

UCA
University of Central America

Report 2013-2014

Social Service

Learn and Serve



Content

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction (Renata Rodrigues) | 3 |
| UCA Social Service: A Retrospective and Reflective Overview (María Luisa Miranda) | 5 |
| How is Social Service Learning Implemented at UCA? (Gastón Ortega) | 8 |
| Humanities and Philosophy (Javier Menocal) | 11 |
| Finance-Public Accounting and Auditing (Ruth Orozco) | 13 |
| Social Work and Development Management (Ana María Gutiérrez) | 16 |
| Humanities and Philosophy (María Elena Barrerda) | 18 |
| Social Work and Development Management (Danilo Norori) | 20 |
| Business Administration (Eduardo Soza) | 22 |
| English Teaching as a Foreign Language (Graciela Torres) | 24 |
| Architecture (Héctor Delgado) | 26 |
| Environmental Quality Engineering (Indiana García) | 28 |
| Civil Engineering (Jean Carlos Gutiérrez) | 30 |
| Business Administration (Juanita López) | 32 |
| Graphic Design (Julio Membreño) | 34 |
| Systems Engineering and Information Technologies (Justo Villanueva) | 36 |
| Social Work and Development Management (María José Blanco) | 38 |
| Industrial Engineering (Maribel Medrano) | 40 |
| Systems Engineering and Information Technologies (Mariella Cuadra) | 42 |
| Law (Norman Campos) | 44 |
| Graphic Design (Ricardo Delgadillo) | 46 |
| Social Communication (Valeria Dávila) | 48 |



Professor: Renata Rodrigues
Academic Vice President
Introduction

One of the ultimate goals of education in the Society of Jesus is to educate men and women for and with others. This is a huge and complex task that demands a strong commitment from the educational institution, a commitment that involves the whole community in a systematic way. How can higher education institutions contribute to instill vocational values and spirit of service in its academic community? The answer to this question cannot be described as simple, but as creative, innovative, consistent, and contextualized. For the University of Central America (Universidad Centroamericana, UCA) the concept of educating people for and with others can be achieved through Social Service Learning. This is an academic program articulated in the curriculum of all majors at UCA. It is carried out through the Service Learning Methodology. In Spanish, such methodology is called Aprendizaje Servicio (APS). The purpose of this program is to provide students with learning experiences by facilitating services to vulnerable groups of society.

The Social Service Learning program was created in 2011. Since then, we started a beautiful journey of exploration and learning. This booklet summarizes some of the most enriching experiences; furthermore, it makes evident the results and innovative and meaningful practices of the program. Twenty-one learning experiences were selected out of the 100 projects carried out over five quarters.

We are very proud of the results achieved to date. The solidarity and spirit of service of our students have become evident, the commitment and willingness of the professors have been extraordinary, and the opportunities given by the community partners to learn from their reality have allowed both learners and community partners to create meaningful experiences for learning and improvement.

This success deserves celebration and recognition. For this reason, a special day, “Social Service Learning Day,” was created to show the whole academic community what is done through the program and projects. The organizers of the event were students and professors who worked during one, two or three quarters with different community partners, such as small business workers, farmers, street children, people without access to drinking water, members of the Lupus Association of Nicaragua, and community leaders, among others, who opened their doors with much trust and generosity.

We are deeply thankful to every community partner for teaching our students the joy of serving others; and to our students for their dedication, creativity, perseverance, ingenuity, and responsibility. We thank each of the professors who accompanied us in these projects, for their commitment to the development of men and women for others.

These last two years confirmed that the decision we took in the 2011 was the right one. We have learned a lot even though we know there are many opportunities for improvement (methodology, organization, and training). It is part of the process and of learning. Nevertheless, we can say the Social Service Learning has generated meaningful experiences, committed action, and valuable outcomes for students, professors, and community partners. This represents a process of reflection that will surely impact the lives of many of our students and engage them in the construction of a better society for everyone.



Professor: María Luisa Miranda
Undergraduate Programs Director
Service Learning: a Reflective and Retrospective Look

The Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) of Nicaragua, as one of the 33 member universities of the Association of Universities entrusted to the Society of Jesus in Latin America (AUSJAL), is fostering the University Social Responsibility (RSU in Spanish) program on its campus, which AUSJAL promotes. In the context of its commitment to RSU, in 2011 UCA participated in a self-assessment process on its impact on four main functions of the university: education, research, social and environmental engagement, and administration.

Among the results of this self-assessment, it was found that there is a significant integration of RSU in the students' course of study at the curricular level. Some of the most important findings are: 60% of the undergraduate courses and professional practices included elements of Social Responsibility in their content; moreover, all majors implemented activities that required some type of experiential learning that would enable the students to have contact with reality and a direct intervention.

Regarding professors, the self-assessment found that 49.5% considered that the institution promoted Social Responsibility in diverse disciplines in a timely way, but without developing them systematically—that is, based on objectives, with clear, well-planned, organized and assessed guidelines for each field of study.

At an institutional level, it was found that prior to the self-assessment there was no model or information system that recorded the activities and experiences developed by students and teachers. This lack of recordkeeping prevented the university from having the necessary information to objectively assess the impact and effectiveness of the practices developed at the undergraduate and postgraduate level for each project, program or academic year.

Drawing from this input, UCA set out to ensure that: “the plan of strengthening and improvement for University Social Responsibility at UCA incorporates the Social Service Learning in the curricula of all the undergraduate programs. This must be done through the methodology Service Learning (Metodología Aprendizaje Servicio), which is logically consistent with the dimensions of the Ignatian Pedagogy.” (UCA, 2011, p. 1)

It was not easy to come to this decision and, before doing so, several reflective and formative processes took place. First, we had to find answers to two key considerations: How should we integrate Social Service Learning into the curriculum? And, what methodology could be used to make it possible?

To start, UCA explored how service learning was being implemented in other universities at the national level in Nicaragua. Although social service is required in medical careers and construction, we did not find adequate information about the definition and uniformity of

the curricular processes in the few universities that implemented it. We also explored the implementation of social service in foreign universities.

In this way, in 2011 we were able to become acquainted with the social service experiences of the Central American University Simeón Cañas in El Salvador, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico, including the diverse ways of implementation and follow up in both. That same year, the National University of Mexico was celebrating its 75th anniversary of Social Service Learning implementation. From these experiences, we clearly understood that Social Service Learning at UCA-Nicaragua had to be a coordinated effort by the heads of each of the fields of study and not centralized under the responsibility of a unique institutional office.

From the outset we were also clear about some aspects of Social Service that should *not* be required: 1) Service Learning could not be a requirement for graduation; 2) Service Learning could not be developed in one course only or worked out through different courses without connection; and 3) Service Learning had to be developed every year in the same courses of the majors (as opposed to course offerings that changed from year to year) as a way of improving the experience.

What was clear that it was vital to ensure that all students experienced Social Service. While figuring out the strategies to incorporate Service Learning in the curriculum, UCA was implementing its Formative Research Program at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. This initiative was intended to develop research competencies by means of diverse courses throughout the whole academic program or major field of study, although these were not initially designed with this objective in mind. The initial results of the implementation of this program generated great learning outcomes and much satisfaction, which led UCA to develop its Social Service Learning program the same way.

At this point, what was still pending was how to define the methodology to develop Service Learning. There were various initial efforts to design a methodological process that would slowly develop the application of the dimensions of Ignatian pedagogy. This would have focused only on a couple aspects of courses offered during the first two years of study, specifically goals relating to contextualization and reflection. Gradually, other dimensions of the pedagogy would be included as the student advanced through the requirements of his or her major, thereby encompassing other dimensions, such as context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation, all of which would be implemented in final course projects in the type of classes that come at the end of the major.

Additionally, we had the opportunity to participate in the International Conference of the Iberianamerican Network of University Volunteers for Social Inclusion (REDIVU, 2011), held in Mexico City with María Nieves Tapia as the keynote speaker. She shared the strengths of learning-service which was a methodology recently introduced in universities in the Southern Cone of Latin America, which connected disciplinary learning with attitudinal learning from social commitment. It was during this meeting that we considered the possibility of implementing learning-service as a methodology for Social Service, since we

found in this model a great deal of overlap with Ignatian pedagogy. Nevertheless, when we decided to take this decision, we recognized the need to train the faculty and administration in this methodology.

In 2012, UCA participated in the Fourth Gathering of University Social Responsibility held by the organization AUSJAL at the University of the Valley of Rio dos Sinos in Brazil. The purpose of this gathering was to share each university's approach to introducing Social Service in the undergraduate curriculum, which for UCA included its inspiration in Ignatian pedagogy. At the same meeting the University of Alberto Hurtado from Chile presented its success achieved through the implementation of a methodology of learning-service in some of its courses. From this moment, UCA began to develop strategies of collaboration between both sister universities to promote and exchange experiences in relation to Learning Service (APS).

Finally, in 2012, UCA started a collaborative project with Fairfield University and Georgetown University. The project, Jesuit Universities Humanitarian Action Network (JUHAN), is geared toward instilling in students humanistic values by providing innovative and reflexive methodologies concerning the great problems of the world. This project has enriched the APS methodology adopted by UCA. Moreover, the funds provided by the project have been invested in faculty training and implementation of successful and meaningful experiences of Social Service Learning.

It has been two years since the first experience of Social Service Learning at UCA. The lessons and learning experiences have been numerous and sufficient to provide feedback on the implementation of APS. The success with regard to student learning and with the professors and faculty responsible in each of the fields of study have exceeded our initial expectations, which you will surely read about in publications parallel to this one.

As an institution, we know that the integration of Service Learning in each major is one of the most meaningful academic efforts that contribute to the professional development of our students. Why is it meaningful? Because it enables the integration of theory and practice in real contexts. Such contexts represent social vulnerability in Nicaragua, a reality that must be made visible, reflected upon, analyzed and experienced by every university student. Thus, through academic activities geared to strengthen the student's professional profile, they are invited to be active subjects, agents of change and promoters of social development, with the goal of developing their commitment to social and environmental responsibility in everything that they do as professionals and as citizens, today and throughout all of their future endeavors.

Reference

Universidad Centroamericana. (2011). *Servicio Social en las Carreras de Pregrado*. Managua: UCA.



Professor: Gastón Ortega Herrera
Coordinator of UCA Social Service Learning
How is Service Learning implemented?

The Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) is the first university in Nicaragua to implement Service Learning in all its majors and it is also a pioneer in the development of the Service Learning methodology (APS) in curricula.

The satisfaction of contributing to the solution of problems that affect the most vulnerable is highly appreciated by students. They do not simply make up projects that resemble their future professional context; rather, they design a website to support social organizations that require this tool; instead of imagining the cost of products, they learn productive processes of small and medium-sized enterprises to provide accounting advice for the owners. In simple words, students develop cognitive capacities in real contexts. On the other hand, the research agenda of the university is strengthened with socioeconomic studies conducted by students that dignify work, such as garbage recycling carried out by “recyclers”-- people who live from the trash in the dumps.

Another example is related to the technological innovation created by our students to respond to the problems stated by the National Ministry of Education (MINED in Spanish). Our students are working to create didactic units for Math courses in multimedia version. Students are also responding to the needs of the United Nations World Population Fund (UNFPA) by creating digital programs that support education in terms of sexual and reproductive health. Presently they are carrying out communication campaigns to influence efforts to overcome bullying in schools, and also elaborating advertising campaigns to promote breast cancer prevention.

How did I start with this program? The first day at work, I introduced myself to the committee that prepared an awareness campaign to promote Social Service Learning. This committee, consisting of professors and students from various fields (among them graphic designers) had been working for weeks. The objectives of the committee were supplemented by other activities during the rest of the year. Among the most relevant actions developed in 2012, here are some that ultimately stand out:

1. Interviews to assess the simulation of Social Service Learning in 19 undergraduate programs.
2. Awareness campaign with different advertising pieces.
3. Meeting with potential allies of Social Service.
4. Launch of Social Service Learning with a concert (October 17).
5. Design of the promotional video for Social Service Learning.
6. Workshops to train 29 academic directors, 128 professors and 818 students from seven majors.

The efforts made by the coordination of the Social Service Learning office, the deans of

the schools and coordinators of departments created the optimal conditions for the implementation of Service Learning in 2013 through two approaches. On one hand, it was decided that all students registered in 2013 as freshman students would take service-learning courses as part of their curriculum (pensum or required coursework). Students registered before 2013, could participate in service learning courses as part of the socially responsible university pedagogic policy, but not as a requirement in their pensum.

It is also important to mention that UCA has formal documents that assert this institutional policy. The notion, strategies and methodology of the program are detailed in these documents, along with the use of the service learning methodology. As a matter of fact, the application of APS in a course is the particular way that UCA implements Social Service in all the current fields of study of the University (UCA, 2011). In this regard, a great achievement of 2012 was the fact that through the University's curriculum, all of the undergraduate programs contributed to this renewed "socially committed university." Each major defined the path to implement service learning in their program of study (from three to five courses of the pensum). This is what distinguishes service learning from other types of social work such as volunteering. Even though both develop actions of solidarity, the first one directly integrates such actions to the curriculum of every major (UCA, 2013). In contrast, volunteering promotes student solidarity by collaborating with social projects of the University Pastoral Center.

For this reason, the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the service learning courses, implemented with APS, are the key activities that have to be managed and coordinated each academic period (that is, quarterly). Therefore, the coordinator of every academic program convenes service-learning professors to be trained in monitoring and evaluation strategies and to identify the most suitable community partners for the projects.

In every project, professors who implement service learning meet with the coordination of the major once a month. They must guarantee that by the end of the academic period, they have all records, evidence and assessment of the service learning experiences from both the student and professor's point of view. It is worth mentioning that in some cases the assessment of the community partners is also included. However, it is still a challenge to get this feedback from the community partners on time.

One of the lessons learned from service learning (SL) experiences is that sometimes it is difficult to value the benefits of the SL courses and the contribution provided by our university students, especially if the projects are developed over the medium or long term or when the outcomes are intangible. Here are some examples: designing architectural plans to access a housing project, learning respectful ways of coexisting and working in teams, designing an electric distribution to prevent short-circuiting in houses, conducting research on how young people perceive violence, and, implementing strategies for corporate social responsibility in small businesses. In conclusion, the SL projects speak to a vision that favors getting direct results in the short term, by which means we learn to live together and desire to improve.

Another lesson is that the success of service learning depends on adequate planning and effective communication with the community partner. It must also motivate and challenge the students in line with their professional profiles, contextualize the real problems students will face in their professional field, and provide support for the professor. However, there are always unexpected challenges that have to be overcome. Besides these considerations, another factor that facilitates satisfactory experiences for all concerned is the development of courses that follow a continuous sequence in the pensum (on a quarterly basis).

In the articles written by the professors and teachers in this report, it is possible to see that some taboos were dispelled with the implementation of the program: “freshman students cannot do much;” “if the university does not provide all the resources, nothing will be possible;” “part-time teachers cannot be involved in this type of projects;” “it is difficult to find community partners for some courses;” “the implementation of Service Learning is easier in the School of Humanities, not in the Engineering School;” and the list goes on. In the end, we learned through experience that possibilities and realities exceed expectations.

For all the above-mentioned achievements, some acknowledgments are in order. The training sessions for the professors over the past academic quarters have been enriched and sponsored by the Jesuit Universities Humanitarian Action Network (JUHAN). This meaningful contribution is seen through strategies of reflection that are implemented in the classrooms. In this way, the SL course becomes a reflective experience that makes students more sensitive to the conditions of the vulnerable sectors of society. Additionally, the students are motivated to take action, according to their professional profile, as a means of improving their social environment.

On behalf of UCA, my deepest thanks goes out to the commitment of part-time professors (who implemented most of the SL courses) and the long hours they put into monitoring their students without any extra remuneration. Thanks to the officials of the academic programs, deans, the Undergraduate Program Director and the Head of the University for their support and involvement to bring this institutional project to life. And, a special thanks to the community partners who trusted in the contribution of students and professors of this university and to the students who are examples of the model of comprehensive education offered by UCA and sensitive to the needs of the most humble.

References

Universidad Centroamericana. (2011). *Marco conceptual del Servicio Social*. Managua: UCA.

Universidad Centroamericana, (2013). *Proyecto Curricular*. Managua: UCA.



Professor: Ernesto Javier Menocal Castillo
Major: Humanities and Philosophy
Coordinator of the Humanities and Philosophy Department

In Nicaragua, there are not enough professionals specialized in Philosophy to meet the teaching demands of this subject area, whether at the level of secondary or tertiary education. For this reason, by means of its pedagogic practices, the major in Humanities and Philosophy offered by the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) has committed to collaborate in the philosophical education of the student population.

By teaching subjects related to philosophy, the objective of this service is to support disadvantaged schools with limited resources and a student base from a socially vulnerable population. The middle and high school students assisted in this context are adolescents with learning disabilities, living in high-risk situations. We believe in building citizenship and educating people to be aware of the reality they will act upon, and to be committed and able to recognize this. This is the reason why the students of Humanities and Philosophy are working in disadvantaged schools in Managua.

An innovative aspect of this Service Learning (SL) course is the support accorded to the “community partners” or school authorities who are committed to: train young teachers with pedagogical refresher courses, facilitate didactic material and provide constant feedback on teachers’ educational performance and didactic strategies.

This SL course is developed in the following way: UCA students work as teachers/facilitators in high school seniors’ philosophy classes during the first semester of the year, according to the academic calendar of the ministry of Education (MINED). Our students work with senior high school groups three hours a week; teaching 63 hours in the 21 weeks from February to June as scheduled by MINED.

Service Learning is the pedagogical model implemented. It is an experiential educational approach based on reciprocal learning through the social interaction of teachers, students, and community partners with the objective of assisting a population of socially vulnerable students. The formative activities our UCA students are exposed to take place in the university through planning, assessment of outcomes, demonstration of class lessons, techniques to deliver a presentation, etc.

Reflecting on the teaching experience is vital to achieve the objectives set by SL methodology: students carry this out in oral and written exercises, and by keeping a diary where they record their reflections both with respect to the classroom and their efforts as a teacher.

The students carry out their student teaching in five schools, working with an average of 10 groups per semester. Each class group has approximately 30 students. The service learning program benefits 300 students.

One of the main outcomes of this experience is the fact that UCA is seen as a responsible institution that educates competent and ethical professionals. The philosophy class is delivered with creativity, promoting a good relationship with the authorities and educational institutions. In turn, the SL experience offers a moment of privilege to reflect on the work of professionals.

Some difficulties also arise in implementing the SL courses: the remoteness and vulnerability of schools (theft and crime), and sometimes our students have to pay for their own transportation to the schools.

The service learning project wraps up with a document that is handed over to the school, in which the students present systematically the methodologies and didactic materials used in the Philosophy class.

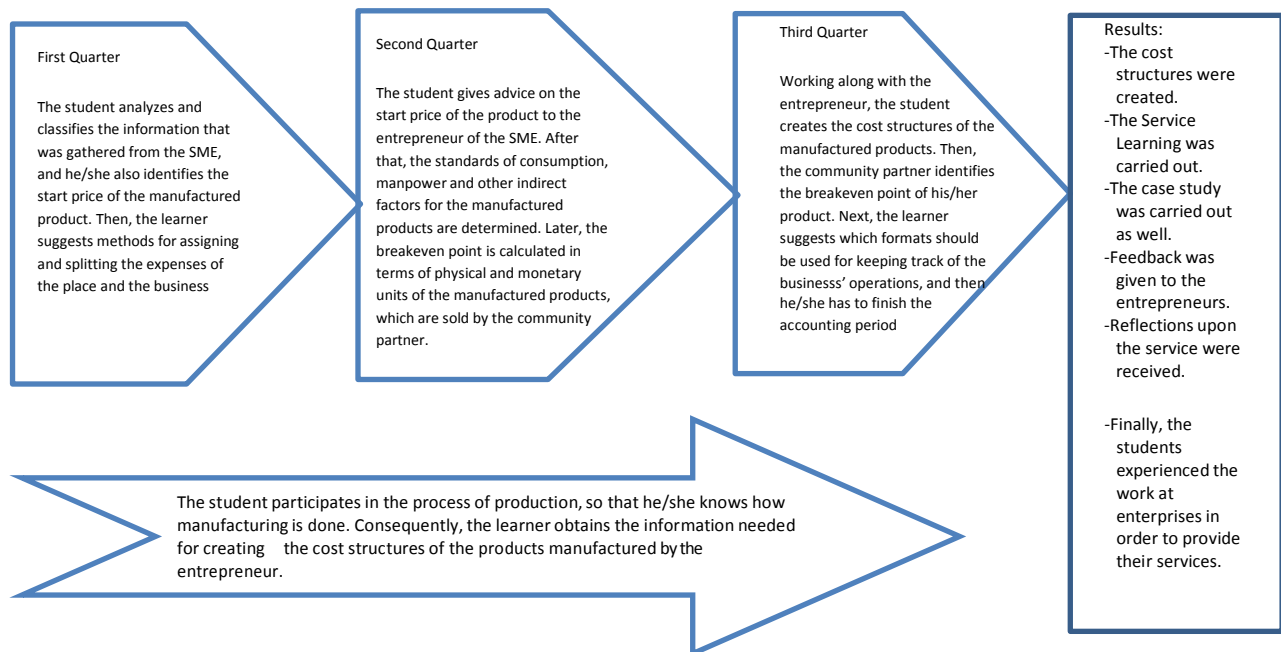


Professor: Ruth del Socorro Orozco Montoya
Majors: Finance and Public Accounting & Audit
Responsible for the implementation of Service Learning
Methodology in the Accounting and Finance department

For majors in Finance and Public Accounting and Audit, Service Learning (SL) was first conceived as a continuation of a research experience requirement which had been offered in previous years through courses on Research Techniques and Cost Accounting I (Cost System I for Finance). In these courses, the professors involved agreed to investigate the reality that small and medium-sized (SMEs) firms encounter in Nicaragua.

In this way, the support that students in the second year of their studies could provide was focused on the development of costs structures of products that SMEs manufacture. This is how the relationship began among students, the university and the owners of the SMEs, especially the bakery sector. As a result of this process, some projects from the Research Techniques course were selected for presentation at the Young Researchers Conference promoted by *Universidad Centroamericana*.

Value Chain of the Service Learning Model for Public Accounting and Audit; Finance Majors



In 2013, the Accounting and Finance Department decided to include a set of subjects from the curricula in order to comply with the Service Learning policy, and as a consequence, to complement the subject matter on costs with techniques of investigation. In this way, the

methodological and technical aspects would be linked up. This in turn enabled our future accountants and financiers to implement Service Learning throughout the methodology of Service Learning (APS). From this point forward, for both majors the structure of the Service Learning is based on three phases.

| I quarter year Phase I (Courses) | II quarter year Phase II (Courses) | III quarter year Phase III (Courses) |
|---|---|---|
| Cost Accounting I/Cost System I | Cost Accounting II/ Cost System II and III | Cost Laboratory |
| Research Techniques | | |

For the development of the strategy, many project teams (three or four members) traveled to different neighborhoods in Managua, or in other cases to their hometowns (Carazo, Masaya, Granada, among others). SMEs are basically focused on manufacturing such as bakeries, joineries, textiles, the processing of blocks-metal, mechanics and others were included in the service learning projects. 221 learners from both majors (151 from Accounting, 70 from Finance) were formed and split into six groups, with four professors, to support 59 SMEs of different types of manufacturing.

In order to meet the selection requirement to become a community partner, the SME could not already have an accountant. Once an agreement was reached, the students spent 8 hours a week (throughout the year), becoming deeply involved in the manufacturing process of the small business, gathering information and writing their report for the course, and sharing their experience with the owner of the SME.

Throughout 2013, young students of each of the groups of sophomores shared their different life experiences with the community partners. Hence the theme that social service has in these two majors is: “learning the job...to offer a service.”

From Accounting and Finances, this caring support consists in learning the manufacturing process of the SMEs, so that the cost structures of the products can be established. Remarkably, the lack of knowledge of the real cost of a product is one of the main issues. The students share the professional knowledge that they have gained at this point in their studies, and learn to use it in real contexts, by means of voluntary, free, service. At the same time, this experience instills in the student new learning to grow as a person and to strengthen his or her professional development.

In this way, the Accounting and Finance Department was able to implement Service Learning, an achievement made possible by the endeavors of the professors, students and the university authorities who oversee the majors. We succeeded in raising the students’ as well as the professors’ awareness of the needs that the SMEs have in the area of accounting.

Our goal is to help the SMEs to establish a minimal control over their operations, identifying the real costs of their products. One fundamental outcome is better management of their activities, which should enable them to grow in economic terms and therefore, opt for financing and ultimately, contribute to society through taxes and the creation of new employment. Presently, the third phase of Service Learning is scheduled to conclude in 2014, by which time the second generation of students will have carried out this learning-serving experience.



Professor: Ana Maria Gutiérrez Aguirre
Major: Social Work and Development Management
Course: Workshop on Social Work Intervention I, II and III
Community Partner: La Esperanza Neighborhood

It is almost 1:30 pm on a Saturday afternoon at UCA and it is time for the class to go on a “field trip” to “the neighborhood.” Everybody rushes to eat or grab food, and to arrive on time in the parking lot of the School of Humanities and Communication so as not to be late for our meeting. And so starts our experience to serve and the opportunity to apply the theoretical and methodological competencies of our field, Social Work and Development Management.

According to UCA Educational Project (2008), “Service Learning is a pedagogical approach oriented to social responsibility. It seeks to educate professionals, combining academic excellence with an ethical vision of service to others.” (p. 27)

In the context of Social Service at UCA, and at the request of a group of leaders of Ecclesial Communities (CEB in Spanish) and community members and inhabitants of La Esperanza neighborhood in Managua’s Third District, we started a process of organizational strengthening for managing programs and projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the inhabitants. The problems faced by this neighborhood are similar to so many others in Managua: poverty, insecurity, drug dealing, poor road conditions and the lack of quality health service, education, and recreational spaces.

The 38 Saturdays invested on collaborative work with the community allowed students and community members to reflect and actively respond to social needs, considering historic, sociopolitical, economic and cultural elements. The project aimed at defining and implementing strategies to start a social intervention process in which the students were the protagonists, and to develop leadership skills and strengthen the community organization. At the end, a democratic and broad participatory process was generated to create a Strategic Plan and projects to benefit the community.

In May 2014, following three academic quarters of service learning, UCA students finished the project in La Esperanza neighborhood. The purpose of the experience was achieved: to bring theoretical knowledge to bear on practice and provide quality service for the community. We can recall many anecdotes, learning outcomes, objective and subjective elements, difficulties and achievements that made this work experience pleasant and a source of pride for all of the participants.

Some Achievements:

1. Effective coordination and communication between students and community partners to reach the shared goals of the project.

2. Development of leadership skills and community organization through training processes and new social practices.
3. Application of theoretical and methodological knowledge to collectively create a strategic plan and develop four community projects.
4. Learning attitudes such as attentive listening, dialogue and conflict resolution to promote a culture of peace.
5. Implementation of different strategies and techniques: visiting houses, meetings, workshops, interviews and motivational talks in order to promote participation and community organization.
6. Social recognition of the group of students who participated in the process.

Some Challenges:

1. Having enough time to develop the practice - the context demands more time to prepare than possible.
2. Deepening and managing adequate theoretical and methodological elements to support the community process.
3. Tying courses such as Analysis of Reality and Community Intervention to community processes similar to Workshops I, II and III.
4. Keeping constant communication and organization with the community partners to work effectively.
5. Creating a multidisciplinary project that involves different majors collaborating with the same community.
6. The work overload of the community leaders limits effective organizational processes such as evaluation and systematic planning. To overcome this, new mechanisms to develop the project have to be created.

At the end, students and community partners found in UCA's service learning a meaningful learning experience: a change of attitude towards life and studies, greater appreciation of things and people, willingness to be open to new learning experiences, proper conflict management skills, and the important professional practice to serve the society.

Reference:

Universidad Centroamericana. (2008). *Proyecto Educativo*. Managua: UCA.



Professor: María Elena Barreda
Major: Humanities and Philosophy
Course: Teaching Practice I and II
Community partner: Fe y Alegría Schools

Teaching Practice I and II are subjects placed in the next to last and final quarter of the Humanities and Philosophy Major. According to the prerequisites, students need to be in their fourth year of study.

The general objectives of the subject matter are to:

- a) Support the work of the Society of Jesus (Educational Centers of “Fe y Alegría”) and other community partners through teaching humanistic subjects (Philosophy) to a socially vulnerable student population.
- b) Assess the context in which students develop their learning process in order to make appropriate pedagogical decisions.
- c) Put into practice some international standards required for teaching assistants.

Based on these objectives, the service learning course was carried out by students of this major to work as philosophy teachers in high school classes. The instruction, which is offered twice a week, is geared toward students in the fifth year of their Baccalaureate.

Besides attending their classes at the university, students comply with the pedagogical obligations that community partners (high schools, institutes) assign, such as semester planning, teaching units and class planning. These students not only have control over attendance and grades, but they also have to prepare exams and evaluative reports, among other responsibilities.

In order to reflect on their teaching and find ways of improving it, both at the academic and personal level of understanding, students keep an anecdotal dairy where they can record details of the classes they teach. This information has many purposes: first of all, students can compare what they plan and how they carry out such plan; second, they can focus on their performance as facilitators and teachers; and third, they can reflect on how this experience can be applied in their own philosophy of life and how this is manifested in actions with students.

According to the evaluations of the community partners, students who are now graduates of Humanities and Philosophy and also worked as philosophy teachers in different centers carried out excellent work as facilitators of reflection and learning. In fact, schools were able to confirm the quality of the service offered through class observations. It should be mentioned in spite of the fact that the school and university calendars are not synchronized, the students complied with all the academic obligations demanded by the social service and their major, while also completing their thesis for graduation.

During their engagement with service learning, the students showed a great deal of motivation in class planning, use of new learning methodologies, preparation of their own materials, etc. These outcomes can be seen in the report, “Sharing Experiences” in which they summarize their involvement. Moreover, in this document you can find all the Teacher-Recreation activities developed from the beginning to the end of the course.

As a teacher, I feel satisfied and grateful because of the experience shared with the students. My greatest satisfaction was confirming that the execution of this project of Social Service assured the students learning about knowledge (to know), about social and professional skills (know how to do) and attitudes (know how to be).

Students not only put into practice their knowledge, they also addressed a genuine need of the school system and high schools located in marginal areas, that generally lack teachers certified in Philosophy, as well as the pedagogic strategies appropriate for youth doing their Baccalaureate.

Service learning also promotes the encounter between community and the university. We reinforce our roles as teachers when we serve as facilitators for reflection and learning, and especially when we help our students embrace a signature of solidarity that says, “YOU ARE THE WORLD, CHANGE IT.”



Professor: Danilo Norori
Major: Social Work and Development Management
Community Partner: Children and Adolescent
Workers (NATRAS in Spanish)

During the first and second quarters of the 2013, senior students of the Social Work and Development Management program implemented the Service Learning Methodology (APS) in the courses on Methodology of Intervention with the Family I and II that correspond to the plan of study of students in the fifth year of the Social Work and Development Management Licentiate.

As a new experience being implemented for the first time at UCA, we enthusiastically took on the challenge to get the best results. What follows is a description of our experience.

The Social Work and Development Management major includes in its study plan many pre-professional activities directly related to communities, families and social institutions. For this reason, implementing Service Learning (SL) was natural. Even though we did not have much time to incorporate SL propositions in which we were trained, we were able to overcome the problem and incorporate the information at the beginning of the second academic quarter.

At the time, there was a request from a community partner, NATRAS, part of the Ecclesial Communities (CEB in Spanish). One of the general objectives of this institution is to provide children and adolescent workers with a space where they are treated as individuals. These children receive comprehensive and preventive education, taking into account their socioeconomic context.

The main concern of our community partner was the lack of interest on the part of their families to be involved in the project. Hence, we believed that the courses on Methodology of Intervention with Families I and II were relevant to contributing to the solution of the problem. Our objectives were: 1) to create an assessment of the family of each child; and 2) to create a proposed intervention (particular and general). In addition, the objective for the SL course was to implement strategies for the intervention with families which requires cognitive competencies from students to bring benefits to the community partners and families. At that time, we thought that these courses would reinforce the experiential, ethical, and professional aspects of their study plan.

During the first stage of the project, the leaders of NATRAS visited UCA to explain their program and objectives. I also visited their office to see firsthand the reality in which our students were going to be involved. This insight helped me plan the experience in the best possible way.

Later, we had to schedule meetings with the families and students on Saturday afternoons. It was difficult to meet with families because of their jobs which are generally related to informal business. Some conditions were established to overcome this difficulty: UCA guaranteed the attendance of students, UCA provided the transport, and NATRAS leaders invited the families personally during the week. We organized a fun activity for families to visit the university. Despite the efforts, the number of attendees never fulfilled expectations.

After some time, we changed the strategy. Instead of waiting for the families to come to the meeting places, we visited their homes on Saturdays, Sundays, and during weekdays. As a consequence, we had to consider three variables: family, educator and students. This was an opportunity that mirrored real life situations that occurred when working intervention processes with family.

At the end of the third quarter 2013, we had the profile of each family and a proposal of intervention that allowed our community partner to continue with their work.

In class, each student or group of students shared the results of their work; and received feedback before they delivered their final report. We had frequent evaluation meetings with families, who were thankful for the effort, dedication, trust and ethic of UCA students. A closing ceremony with the community partners was organized to deliver the study, which was called: "Family Assessment."

All the participants of the project regarded this experience as positive. Our students applied their knowledge to create the genogram of each family, the family relationship maps, and the ecomaps, among other methodological instruments. In the end, our community partners received valuable material to continue working on their intervention strategy with families of the children and adolescents of the project.

We learned to deal with unexpected events and to be more ethical and mature when working with sensitive family issues. We earned the families' trust--they opened their doors and hearts for us. We can say that the community and university are closer now. This experience allowed us to develop critical thinking. As a facilitator, it was a challenge that generated new knowledge, attitudes and professional interaction.

For future experiences, we have to improve the planning of the SL course, establish realistic goals, and reinforce communication, monitoring and evaluation, so that the experience becomes a meaningful lesson for all the participants of the SL course.



Professor: Eduardo Soza González
Major: Business Administration
Course: Marketing research
Community partner: World Vision and
American Nicaraguan Chamber of Commerce

The Service Learning methodology (SLM) was implemented in the course of Marketing Research in the Business Administration major. It took place in the II and III quarters of the 2014 academic year.

The SL experience started in the second quarter. The marketing research process was a great opportunity to get involved with the actual reality of running a business, especially the decision-making process. The results were part of the marketing design that contributed to the development of the business institutions involved in the project.

The SL objective of the course was: “to provide support in the implementation of marketing studies, marketing research and marketing plans for small and medium-sized businesses. These enterprises can provide productive or service activities to facilitate tools that improve individual and collective businesses by developing business competencies.”

The community partners were contacted through institutions that support business growth and development. The chart below summarizes the community partners involved in the SL experience:

| Community Partner | Enterprise | Location | Institution |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Ana Mora | Fotografía Génesis | San Francisco, Nindirí | |
| Elizabeth López | Hamaces Emily | Los Manguitos, Masaya | Visión Mundial (World Vision) |
| Trinidad Flores | Artesanía en Tuza | El portillo, Masaya | |
| Mario Arana | Agua Ardiente Mombacho | Ciudad de Masaya | American Chamber of Commerce Nicaraguan Chamber of Commerce |

We visited the community partners approximately five times, each time with a particular objective in mind:

- Identifying information needs and future plans for the business;
- Raising awareness of the importance of conducting marketing research; and
- Presenting the research proposals.

In order to reach the objectives, UCA supported the students with technological equipment (computers, cameras, tape recorders and Internet) and other expenses such as photocopies, printing, and transport to the enterprises and other field trips. It is worth mentioning that this project was also financially supported by World Vision and some business people.

This experience was enriching for students and the instructor. Important values were reinforced: helping others (by sharing our knowledge with the community partners), responsibility, mutual support, fellowship, tolerance and perseverance. All of these were derived from negative and positive experiences, commitment of the community partners, hard work, and the enthusiasm of the students who were committed to support a socially vulnerable economic sector.

The implementation of the SL methodology contributed to our personal growth by relating professional knowledge to the reality. When we experience feelings of enthusiasm and concern for other people's needs, we can be sure we have achieved spiritual and intellectual development.



Professor: Graciela Torres Castillo
Major: English Teaching as a Foreign Language
Course: English for Specific Purpose IV
Community Partners: Talleres de Artesanía (Craft Workshops)

“I have a surprise for you! As the final project for the course, we are going to apply the Service Learning methodology.” These were the words I used when I presented the guidelines for the final project of the course to my fifth level English students majoring in Social Communication. I remember their expressions very well; they did not know what I was talking about. I could understand their feelings because the journey we were going to start was totally unknown.

In this course, students continue developing written and oral competencies in English by using task-based activities related to their future professional field. Bearing this in mind, an objective for service learning was also set: creating a video or promotional brochure in English, in which all the general information, products and services offered by a small enterprise or a nongovernmental institution were outlined.

To start this learning experience, a small group of students, the coordinator of UCA’s Social Service Office and I visited San Juan de Oriente, in search of community partners. The next visit was aimed at gathering information about the reality of the community partners, their needs and how they would use the product designed by my students.

The same week, I met with Chureca recyclers. They expressed their need for a video to present information about their organization in English, because they are financially supported and also trained by foreign institutions.

As a result, the community partners for this service-learning course were three small enterprises in San Juan de Oriente and one nongovernmental institution from Managua. The three small enterprises were craft workshops: El Maestro, La Urraca and Pastora, all of them recognized for their high quality of national craft. The other community partner was REDNICA, a network of Nicaraguan enterprising recyclers that works with 10,500 recyclers from different garbage dumps.

To get this project done, my 21 students had to complete different tasks during their second academic year in 2013. They visited the community partners four times. The first, as mentioned earlier, provided students with some relevant information about the people and places that would appear in the video and brochure. During the next visits, students and community partners worked collaboratively and responsibly using a signed agreement as their guide.

The students used cameras, tape recorders, and computers with specific software programs to design the brochure and edit videos, including the sound.. It is worth mentioning that none of the students had such equipment and resources; however, the Direction of the Social Communication Department unconditionally supported the group and provided the required conditions and resources for the project.

After four months of hard work, we reached the end of the project's road: students were tired, but really satisfied. In August, my students presented their outcomes in a modest ceremony; the English material was handed over to the community partners and has been used since that time as an effective and attractive way to disseminate their work.

As every trip reaches its end, what is left for me to do is look back and observe the achievements reached. At the end of the course, besides showing their command of the subject matter, my students developed interpersonal skills, as well as problem solving and teamwork skills. The most important achievement was the development of more socially responsible and committed students, who are now aware of the national reality. Last but not least, a greater sense of belonging and identification to the university vision and mission was achieved.

My trip is over, but I feel satisfied and glad to have gotten more out of the journey than expected. This motivates me to repeat the experiences again.



Professor: Héctor Delgado
Major: Architecture
Course: Popular Housing Module
Community partners: HABITAR Y
FUNDESONIC

The module Popular Housing (PHM) is a set of courses for senior students in the Architecture major. The purpose of it is to introduce students to the housing issues faced currently by vulnerable or poor groups.

The Popular Housing module consists of topics relating to data analysis, a spatial housing workshop and technological alternatives. While studying this module, students develop their professional practice, emphasizing the solution of needs. This housing project is conceived from a systematic approach that enables the analysis of the characteristics of areas of the city in relation to time and space. In addition, this course develops skills for participatory design involving the community; it also helps student make use of technological alternatives to support the notion of urban design, optimizing the function, improvement and protection of the urban space.

In April 2014, the cities of Mateare, León, Managua, La Paz Centro and Nagarote, in the western part of Nicaragua, were affected by earthquakes of a magnitude 6.6 and 6.2 (Richter Scale), along with dozens of aftershocks. The structural damage of different facilities was serious, and it left the country on edge during Holy Week and Easter Week. .

In this context, the students in the Popular Housing module (2014) carried out service learning to determine the housing situation of families after the earthquakes. The families assisted were chosen by means of a social housing diagnostic study elaborated by HOLCIM Nicaragua in Nagarote (2012). Such a housing diagnosis, called Casa Fácil, helped to identify the people who urgently needed support to rebuild their houses and to access the subsidy provided by the Institute of Urban and Rural Housing (Instituto de la Vivienda Urbana y Rural, INVUR). These were the goals that animated the investigation, on behalf of the Foundation for Development of Nicaragua (FUNDESONIC) and the Center of Studies and Support of Housing (HABITAR).

After the earthquake, the diagnostic information on housing was not updated and HABITAR and FUNDESONIC needed current information on the housing situation and of the families that had been identified in 2012, who had received a folder of plans for the improvement of their dwellings.

Hence, the classes were carefully planned to assure that the students would have a quality service learning experience and be closely related to the families of Nagarote. UCA supported the project by providing transportation for the students as needed; the institutional community partners contributed significantly to the project by training our students, providing support during the field trips, and facilitating information such as the data base and location plans of the families identified.

The students and teachers undertook three field visits. The first time, we were guided by technicians of FUNDESONIC, who kindly explained to the senior Architecture students the procedure to find out the actual housing situation and also how to establish the first contact with the families assisted.

The second visit aimed at carrying out the physical survey of property in all the houses identified. The families set specific dates and schedules to carry out the activities regarding the participatory design of their homes. During the last visit, the service learning students delivered the proposals for gradually rebuilding the families' houses. Students and professors from the University of Amberes, who wanted to learn from our service learning experience, participated in the last activity.

At the end of the quarter, we organized an academic presentation of the outcomes. The students delivered the updated study in a digital format, which indicated the number of collapsed houses and the plans of the current housing situation of the 64 families. Technicians of HABITAR participated as guest evaluators.

The service learning experience was successful because students were highly committed; this can be seen in the outcomes, the proposals for housing improvement and the expenses covered by the students themselves when additional field trips were required. A quality service was provided to the community partners, social entities (HABITAR, FUNDESONIC), private institution (HOLCIM), and public organization (INVUR) that work on the solution and improvement of housing for vulnerable sectors (like Nagarote in this case).

It is important to mention that there were some drawbacks in the process. For instance, when some families realized the outcome was going to be a folder with housing plans for improvement, they decided not to continue providing information to the students. For future experiences, the Popular Habitat module will be oriented to achieve outcomes that have a direct, positive impact on families' living conditions.



Professor: Indiana Garcia
Major: Environmental Quality Engineering
Course: Drinking water treatment and wastewater treatment
Community Partners: San Juan de la plywood and Villa Japon

Doing service learning is a students' and professors' duty in order to return to society what we receive during the learning process. The School of Science, Technology, and Environment with the head of the Environmental Quality Engineering Major (ICA) decided to include service learning experiences in the courses on drinking water treatment and wastewater treatment, which are offered in the fourth year of the major, since water and sanitation are main problems in rural communities.

After having taken the service learning methodology course (APS) in a week, we looked for community partners through the drinking water and sanitation committees (CAPS). We found out that San Juan de la Plywood and Villa Japón are communities that are really close to Managua and have plenty of water and sanitation problems.

The first time we visited both communities, we were able to register the obstacles present to provide quality water, which certainly affects all the families' health. Moreover, a lack of wastewater treatment and garbage treatment was identified.

The main objective of the service learning consisted in elaborating two technical-economic proposals for a drinking water system in San Juan de la Plywood and Villa Japón in order to get economic support from companies and non-governmental organizations and implement this system to benefit these communities. The activities carried out to achieve the service-learning objectives were:

- Interviews with the CAPS, people, and workers from local government institutions such as the mayor's office and the Ministry of Health (MINSA)
- Preparation of the diagnostic report about the drinking water and sanitation situations in both communities.
- Monitoring the quality of water in the wells during the dry season and the rainy season to determine the quality of water people use.
- Designing and applying surveys to learn people's opinions about the water, sanitation, and illnesses of hydric origin.
- Exploring alternatives to solve the lack of water and sanitation in San Juan de la Plywood and Villa Japón communities.
- Lectures focused on environmental issues to raise awareness about environmental problems and how to deal with them.

- Formulation of economic aspects of the project in order to prepare the complete technical-economic report to carry out improvements in the water system and sanitation in both communities.
- Presentation of the report to each community.
- Providing NGOs and possible supporters with the report after having validated it with both communities.

By carrying out this project of service learning, 178 families (700 people) will benefit in the San Juan de la Plywood community and 130 families (520 people) in the Villa Japón community. They will have drinking water that will help to improve their quality of life and reduce their risks to contract illnesses caused by the lack of a safe drinking water system.

The project lasted one year since the monitoring of the water quality had to be carried out in both seasons. We visited these communities six times and 14 ICA students participated.

To sum up, the service learning project allowed students to put their knowledge into practice to improve the environmental situation in these communities. One lesson learned in this experience was that if each of us helped to solve problems, the quality of life of many people would improve. The lack of interest of some students is one of the constraints. Therefore, we should promote service learning so that it can be carried out professionally.



Professor: Jean Carlos Gutierrez
Major: Civil Engineering
Subject Course: Costs and Budget
Community Partners: National Psychiatrist Hospital

In the second academic quarter of 2014, the course on Cost and Budget, offered to the juniors in the civil engineering major, which is part of the School of Science, Technology, and Environment (FCTyA), was selected to carry out one SL project.

In this course, students learn the necessary tools to develop a budget for a project. Taking into account the needs of the National Psychiatrist Hospital, we decided to work together on construction cost estimates to remodel the hospital and improve its infrastructure.

The proposed renovations focused on these spaces: “Women’s Pavilion,” “Men’s Pavilion,” “The Consulting Room,” “The Emergency Room,” and “The Cafeteria and Dining Room.” We decided to visit the hospital so that students could have a more detailed view of the work they would assume. This visit was mostly carried out by senior Civil Engineering students who were in charge of designing the construction plans to be used to estimate the time and cost of the work.

The community partner made sure we had access to the facilities, while ensuring we respected hospital rules when accessing places where they had patients. One of the recommendations was to avoid taking pictures to respect the patients. After the visit, we had meetings with the students who were in charge of the designs in order to establish the range of the work and the budget. These activities were carried out inside and outside the classroom during the whole academic quarter.

We also checked the prices of the equipment, materials, and tools needed to remodel the buildings and took into account the money needed to pay the workers and other products. The idea was to have a budget that met our needs and work in the same way civil engineering professionals do when they have similar projects like this one. This was extremely important because this experience showed students the things they will be exposed to when they graduate from our university. Furthermore, this taught them that it is important to help people and be committed to changing reality to benefit society.

First of all, we found out that there were inconsistencies in the designs of the buildings. Therefore, we suggested alternatives to improve the designs and make the information as clear as possible. The students put into practice what they learned in the classroom and that helped to tie the university and the society together. Moreover, this experience helped students to see themselves as human beings and develop their solidarity, commitment, and social work while also reflecting critically and constructively on the project.

Here are some students’ reflections:

The aptitude of our teamwork to learn new ideas, techniques, and share experiences among our classmates who had different experiences but always supported us was absolutely meaningful to achieve our objectives and the goals of the project. Definitely, our classmates somehow contributed to our project by expressing their opinions and giving us positive feedback when we carried out our activity plan. We always focused on the main objective, which was the wellbeing of the society (students, 2014).

It is relevant to mention that the actions we took in the project were always carried out ethically and professionally, which are part of our major and are present in the main objective of this project (students, 2014).



Professor: Juanita Lopez Major:
Business Administration Subject
Course: Human Resources
Community Partners: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

The tendency and responsibility to create systems of quality management to optimize processes in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) requires qualified workers committed to the vision and mission of their companies. Consequently, the junior students of the Business Administration Major, which is part of the School of Economics and Business (FCEE), decided that the service learning methodology (APS) was relevant to the course on human resources, and could be realized through human resource consulting. We took into account that many SMEs do not have an office to manage this area.

The enterprises that benefited from the consulting were La Casa del Regalo owned by Mr. Leonel Antonio Torres, Artesanías Tellez owned by Mr. Ivan Tellez, Meublería Omayra owned by Mrs. Julia Erenia Ortiz, Ministerio Juvenil Habana (MJH) represented by Mr. Bismarck Gonzalez Lopez, Importaciones Arguello owned by Mrs. Alejandra Arguello, and Creaciones Acuna owned by Mr. Norlan Acuna.

The learning objective in this project was to raise awareness among the students about the importance of the community service and the value of solidarity. In addition, it focused on learning in depth topics related to human resource systems for the SMEs.

The consulting was carried out in two stages. The first stage consisted of carrying out a small study to identify opportunities for improvement and to come to a consensus with the SME owners about their priorities. In the second stage, the objective was to carry out the consulting on some human resources issues. Before initiating the consulting, we signed an agreement that served as a guide to develop the timeframe of the activities of each group and thereby adhere to the commitments agreed to under different parts of the APS project. The consulting was carried out at the SME establishments. The students visited two or three times to interview people, observe the processes, check documents, and in some instances, facilitate workshops. The professor was constantly with the students during these visits. Furthermore, she used phone calls and emails to check students' visits and the activity schedule.

Some of the resources used in this consulting were: surveys designed in the classrooms, the book of human resources written by Idalberto Chiavenato, samples of evaluation sheets, presentations of recruitment models, laptops, cameras, financial resources for transportation, etc.

The activities were oriented to the following aspects: mission and vision statement, organizational chart designs, definition of the recruitment process and selection of personnel, job description and analysis, customer service workshops, performance evaluation sheets, updating the job manual, and workshops focused on the philosophy of the organization. At the end, the students wrote a report about the products requested by the small businesses, which was given to the community partners during a special event in which officials of the School of Economics and Business (FCEE) and the Office of Service Learning participated.

The students considered this project a great experience and they valued the importance of community service, solidarity, and the development of managing skills, teamwork, responsibility, and relationships because they were able to work together and achieve their objectives. The community partners acknowledged students' contributions to their businesses, which were really relevant for their organization and professionalization.

As a professor, I believe that the service learning methodology (SLM) is a teaching-learning strategy, which benefits meaningful learning for the students and contributes to the mission of having socially responsible professionals. However, it is important to be aware of the challenges encountered in this methodology such as different personalities among the students, lack of students' willingness to use a methodology that makes them work more, the search for community partners, lack of time of the partners to talk to the students, and the extra efforts made by the professor because he/she has to teach, monitor students' visits, and monitor student products for the businesses.



Professor: Julio Membreño
Major: Graphic Design
Course: Editorial Design
**Community Partners: Nicaraguan Association of Systemic
Lupus Erythematosus (ASONILE)**

During the first academic quarter of 2013, I decided to implement the service learning methodology (SLM) in the Graphic Design Major. I did not know anything about this methodology and I didn't expect that the SLM was going to change the way I conceived teaching and my life itself. Since the very beginning, I observed that everything was well organized. Professors using this methodology came together in a meeting organized by Professor Gaston Ortega, who is the Social Service Coordinator at UCA. He shared basic information about social service and service learning methodology.

As a professor, I implemented the SLM in the subject of editorial design. It is a branch of design about which I am passionate, having worked in this field for many years of my professional life and having taught this subject for almost 20 years at the university. Even though I had complete command of the topics in this course, my problem was to identify a community partner. When I talked about this problem for implementing SLM, Professor Dick Sanchez mentioned the Nicaraguan Association of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (ASONILE), an organization that did not have resources to pay for professional design. As a result, we did not charge for the designs.

Everything took off from there. I got in contact with ASOLINE treasurer, Bertha Lezama, and we immediately got along. I had a meeting with her and the SLM coordinator, Gaston Ortega. The objective was to get to know each other and clarify doubts about SLM as a part of social service included in the editorial design subject that our students were taking. We had to check the details for the editorial project, which had the following objectives: help students acquire professional skills and help ASOLINE which fights against this illness, to help people have a better quality of life.

The project consisted of designing a guide for the lupus patient and infographics. The content of the guide had three main objectives: to inform people about ASOLINE activities; help patients who suffer from this illness; and develop the guide as a template for funding to have the resources to reproduce it. We planned to do this by selling advertising spots on the brochure to the labs that produce or distribute the medicine that the patients and association have to buy regularly.

On the other hand, the infographics is a kind of brochure. This is a new branch in editorial design and is useful for presenting complicated information graphically. It was designed to help ASOLINE have brochures with useful information so that they can inform society about what lupus is and its effects, what things patients should do, and where they should go for help. These brochures have been really useful and they have been presented at the events and campaigns organized by the association to inform or fundraise. ASOLINE gave us the information we needed to include in the project, and the students carried out background

research so they could go into detail about the topic and the work that ASOLINE and other organizations are doing to help lupus patients.

Up to this point, this was a simple project and everything was going smooth. Everything changed when I decided to invite ASOLINE members to come to UCA so that they could personally talk to professors and students about their experiences with this illness and how it had changed their life, and describe the situation patients face in Nicaragua, the things the association was doing to help, the assistance they receive from the government, and what we can do to help.

Mr. Ariel Flores, ASOLINE member, was chosen to give us the lecture. His presentation and attitude in fighting this disease changed our lives and the way we have to face problems! In simple words and being honest, he told us about his life since he became ill. Elsa Rojas, a student, told me that it was transforming to have a person right in front of you who has this illness and tells you how this affects his/her life. This student was motivated to be part of a forum about lupus, which was organized by ASOLINE on May 10, World Lupus Day. In this testimony, we learned that lupus is called the illness of 1,000 faces because its symptoms are similar to other illnesses. Hence, it is very hard to diagnose. Mr. Flores said that when he was diagnosed with lupus, he realized he had a serious illness that was very aggressive (lupus comes from the Spanish word “lobo”). Besides, he realized that if he did not take care of his health, he would die in a few years because you normally have five years of life expectancy.

He had to go to the doctor many times and missed days of work. This affected his job performance. Eventually, he decided to quit his job. This raises the question: why did he quit his job if, since he had a formal job, he could have received assistance from Social Service? The answer is that the INSS does not help people with this illness. They receive only painkillers and inappropriate and very expensive medicine. For this reason, he got involved in ASOLINE and now he is one of its best activists.

Another piece of information he shared was that of every ten lupus patients, nine are women. This is really serious because 34 percent of Nicaraguan homes have a woman-led household. If this woman cannot work because of this illness, the consequences are dire. Undoubtedly, we had to react to this testimony. The impact gave us a strong desire to collaborate and produce a quality product. Many of them shared with me that Mr. Ariel’s testimony had changed their life—they had no idea the consequences of lupus in the life of the persons affected. Our community partner was extremely satisfied with the result of the designs and has used them in different events that they have organized. We hope that our collaboration with ASOLINE continues in the future, so that all of us grow as people and bring our knowledge and skills learned for a career to bear on a noble cause.



Professor: Justo Villanueva Rayo
Major: Systems Engineering and Information Technologies.
Course: Multimedia Systems Design
Community Partners: Ministry of Education (MINED) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA-Nicaragua)

After having been introduced to and practiced service learning methodology (SLM), and with the support of officials in our major field of study, we decided to integrate social service in a course where students learn how to develop multimedia applications related to education. The main objectives in the multimedia systems design course were:

1. Create a multimedia application that helps the teaching-learning process in the subject of mathematics for seventh grade students in the Ministry of Education (MINED).
2. Develop a multimedia application using the tool called Baúl Mágico (Magic Trunk) to help students learn about emotions and sexuality among young people and adolescents who are part of UNFPA-Nicaragua projects.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education (MINED) presented a study of primary school and middle school in the Republic of Nicaragua. In section 12, this report covers the need to work together with the support of universities and teaching schools; create digital instructional materials and illustrative videos to teach the subjects, focusing on mathematics and Spanish, especially in the first years of primary and middle school.

Taking this into account, the Office of Educational Technology of MINED, directed by Monica Ganet, got in contact with the social service coordinator in our major (Mariela Cuadra) and the university (Gaston Ortega) in order to reach an agreement to work on the project mentioned above. The agreement was based on creating educational software to support the teaching-learning process of seventh grade students in mathematics. This software will be used in public schools that house the Centers of Educational Technology in the country.

With these objectives, both institutions agreed to check the technical and pedagogical designs every week. MINED chose two specialists in mathematics and two experts in educational technology for validating and evaluating the process of developing the software. The university chose the professor who would teach the course on multimedia systems design and the 28 senior students in the ISTI major, who would design the seven stages of the educational software.

From May 27 to October 15, 2013, in the UCA computer lab J3, we carried out the process of the technical-pedagogical design. Moreover, we developed the multimedia

software. At the same time, two students worked on the application of the Magic Trunk on the topic of emotions and sexuality, during which they received timely feedback from UNFPA advisers.

Achievements

- Development of the multimedia applications defined in the social service objectives.
- Teamwork to develop the complete application subdivided into units (as would be done professionally in large firms).
- Experience in multidisciplinary work (mathematics, pedagogical systems, sociology) with a public institution.
- Teamwork (students, professor, community partner) to serve national education in mathematics.
- Students' teamwork to solve problems while carrying out the project.

Constraints

- Some students were not motivated enough to carry out the project. However, we accomplished the service learning objectives.
- Some students had difficulties managing and organizing their time, so that they had enough time to dedicate themselves to their other classes.

Learning outcomes

It is necessary to improve the plan for working in groups, and turning in intermediate assignments, since sometimes the students got behind and this required a greater investment of time to give feedback on the products developed.

It is advisable that the social service coordination and the authorities responsible for the Major keep students motivated to guarantee a pleasant and satisfactory experience.



Professor: Maria José Blanco
Major: Social Work and Managing Development.
Course: Methodology of Family Intervention I and II
Community Partner: Residence of the Eclessial Base Communities
(Casa Hogar de las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base)

This article describes the experience of implementing the service learning methodology (SLM) as part of the institutional policy of the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) policy, promoted by the Social Service Office. The methodology was applied in the courses on Methodology of Family Intervention I and II, which are part of the last stage of the study plan in the major for Social Work and Managing Development housed in the School of Humanities and Communication. The objectives in these courses are focused on using theory, methodology and techniques to work with families and people in vulnerable situations.

This experience took place in Casa Hogar, a residence for the project of the ecclesiastic communities (CEB) located in Memorial Sandino neighborhood in the city of Managua. This center is in charge of 30 girls and adolescents between 10 and 17 years old who are in prevention and special protection due to different situations that affect their physical integrity. These girls and adolescents are under the guardianship of the Ministry of Family, Adolescents, and Children (MIFAN) that operates at the national level.

Our initial approach to the community partner served as an opportunity to learn about the projects carried out by CEB and the needs that they encounter. This helped us focus on the project objectives of using SLM in the two courses mentioned above.

After that, we had a second meeting with the Casa Hogar CEB team and they shared with us their priorities. They said that as an institution, they were interested in developing processes to strengthen their technical capacity in a number of areas, such as children's rights, the legal framework for family, participation, stress management, and others. After this meeting, our efforts were focused in two directions. First, we signed an agreement between the community partner and UCA. Second, we worked together with the students on a training plan comprised of five modules. The Casa Hogar CEB team confirmed these in a meeting, in which they also proposed to include crisis intervention. Ultimately, the whole process took from May to November 2013.

The specific tasks were the following: design of a training plan, creation of workshop records according to the plan, preparation and organization of workshops, creation of tools that allowed us to evaluate the teachers' prior knowledge which was our point of departure, and processes of reflection for the students "to think about practice."

The implementation of the service learning methodology allowed the students to draw from theoretical-methodological tools that they had studied as part of their professional development and field requirements. This encompassed planning as well as carrying out and evaluating development and training programs that permit the use of alternative methodologies of education for development and the creation of human and social capital. It also included strengthening individual skills and working with students to assume an ethical and professional commitment to people in need.

This experience helped the teachers achieve the following:

- Assimilation of contents and work tools to encourage better ideas and quality interventions.
- Willingness and openness to develop opportunities (spaces) for reflection in order to analyze the intervention with the girls and adolescents in the Casa Hogar.
- Validation of instruments used to diagnose the circumstances of the girls and adolescents and to follow up on these, as part of the products called for in the SLM methodology.
- Commitment to follow the training plan and the materials provided to strengthen systematically their intervention.

For the students, implementing the training plan was a great challenge because of the demanding preparation that it entailed. Applying participative methodologies was a learning experience for the students, the community partner, and the professor of the course. The main challenge was to contextualize the objectives of the course, relate them to SLM methodology and to the community partner's needs. For students, this project was also an ongoing opportunity to acquire social and personal skills to work in a team, distribute tasks, and communicate and share responsibilities within the workgroups.

The SLM methodology, as a pedagogical tool, allowed us to relate theory to practice through the course. We were able to have moments to reflect on our learning process and the Casa Hogar CEB teachers' professional practice at the same time.



Professor: Maribel Medrano
Major: Industrial Engineering
Course: Method and Measurement of Work I
Community Partners: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Method and Measurement of Work I is a course offered in the second academic quarter of the third year of Industrial Engineering which is part of the School of Science, Technology, and Environment (FCTyA).

In this course, students develop skills to evaluate business productivity and apply techniques related to methods of study with the objective of increasing the productivity of firms and ultimately, the level and quality of the life of the population. The Industrial Engineering Major, using the service learning methodology, has focused on strengthening the capacities of the productive systems in small and medium firms.

The main objective of this project was the following: by applying methods, techniques and tools appropriate to the study of work, create the technical foundation in small and medium-sized firms to improve their productivity. The activities were carried out in the city of Masaya in cottage industries for leather and shoes, and others. Some activities were carried out in Managua in an automotive garage, in clothes factories, and a firm producing paper bags. The following lists the community partners and sector:

| Firms | Economic sector |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Calzado Carioquita | Leather shoes |
| Calzado Levi | Leather shoes |
| Cobal | Clothes |
| Kraftesania | Paper bags and ornaments |
| Talabateria La Montura | Leather shoes |
| Taller Hermanos Soza | Leather shoes |
| Talleres IGASA | Service |
| Vilgatex | Clothes |

Based on interviews initiated with the community partners, we established shared priorities. The results were: cost structure, dissemination of the products, designing of a product brochure, Internet advertisement, and business plans. Using these priorities, we prepared a guide taking into account the time commitment of the students and the convergence of the course itself with the work conditions. The latter included organizational elements, cleanliness, order, and among other things ventilation, lighting and noise. Another subject of study was the analysis of the work method. The first phase consisted in identifying the products using diagramming which made it possible to structure the costs of production as a means of improving productivity and identify whether the business was profitable.

The project unfolded in different stages, which were described in the course syllabus. We

agreed to monitor the stages by using journal entries as the projects advanced. The progress of each company was different which depended on access to the information provided by the heads of the companies. It also depended on collecting the data we needed on the production processes, which in turn depended on the type of product, the organization, and the level of experience of the company.

The systematized evaluation of the activities gave us important information about the students regarding their personal data, academic background and impact on the companies. Following the changes that were proposed has also been a meaningful learning experience for the students.

For the professor, the learning encompassed linking the development of a project that incorporates student participatory learning and the community's wellbeing.

The community partners also positively valued the involvement of the students, and have demonstrated a greater confidence in the support that students offer. Thanks to the results in this experience, the community partners want to participate in more service learning methodology projects; they have spread the word in the community about the benefits they have obtained through their alliance with the university.

This project contributed to the strengthening of firms' competencies because it incorporated practices that facilitated the growth and sustainability of these types of business.

I think the final project was excellent because I contributed to the improvement of a small business. I brought solutions to the company and I put into practice the topics I studied in the classroom to achieve optimal results. I was able to work efficiently because I could achieve the objectives of the project. Eisner Barberena.

I think the final project was excellent because I learned new things and put them into practice. Besides, I understood the material better. After I analyzed the industrial process, I was able to identify some deficiencies and I made an effort to provide solutions. The project procedures were great because we, as industrial engineers, have to give ideas and put them into practice. Kimberly Pérez.



Professor: Mariella Cuadra Guido.
Major: Systems Engineering and Information Technologies.
Course: WAN (Wide-Area-Network)
Technologies

The Systems Engineering and Information Technologies Major (ISTI) offers the course, Wan Technologies, to help students develop skills to make decisions in the selection of wide area network (WAN) connecting technologies. In 2014, the professors in charge of this subject were Erick Wheelock and Edgard Dávila.

In order to apply the service learning methodology (SLM), we chose as our social service objective to develop a technical-economic proposal for the interconnection of the surveillance system for the Prevention of Cancer (SIVIPCAN in Spanish) in the cytopathology laboratories located in Managua and Sandino City, using the connection between local area network (LAN) and WAN.

MOVICANCER is an organization dedicated to fighting cancer by designing strategies of prevention, help and education of the community as well as the patient, which promotes empowerment in the active care of one's health before, during and after treatment with a gender approach. In 2008, MOVICANCER signed a collaborative agreement with UCA to create a surveillance system to prevent cancer (SIVIPCAN). Thanks to this tool, we have accelerated the process of the diagnosis and early treatment of breast and cervical uterine cancer.

This system was implemented as a pilot project in Rio San Juan City and the results were very good. In 2013, Licentiate Orlando Martinez Granera, MOVICANCER's deputy Director General saw the need to install the system in the main facilities of the Ministry of Health (MINSA). The objective was to install the system in the cytopathology labs located in Managua and Sandino Cities using LAN and WAN links.

In this way the course on WAN Technologies with junior students of the ISTI major, and a concentration on networks and communication, using the LAN and WAN connections, developed the technical-economic proposal for the interconnection of the Surveillance System for the prevention of cancer (SIVIPCAN) in the cytopathology laboratories that are located in Managua and Sandino Cities. In this course, we also used the project-based learning methodology thanks to the course the professors Erick Wheelock and Mariella Cuadra took in the first academic quarter offered by UCA's continuing education office.

The project unfolded according to the following process: in the initial stage, Mr. Orlando Granera presented the MOVICANCER program to the students. In the second stage, Jose Maria Rodriguez showed the SEVIPCAN software to the students. In the third stage, we

explained to the general manager and the TIGO business technicians the need to interconnect the system. In the fourth stage, the students carried out an inspection of the cytopathology labs to determine the technical requirements to elaborate the proposal. In the fifth and last stage, the students finished the proposal. The students, all people involved, the professors, and the community partners were all satisfied.

It's worth mentioning the following accomplishments: the commitment and motivation of the students, collaborative work among the whole group, enthusiasm of the professors, and the application of project based learning methodology. These experiences are really important because students have the opportunity to relate theory to practice and they use their knowledge to benefit society.

Among the difficulties we encountered: restricted access to the cytopathology labs and the schedule available in the cytopathology labs was the same we had for the class. Something we learned is that we first need to sign an agreement with the community partner before starting any process.



Professor: Norman Campos
Major: Law
Course: Family Law
Community Partners: Public schools

The junior law students participated in a service learning project in the course on Family Law. In conversations with the social service coordinator, Professor Gastón Ortega, we discussed various legal questions that students could help to solve taking into account the learning objectives we had for this course: for example, the need to efficiently register in the Vital Statistics Office. This is important given inconsistencies in first and last names, as many adolescents are in a rush to obtain their birth certificate, student transcript, process their identity card, and even to secure a job.

Another legal problem is that people do not know about the roles, rights, and duties established in national legislation related to family relationships: father's absence, responsible parenting, right to identity, child support, recognition of parentage and marriage, adoption, domestic violence, and others. We talked about this idea in the classroom and the students gave their support with a great deal of enthusiasm. We analyzed this and realized that what we should do is disseminate the 1065 Decree or regulatory order of relationships between the mother, father, and children.

Family law affects the whole population and at all ages, but we decided to look for a community partner that needed this knowledge to adequately promote its rights and obligations within the nucleus of the family. Considering that Nicaragua has many young people, the students decided to look for an institution with this profile. In the project, they included teaching techniques and practice to give clear examples about the contemporary roles we have in the family. This last topic was the one we decided to put into practice, with the idea of doing it in the public schools.

In a second stage of the project, we looked for a community partner. With the help of Professor Gastón Ortega, we were put in contact with the American Nicaraguan Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), which is a collaborative of companies that sponsor a group of public schools. The committee talked to us and they accepted the project, but they asked us to demonstrate law students' activities in AMCHAM facilities before they would approve of the project to be developed in the schools.

It is vitally relevant to recognize that the students from two groups of classes showed a lot of enthusiasm when we talked about the service learning project. As a professor, I am really happy about their acceptance of the project. The project was presented in AMCHAM with representation from students, teachers, and AMCHAM officials. We received an excellent evaluation, but at that time we were still waiting for a date to present them in public schools in the Managua municipality.

On Monday, April 7, we went to three public schools: one was located in Santa Ana Norte

neighborhood where we used two classrooms, one in Laureles Sur School, and the last one was Casita Azul School located in the Bolonia neighborhood. Five groups participated simultaneously and it is important to mention that each group had from 10 to 12 people. We began by role-playing to represent a typical Nicaraguan family. After that, we had a debate using wall charts where adolescents wrote down the good and bad things they identified in the role-playing. After these activities, the students explained the legal issues related to the things the adolescents wrote. In the end, we shared with the school students a coffee break that was prepared by our students and the education committee.

The school authorities were present in the activity and so were some AMCHAM representatives. The adolescents learned how to express their feelings and opinions about family situations that affect them. Moreover, they realized that it is important to respect and tolerate others. They also analyzed the importance of improving communication between siblings and parents. Besides, they learned that there are institutions that care about Nicaraguan families and there are situations that break the rights of family members, for instance, domestic violence that commonly affects boys, girls, and adolescents, and especially women.

It is worth mentioning that three groups of students were scheduled to visit two schools on April 14, but this did not happen due to the earthquake. It is also relevant to mention that the students were willing and motivated to visit the schools.

This was a wonderful experience and I believe with all certainty that the plan of study of this course is an efficient application of social service. I feel satisfied with the work carried out by my students in the School of Law. They took some risks and they shared their human side with the adolescents, while having the leading role in this project.

I thank God and UCA for having given me this opportunity. I also thank Professor Gastón Ortega for his support in carrying out this project. I thank AMCHAM as well. I thank God because the university has this vision. I am certain that this experience will continue to be strengthened each year.



Professor: Ricardo Delgadillo

Major: Graphic Design

Course: Digital Design IV

Community Partners: United Nations Population Fund UNFPA

Since I started to teach graphic design at UCA in 2009, I have been focused on design development and visual representation, which are part of the digital branch.

As a professor, I have always been interested in helping students relate the tools they learn with the realities of professional life. I have done many things to help them be exposed to the real situations they will have outside of the classrooms and the computer labs. In graphic design, it is possible to do this if we have a client that has problems with a specific visual communication.

In 2012, I taught the Digital Design IV course to junior students from the graphic design major. In this course, students learn about the software called Adobe Flash Professional that enables the creation of multimedia environments and vector animations. This allows graphic designers to create interactive experiences that are displayed uniformly on both desktop computers and mobile devices. In the third academic quarter of 2012, I had the opportunity to help students create the application and using service learning methodology, to put into practice what they learned in a real context. Students took over the complete process: diagnosis, planning, running, results, and evaluation, in order to provide answers to the community.

The opportunity for this project emerged when the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) sought assistance through UCA to help jointly with a range of public institutions and social organizations that facilitate access to justice and comprehensive attention to the victims of gender-based violence: the National Police (PN), by means of the Commission on Women and on Childhood (CMN), the Public Ministry of the Supreme Court (CJS), and the Institute of Legal Medicine. All these entities signed an Agreement of Inter-institutional Coordination to improve the assistance provided to women victims of gender-based violence. As one of the strategies of the agreement, they created a flow chart indicating the paths for assistance modeled in the context of a comprehensive assistance system (MAI), to show how these paths flowed from one institution to the next. The result of this effort was a very functional flow chart for the institutions, but hardly friendly for the end user—the victims of violence. So our goal was to maintain the spirit of MAI and make it user-friendly by developing a multimedia product. This project was perfect for applying the knowledge gained in the course. By meeting with the community partner, the students were able to learn the how much their services as graphic designers was needed and to have the satisfaction to see it published.

It was hard and motivating for the students as well as the professor because at the same time, we had to be in the classroom to learn about the subject and we had to do the planning and elaboration of the project. It was a meaningful experience as people and professionals.

Taking into account the Ignatian spirit, TO LOVE AND SERVE IN ALL THINGS, the students had a wonderful experience because they realized the situation the victims of violence have to face.

To sum up, this experience was really positive because the students not only developed skills professionally, but because they were sensitized to a very important challenge that we have in our society, which was also really meaningful. The students' creativity and efforts were palpable as they presented more than 30 ideas to improve the MAI idea. The students were recognized in a public event on August 20 in the Holiday Inn Hotel. At this event, people who signed the inter-institutional agreement participated and the best project was awarded. The best project was designed by the students Frida Rosales and Fatima Ramirez. I congratulate them and all the students who participated. I want to thank UCA for having given me the opportunity to be part of this beautiful and noble service learning methodology.



Professor: Valeria Dávila
Murrillo Major: Social
Communication Course: Lecture III
Community Partners: Private and Public
Schools

In September 2013, I was told that for the first time the Social Communication major was going to implement service learning in the course, Lecture III, for the freshman groups. At the beginning, I had no idea how this would work and I wondered if my students could really rise to the occasion, considering they were freshmen students who had just taken basic courses and lacked communication competencies.

Bullying was the topic chosen by the teaching staff for work on a service learning project. There were basically two criteria for selecting this topic: first, it is a problem that plays out at all the different school levels; and second it is a topic that our freshman students could manage.

I still remember some of my students' faces when I explained the methodology. "They have us at point blank," they said, while they tried to digest what service learning was all about. I was concerned when I saw their worried looks and lack of willingness to do it. The topic got the attention of some of my students. It was like sticking my finger into a sore and finding evidence of a problem that was already identifying itself in my group of students. One group had no doubt in asserting, "But we ourselves are victims of bullying!" I imagine these students asked themselves how they could help others if they too lived this problem. My answer was that this should motivate us to work with this topic, because change should start with us, since we cannot offer what we do not have.

As a result, I organized a couple of sessions to reflect on their interpersonal skills and how they got along with each other. Even though there were no immediate or drastic changes in their attitudes, zero tolerance for bullying was instituted, along with denouncing it.

As we went along studying the topic and explaining how to apply service learning methodology, the majority got excited. I, too, because in reality, we were all learning what social service was. For my part, I understood that it is a good strategy to choose a topic that concerns and interests the students, and put to them the challenge of doing something new and well. Why not give a sense of competitiveness?

Each group of students had to look for a community partner, present the service learning project, collaboratively establish goals with them and finally set an agreement. That was the first learning experience. Little by little, students got their community partners to start with the project, some were very motivated because of the interest that the community partners (primary and secondary school principals) showed. This process was not so difficult, because all of them opted to contact the schools where they had been enrolled recently while doing their baccalaureate.

However, some got discouraged along the way, because some schools did not give the necessary support; for example, they restricted the time with the group or they did not give them a space appropriate for the activities, etc. Despite these difficulties, my students did not give up.

I admit I underestimated my students when I wondered at the beginning of the experience: “How are they going to formulate a communication project at this early stage of their academic life? How are they going to report and disseminate the experience?” A lesson for me was that young people have great talents eager to be developed!

Furthermore, the teaching staff strategies also worked out very well. We had decided to include in the syllabus of the course some sessions on communication for social change. The objective was to enrich the theoretical framework of the project. And we taught them how to carry out a diagnostic study, design research instruments and formulate communication projects. Other practices that yielded positive results included the close tutoring at each stage of the project, and the spaces for reflection and socialization of their experiences to learn from mistakes and successful actions.

Probably, the most satisfying moment I experienced was to assist some of my students in their final intervention regarding bullying. They knew a lot about the topic and had great capacity to communicate and manage the group. The children of the project were actively participating and talking about bullying. Some adolescents shared their experiences as victims of bullying and they all reflected on the reasons why bullying exists and how to avoid it. This was generated by the edu-entertaining activities conducted by UCA social communication students.

In a rural school located at el Crucero, the children worked a full morning with our students and at the end asked when we were coming back. In addition, the principal of the school also requested us to repeat the experience with other groups. Unfortunately, the academic quarter was basically over and we did not have time to go again.

Implementing service learning started as an academic obligation, but a few weeks later it turned out to be meaningful and rewarding because the students experienced the joy of helping and serving others.

No doubt, service learning makes a difference in those who work on it with the commitment it requires. We are still hesitant about implementing service learning in the freshman academic year, because each year I see their afflicted or annoyed faces. Yet, I can say I will always be surprised by their innovative and effective proposals.

History has a tendency to repeat itself. The most skeptical will be those, who at the end will most enjoy the experience of serving others without expecting anything in return. Definitely, service learning contributes to changing lives, as the UCA anthem goes: “We are UCA, a whole spiritual adventure where humanism, science and culture will forge men and women for others.”

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