learning opportunity for students
- helpful, positive, and inspirational staff
- feedback that the student's contribution is valuable

When CSL really works, the differences it makes to students go beyond tangible learning outcomes, as illustrated in the following comments:

"I believe I had a well rounded experience with my organization. I learned a lot about myself, my community, the organization, and a variety of social issues that women face. My community leader also made it pleasant by meeting with me to debrief the discussions and experiences that I had."

"It placed me in a situation I wouldn't have been in before. Gave me hands-on experience and opened my eyes to social problems happening locally. I learned a lot and gave me motivation to help."

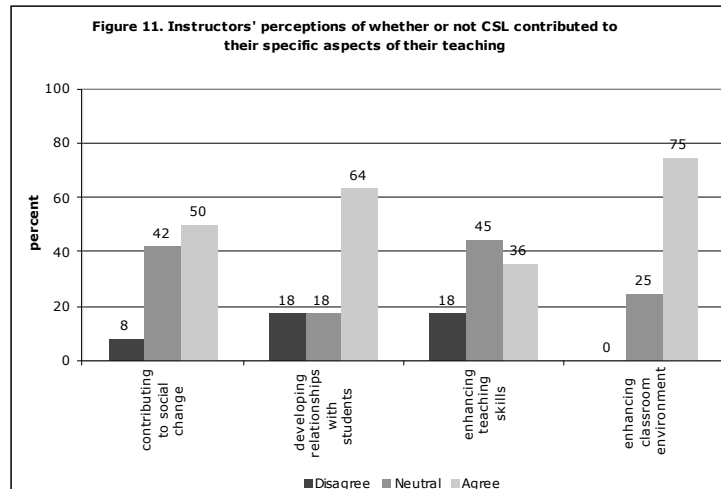
"My organization was filled with very motivated and accommodating individuals who sought to maximize both my contributions to them, and their contributions to me. They gave me the opportunity to be engaged in actions that penetrate social change and acquire very practical (and marketable) skills and experience."

"I've gained a more holistic view of the process of learning."

### ***For instructors***

Instructors were also asked to what extent participation in CSL had been valuable to their teaching. Figure 11 shows considerable variation in instructors' perspectives, depending on the area being considered. 64% agreed that CSL had contributed to developing relationships with students, and 75% agreed that it had enhanced the classroom environment. However, much smaller proportions agreed that

their participation in CSL had contributed to social change (50%) or had enhanced their teaching skills (36%).

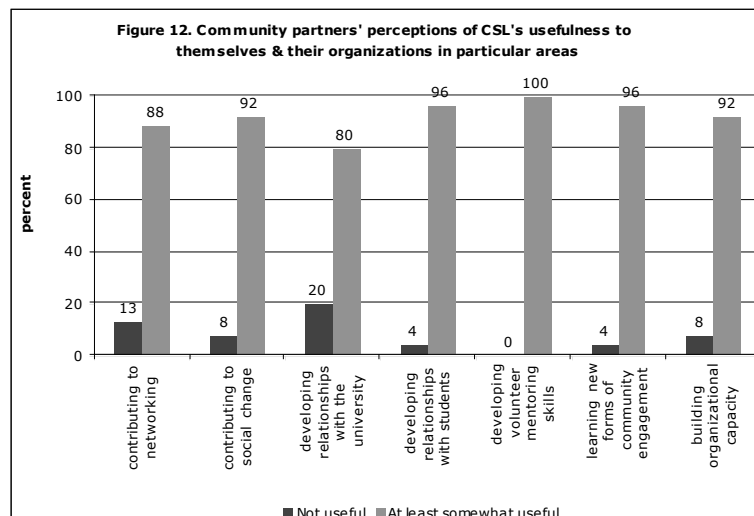


Some instructors provided examples of how they had changed their teaching as a result of participation in CSL. These included the following:

- changing the nature of written assignments
- adding experience as a reference point for discussion, e.g., using examples from real life
- increasing involvement of community representatives in classroom presentations
- increasing consideration of "soft" skills and knowledge in assessment

### ***For community partners***

Community partners were also asked to evaluate the usefulness of CSL to themselves and their organizations. Figure 12 shows that a large majority of community partners (between 80% and 100%, depending on the area evaluated) perceived involvement in CSL to be useful.



Among the contributions of CSL participation to their organizations, community partners reported the following:

- fresh ideas, educated perspectives, enthusiasm, energy
- extra hands (many commented on tangible contributions)

- organizational capacity building, e.g., opportunity for reflection on the organization, on possible and feasible roles for volunteers, and on potential outcomes of short placements
- increased public awareness of social issues
- increased community visibility

In addition, a potential sustainable benefit to organizations exists in the fact that 49% of CSL students said that they would consider continuing to volunteer with their CSL placement organizations.

Community partners were asked how mentoring students in CSL placements differed from hosting volunteers. Their responses included the following:

- an increased sense of responsibility / formality, e.g., for articulating information and for ensuring that students learn from the experience
- more specific tasks or a different type or level of task
- more supervision, i.e., more time spent per hour of contribution
- greater amount of time commitment by CSL students meant being able to rely on them
- students more responsive, dedicated, more committed and more focused
- the broader context was taken into account, e.g., students look at services at a community / social level, not just as a task

They also appreciated the opportunity to attend final class presentations as a way of tying things together.

## **Challenges and directions**

### ***Implementation logistics***

Compared to the previous year, there were relatively few comments on the logistics of implementing CSL during 2006-2007. This finding suggests that adjustments made by the CSL Program were effective in alleviating frustrations identified during the first official year of implementation. For example, the only timing issue that students commented on in 2006-2007 surveys related to the introduction of CSL to courses at the beginning of the term. Timing problems included the following:

- introduction of CSL occurring before students were officially registered in a course, before timetables were confirmed, or when students were not present in the course
- missing out on a preferred placement option because it was no longer available, resulting in a decision not to participate in CSL

These concerns led to a suggestion for some kind "catch-up" opportunity for students.

Some students commented that connecting with their community partners had been a challenge at the beginning of the placement.

- In several cases, students became frustrated with not hearing back from their partners and created their own alternate placements.

Since timing is important, some students suggested a need to clarify expectations, and to ensure that community partners have projects established and ready to go at the beginning of the term. They also stated a preference for concrete projects with meaningful involvement.

A specific area needing clearer guidelines was research ethics requirements and protocols for community-based projects involving research.

Students also suggested a need for a mechanism for revisiting and changing placements after they begin. For example, some students faced scheduling conflicts that made it difficult to implement their placements. Others found that there were too many students allocated to a particular setting resulting in fewer opportunities to make a meaningful contribution.

### ***Matching placement options to courses and students***

A second area for improvement relates to the fit of placement options to courses and / or to particular students.

Some students and instructors commented that some placement options were not that relevant to the course focus or content. This finding suggests a need for more collaboration between the CSL Program and instructors to ensure a good fit or for instructors to facilitate opportunities for reflection on what a perceived lack of fit means.

Some students commented that their projects demanded too few of their skills, while others commented that projects demanded more skills than they possessed. Although some students were able to see how carrying out what they perceived to be mundane tasks contributed to the organization's needs and exposed them to the workings of the organization and its place in the community, others were not able to see beyond the tasks. These findings suggest a need for discussion, perhaps as part of student or partner orientation, or perhaps between students and instructors, about how to use community work projects as vehicles for learning through reflection.

### ***Integration of CSL into courses and community***

Given the importance that students place on the relevance of their community placements to their courses, it is important that CSL be integrated effectively into courses. Findings suggest that the better the fit, the more likely participants are to experience CSL positively and have a sense of its mutual benefits.

Perhaps because community partners associated hosting students with a greater sense of responsibility, they suggested that they would like more communication with instructors about expectations and learning goals. Several commented that having the course syllabus ahead of time was helpful.

More collaboration between instructor, partner and student was particularly important to community partners who had less than ideal experiences with students. Less than ideal experiences included the following:

- mentors' perceiving that students were less competent in carrying out projects than expected
- students not following through on commitments to projects, e.g., not completing projects
- problems with students' punctuality, reliability, motivation and dedication

Some partners questioned the extent to which instructors were committed to CSL and wanted more information about how the CSL component is assessed as part of the course requirements.

Conversely, a few instructors commented on the commitment of community partners to CSL, especially in the face of lack of timely response to getting projects under way.

### ***Realities affecting experiences of CSL***

Community partners mentioned that lack of time, organizational expertise, and / or financial resources for student projects were factors that affected the extent to which CSL worked effectively. As a result, some emphasized the importance of CSL students having a good understanding of the nature of, and constraints on, the non-profit sector, and an opportunity to reflect on and contextualize problems that arise in community placements in light of this understanding.

Some community partners also commented that the amount of time available for placements (usually about 20 hours) and students' less flexible hours of availability got in the way of maximizing the CSL experience.

Conversely, some students commented that their placement organizations' hours were not flexible enough to accommodate students' schedules.

Among instructors, class size was identified as a barrier to effectively integrating CSL.