

Summer Service Learning Participation: 1980-1999

by Jay Brandenberger, Sue Cunningham, and Tom Trozzolo

Building on strong service traditions at the University of Notre Dame, the summer service learning program facilitated by the Center for Social Concerns has grown into the largest national initiative of its kind in higher education. This report documents the growth of the Summer Service Project at the University of Notre Dame from 1980 to 1999, and examines relevant participant characteristics.

Historical Contexts: 20 Years of Growth

The Summer Service Project (SSP) developed from summer service opportunities facilitated by CILA, a Notre Dame student organization, during the 1960's and 1970's. Prior to 1980, over 400 students served during summers in Latin America and the U.S. through CILA's efforts (a later report in this series will examine such initiatives).

In 1980, Notre Dame alumni/ae clubs became official sponsors of Summer Service Projects. Working partnerships among Notre Dame alumni/ae, project site supervisors, students, and the Center for Social Concerns enabled significant growth and expansion. Funding from the Jim Andrews Memorial Fund and other sources sustained steady growth in the number of placements offered and the quality of the experiences provided.

The SSP integrates service and academic study, consistent with the service learning model that expanded within higher education during the 1990's (see Rhoads and Howard, 1998; Elyer and Giles, 1999). During the 1980's the SSP was offered as a one-credit course in Theology, expanding in 1993 to three-credits (with cross-listings in various departments). For further information about the objectives, focus, and academic model that frame the course, see the Center's web page and resources listed at the end of this report.

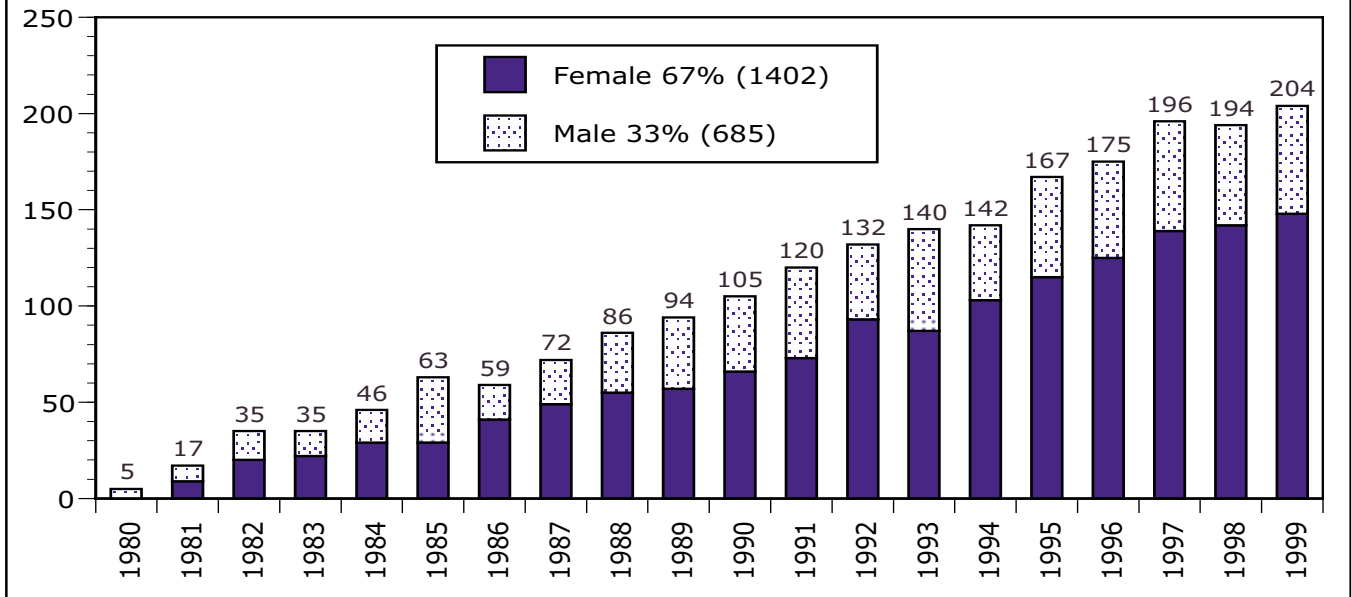
Participant Totals

From 1980 to 1999, 2,087 Notre Dame students participated in the Summer Service Project at various national and international sites. Figure 1 shows the steady growth in the annual number of participants, from 5 in 1980 to 204 in 1999.

Current SSP Overview

- Students receive three credits in Theology for participation from April through September:
Theo 360: Summer Service Learning: Confronting Social Issues
- Participants serve and learn for eight weeks at over 160 national sites
- Students serve at sites providing health care, domestic violence prevention, shelter, youth services, education, and other assistance
- Alumni/ae provide mentorship and funding
- Participants receive a \$1900 tuition assistance scholarship

Figure 1 Number and Gender of SSP Participants by Year, 1980-1999



During the 1990's the Center developed auxiliary summer service learning initiatives, including an International Summer Service Learning Program, summer internships for Hispanic and African American student leaders, and opportunities to work with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. In 1999, for example, 34 additional students participated in auxiliary summer service learning initiatives. (Note: the totals in Figure 1 reflect only regular SSP participants; auxiliary programs will be documented in a future report.)

Gender

Figure 1 indicates that more females (67%) than males (33%) have participated in the SSP during the last twenty years. This trend is consistent with national data showing greater female participation in service-learning initiatives within higher education.

The Center for Social Concerns continues to develop a variety of efforts to increase participation among males. Future research will examine gender trends and differences more fully.

Service Learning Sites

The Summer Service Project builds on the University's national and international links. Students have shared goodwill, demonstrated the University's commitment to social issues, and learned from partners in a variety of locations.

Since 1980, Notre Dame students have worked in 288 U.S. cities in 47 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Internationally, students have served in 11 cities in eight foreign countries (Brazil, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ghana, Hong Kong, and Mexico) prior to the development of the International Summer Service Learning Program.

Top 20 SSP Host Cities: 1980-1999

Chicago	80	Pittsburgh	29
South Bend	69	Houston	27
Indianapolis	49	Kansas City	27
San Diego	45	Philadelphia	26
Boston	36	Phoenix	26
Columbus	36	Springfield, IL	26
Cleveland	33	Albuquerque	25
Los Angeles	33	Detroit	25
Cincinnati	32	Michigan City, IN	25
Louisville	29	Milwaukee	25

College Year of Participants

Figure 2 indicates that most students participate in the SSP in the summer following their junior (51%) or sophomore (35%) years at the University. (Students typically do not participate in the SSP following their senior year since course requirements are completed during the following fall.) The Center places those students with sufficient competency and maturity to serve the host agency and benefit from the inherent learning opportunities. In recent years, building on student interest and readiness, a relatively higher percentage of first year students has been accepted. Historically, few students have participated in a second SSP experience (the Center prioritizes first-time applicants), but increasingly students request follow-up or advanced opportunities.

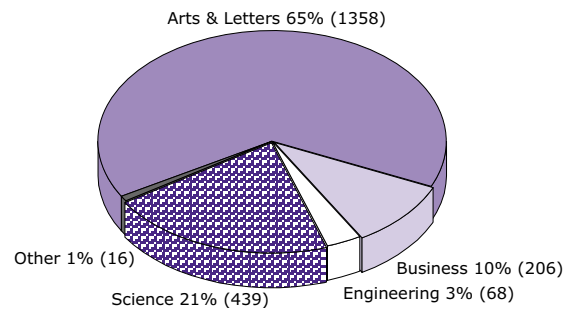
College of Enrollment

The Center for Social Concerns welcomes participants from each of the University's Colleges. Figure 3 shows the college enrollment of SSP participants over the last two decades. The majority (65%) has been enrolled in College of Arts and Letters (the largest College at Notre Dame), followed by the Colleges of Science (21%), Business (10%), and Engineering (3%). Note that the proportion of science majors participating in the SSP is high relative to the percentage of undergraduate science majors at the University.

In recent years, the Center has established partnerships to develop summer service learning opportunities for those in less represented majors (e.g., the ACCION business internship). A faculty liaison with each College enhances such collaboration.

Additional courses have been developed within specific departments (e.g., Psychology) to build upon the required SSP Theology course (Theo 360) and

Figure 3 College of SSP Participants (1980-1999)

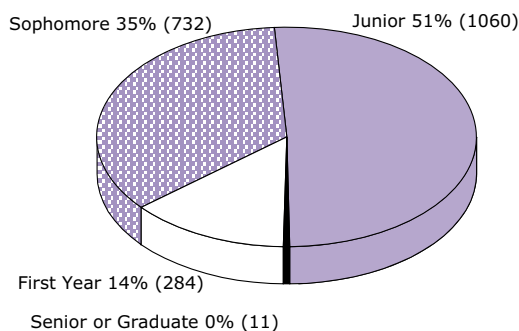


enhance links to students' fields of study. In addition, since 1980 over 400 students have participated in *Theology and Social Ministry*, an advanced second course designed to facilitate further analysis of social issues arising from students' summer experiences.

During the course of my Summer Service Project, I found some of my beliefs challenged and many of my long-held opinions disputed. The project I once was reluctant to begin is now over, and I find myself wishing that I had another eight weeks to be challenged physically, changed mentally, molded emotionally, and reshaped spiritually. How was I to know that this summer would be the deciding factor in my choosing a major, would force me to explore who I really am, and would result in my loving so many more people?

—Susanne Witt, 1997 SSP participant at the Interfaith Food Shelter in E. North Carolina

Figure 2 Year Completed Prior to SSP Participation (1980-1999)



Implications and Future Research

The steady growth in SSP participation since 1980 (from 5 to 200+ participants annually) represents an integration of student interest, alumni/ae and donor support, and a commitment on the part of the Center to summer initiatives. With recent financial support from the Kathleen Andrews Family and the Andrews McMeel Foundation, the Center for Social Concerns is poised to expand further the number and quality of summer service learning experiences for a wide array of students, and to share our developing model with national partners.

Summer service learning provides an opportunity for significant personal engagement that can have a strong impact on student development. SSP participants are engaged full-time for a two-month period, learning first-hand about community concerns, the impacts of poverty, and more. Such summer immersion experiences may be more profound than brief service learning involvements during the academic year.

Research by McAdam (1988, 1989) provides context and support for the claim that significant summer service has potential life-long impacts. McAdam examined the lasting effects of participation in the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign that enrolled college students in voter participation and related civil rights initiatives. Twenty years later, participants showed significantly higher levels of political and social involvement than those who had been accepted for Freedom Summer but were unable to participate.

Building on such work, research at the Center is currently underway to examine various impacts of summer service. Findings from both short-term measures (before and after the summer immersion) and long-term analyses (an examination of SSP alumni/ae ten years later) will be outlined in future reports.

References

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Center Research Report Series

This report is part of an ongoing series published by the Center for Social Concerns and partners at the University of Notre Dame. Research at the Center focuses on the role and impact of higher education with respect to the development of social responsibility, leadership, ethics, and faith.

Future Reports

A sample of topics to be addressed in the report series:

- levels of service/civic involvement among ND students
- the impacts of engaged learning
- the role of faith and religion in relation to student service
- moral and civic development

Reports are available for downloading at:

http://centerforsocialconcerns.nd.edu/sub_research.html

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