



Service Learning Office Annual Report for 2013

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Background of Service Learning at our University

Engaging Minds, Hands and Hearts

The University of the Free State commits itself to the development of the total student. As a curricular form of community engagement, service learning provides potentially life-changing learning experiences, developing students holistically by engaging their **heads** (cognitive domain), **hands** (psychomotor domain) and **hearts** (affective domain). Ideals underpinning service learning include, *inter alia*, unconditional respect, an ethos of care and appreciation for the power of diversity.

For our students it becomes what Paulo Freire referred to as a "**pedagogy of hope**", allowing them to develop critical awareness of society and their role in it, and at the same time appreciating the unique contributions that they can make.

Definition of Service Learning

The University of the Free State defines community service learning (or "service-learning") as follows:

An educational approach involving curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students –

- (a) participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities aimed at addressing identified service needs in a community, and
- (b) reflect on the service experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as achieve personal growth and a sense of social responsibility.

It requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers and students, members of the communities and representatives of the service sector) ([Community Service Policy](#), 2006–3.1.7).

Benefits of Service Learning

Service learning provides a point of entry for sustainable community engagement by actively involving higher education staff, students and a large variety of stakeholders in society. Over time a considerable number of staff members have become convinced that it can contribute to the transformation of the institution by allowing the UFS to participate more effectively in the production of knowledge that is aimed at "addressing and conquering the most serious challenges of our immediate environs", as stated by the Chancellor, Prof. Khotso Mokhele, in his inaugural speech.

Section 4.2.1 of the UFS Community Service Policy notes that the inclusion of compulsory community service learning modules in all academic programmes (at least one per programme) is a policy priority. Specific reference is made to the proven record of service learning as an educational approach that leads students, through structured critical reflection, to a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as the achievement of personal growth and a sense of social responsibility.

Who is Involved?

The Policy also proposes that service learning (SL), like all other forms of community engagement, requires a context of continuously negotiated, respectful and ethical collaborative partnerships that involve, *inter alia*, community-based non-profit organisations, schools, and participants from local and provincial government. Stakeholders from businesses and industry are involved in terms of their corporate social responsibility focus.

The integration of service learning with research provides unique opportunities for advancing the “scholarship of engagement”, hence the growing number of postgraduate studies and scholarly publications by UFS staff members.

Tell me, and I will forget.
Show me, and I may remember.
Involve me, and I will understand.

Confucius, 450 BC

Aim and Key Tasks of the Service Learning Office

The **aim** of service learning (or community service learning) is to advance the integration of community engagement with teaching and learning.

The Service Learning Office focuses on aspects specifically related to service learning as a curricular form of engagement and educational approach.

The Service Learning Office (with two full-time and three part-time staff members) provides various forms of support for lecturers who offer service learning modules and thus endeavours to liaise closely with the Portfolio Committees for Community Engagement and Service Learning in the various faculties and on the QwaQwa campus.

The following are regarded as the **key tasks** of the Service Learning Division:

- Facilitation of the budgeting process with regard to service learning modules (this will no longer be the case in 2014 since the budgeting process has been decentralised and transferred to the faculties).
- Liaison with UFS staff and external partners (Non-Profit Organisations in particular).
- Staff development with regard to service learning.

- Working towards the inclusion of service learning in performance management and promotion criteria.
- Developing mechanisms for quality management (including evaluating the impact of service learning on students and communities).
- Utilisation of a web-based database for service learning for reporting purposes.
- **A new service learning and community engagement mini-library has been established in Room 211 at the Steyn Annex building. The resources are available to staff members.**
- National and international liaison.
- Exploring funding opportunities for research and projects.
- Promoting service learning as a scholarly activity.
- Amendment and updating of the Service Learning Risk Management Guidelines with the input from service learning and community engagement contributors.
- Providing feedback during quarterly meetings of the Management Committee for Community Engagement and Service Learning (Mrs Dikgapane Makhetha).
- Attending faculty Community Engagement and Service Learning Committee meetings, such as Health Sciences and Education (Mrs Dikgapane Makhetha).
- Participating in and supporting student activities such as exhibitions and presentations.
- Providing the necessary information about modules, reports, policies and upcoming conferences on the [service learning website](#) (Mrs Dora du Plessis).

Service Learning as Scholarship of Engagement

In order to affirm the status of service learning as potentially embedded in a scholarship of engagement staff members are always encouraged to find topics linked to their service learning and other community-based work for their post-graduate and other research endeavours. They are also encouraged to publish and participate in conferences. The NRF project is one of the vehicles that provide a collaborative research platform for this purpose.

The NRF Project

One of the most prominent components of the scholarly activities of the Service Learning Office is the three-year NRF project that Prof. Erasmus is the grant-holder of. The project title is: “Knowledge as Enablement: NPO focus” and it involves Non-Profit Organisations and several UFS-based researchers. During 2013 a number of UFS staff members were able to benefit from the bursaries, the staff development grant and other funding items that form part of the NRF grant.

Book Project

In 2013 the main focus of the NRF-project has been on a book, as the culminating endeavour of the NRF-project. The title of the book is: **Knowledge as enablement: Engagement between the Third Sector and Higher Education in South Africa**. The book aims to promote dialogue on principles and practice of enablement through reciprocal knowledge sharing between the third sector (i.e. non-profit and other voluntary civic organisations) and higher education institutions in South Africa. Prof. Mabel Erasmus and Dr. Ruth Albertyn are the editors of the book. The first planning session was held in July 2013. During this session the potential chapter authors attended a three day workshop in Bloemfontein. The following is a summary of what the authors and editors did and the decisions which were generated by the group.

- Participants shared their proposed contribution to the book.
- Characteristics of the book chapter as a writing genre were noted with the focus on the collective vision of the book and how each chapter needs to be linked to the overarching purpose in a very explicit way.
- Participants then worked interactively and together formulated a purpose for the book which was the end result of quite a lengthy collaborative process.
- Each person formulated their argument so that the connection to the purpose was clear. Each person presented their argument and received feedback from the group.
- Each person started writing their introductions based on the 6 sections proposed in the handouts.
- The publishers talked to the participants and answered questions regarding the publishing process.
- Deadlines and a work procedure were established by the group.

The second workshop is planned for 5-7 December 2013. During this time the final draft of each chapter will be finalised and conclusions will be written.

New Academic Publications by a Staff Member of the Office and colleagues

The following publications produced by the head of the SL Office and two colleagues were published in 2013:

- (1) Stanton, Timothy K. & Erasmus, Mabel A. Inside Out, Outside In: A Comparative Analysis of Service-Learning's Development in the United States and South Africa. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 17(1):64-96.
- (2) Inez Bezuidenhout & Mabel Erasmus. Arguments in favour of service learning in the South African law curriculum. In Osman, R. & Petersen, N. *Service Learning in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. Pp. 162-185.

Another paper by Prof. Erasmus has been submitted to the UFS-based journal *Acta Academica* and is currently under review.

Conference Participation

The Division supports service learning practitioners which include students, lecturers and community partners to participate in international conferences. A number of staff members attended and participated in the following conferences:

UFS Participation in SL Conference in Hong Kong and Mainland China

Prof. Mabel Erasmus was invited as a keynote speaker for the 4th Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Service-Learning. The conference theme was: *Service-Learning as a Bridge from Local to Global: Connected World, Connected Future*. The conference was held at Lingnan University, Hong Kong (5-6 June 2013) and at Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, Mainland China (7 June 2013). The paper that Prof. Erasmus presented was titled: *Service-Learning as a new approach to teaching and learning in South Africa*.

As part of the pre-conference activities Prof. Erasmus was also requested to present a seminar with Prof. Andrew Furco from the USA. Her presentation was titled: "The many benefits of Service-Learning: Showcasing the South African Experience" while Prof. Furco focused on his many years of SL experience in the USA.

The following four UFS colleagues presented papers at the same conference: Elanie Myburgh (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences) and representing the School of Nursing: Ielse Seale, Lingiwe Nogabe and Karen Venter.

The conference was an exceptionally vibrant and revitalizing experience for the colleagues who participated. Participants from the 19 countries that were represented were mostly university staff from the Asia-Pacific Region; several of them indicated their interest to network and collaborate on SL with UFS colleagues.



The UFS participants with Dr Carol Ma (Lingnan University), main organiser of the conference. The occasion was an international Window on the World (WOW!) night.

The ISSL in Stellenbosch

Several UFS staff members will be presenting papers and posters at the **5th International Symposium on Service Learning** to be held in Stellenbosch in November 2013. Elanie Myburgh, Magda Barnard, Karen Venter, Marisa Wilke and others will be presenting posters. Dr Luzelle Naudé and Prof Mabel Erasmus will be presenting research papers.

Postgraduate Studies

During 2013 Prof. Mabel Erasmus supervised (or co-supervised) the following Ph.D. and Master's studies in the fields of community engagement and service learning:

Supervision of post-graduate studies : 2013
Barnard, Magda (Masters in Higher Education Studies – mini-dissertaion) <i>Reciprocity in service learning relationships between a higher education institution and a non-profit organisation.</i> Supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus Co-supervisor: Dr Somarie Holtzhausen
Boughy, John (Ph.D. in Higher Education Studies) <i>A comprehensive university at the heart of its communities: Establishing a framework for engagement.</i> Supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus
Coetzee, Lindie (Masters in in Higher Education Studies) <i>Student transformation through service learning – A case study.</i> Supervisor: Dr. Luzelle Naude Co-supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus
Janse van Rensburg, Elize (Masters in Occupational Therapy & Higher Education Studies) <i>Enabling occupation through service learning? Perceptions of community representatives.</i> Supervisor: Mrs Tania Rauch van der Merwe Co-supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus
Magaiza, Grey (Ph.D. in Higher Education Studies) <i>Youth inclusion in development: Social entrepreneurship and its implications for youth development in Qwaqwa, Eastern Free State</i> Supervisor: Dr Elsa Crause Co-supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus
Matsoso, Moodi (Masters in Higher Education Studies – mini-dissertation) <i>Building relationships between local community members and service learning students at a South African university.</i> Supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus Co-supervisor: Mr Grey Magaiza
Munsamy, Jeeva (Masters in Development Studies) <i>Changing trends in community engagement at the Central University of Technology, Free State.</i> Supervisor: Mr Samuel Fongwa Co-supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus
Muzambi, Talent (Ph.D. in Higher Education Studies)

Supervision of post-graduate studies : 2013
<p><i>An adult education and training framework for Nonprofit Organisations in the Northern Cape.</i> Supervisor: Dr. Rika van Schoor Co-supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus</p>
<p>Myburgh, Elanie (Masters in Higher Education Studies – mini-dissertation) Completed January 2013 <i>The use of a learning management system to enhance collaboration among service learning participants.</i> Supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus Co-supervisor: Mrs Tiana van der Merwe</p>
<p>Pitso, Pulane (Ph.D. in Higher Education Studies) <i>Community service learning as a transformative tool for infusing the university curriculum with graduate attributes for improved service learning.</i> Supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus Co-supervisor: Ms Lynette Jacobs</p>
<p>Venter, Karen (Masters in Higher Education Studies – mini-dissertation) <i>Development of service learning champions through knowledge sharing.</i> Supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus Co-supervisor: Mrs Ielse Seale</p>
<p>Van der Merwe, Tiana (Masters in Higher Education Studies – mini-dissertation) Completed January 2013 <i>The role of online learning in service learning group work experiences at the UFS.</i> Supervisor: Prof. Mabel Erasmus Co-supervisor: Prof. Annette Wilkinson</p>

Participation in SAHECEF

The South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF) represents the core elements of Higher Education in SA, namely teaching and learning and research through community engagement and collaboration with communities.

The following UFS staff members are on the Board of SAHCEF: Rev. Billyboy Ramehlele, Prof. Mabel Erasmus, Dr Luzelle Naudé, Ms Lolly Mogoere, Mrs Ielse Seale and Mr Dawie van Jaarsveld. Membership of the SAHECEF website is free to all university staff members who have an interest in community engagement and service learning. The webadres is: www.sahecef.ac.za.

Prof. Erasmus has recently been appointed as chair person of the Research Working Group of SAHECEF.

The main aims of the Working Group is to promote the scholarship of (community) engagement and to increase the capacity of SAHECEF members to conduct research, to publish and utilise research results in the field of Community Engagement.

Some planned activities of the Working Group is to work towards a Community Engagement (and Service Learning) Journal for South Africa; to work towards accreditation of some of the international Community Engagement and Service Learning journals; sharing the research results of members and invite discussion; and to engage with other international research capacity-building groups.

Workshops presented at other South African universities

Prof. Erasmus was invited to facilitate the following two workshops at South African universities:

- (1) Service Learning Workshop at Rhodes University (RU), 19 July 2013. The aim was to provide information and assistance RU staff members already involved in Service Learning programmes, as well as those interested in establishing Service Learning courses in their departments.



Prof. Erasmus with Dr Amanda Hlengwa and Ms Diana Hornby (Director: Community Engagement at Rhodes University)

- (2) A three-day research workshop (31 October – 2 November) for CCEWIL staff members of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, on invitation from the

Director of CCEWIL, i.e. the Centre for Community Engagement and Work-Integrated Learning, Prof. Joyce Nduna (far right on the photo).



Service Learning Activities in the Faculties

Please note that individual reports on the SL activities in the faculties form part of the inclusive CE Report for 2013.

Most of the service learning work is done within the various faculties of the UFS by committed, knowledgeable colleagues who themselves undertake the curriculum development, partnership-building, practical implementation, risk management, ethical collaboration and quality management that are required for effective service learning engagement.

Each faculty has a well-functioning Committee for Community Engagement and Service Learning that manages and oversees all the above-mentioned aspects. These committees liaise with and report to the UFS Management Committee for Community Engagement. They also report to the various faculty boards. The faculty committees are commended for their high quality functioning which contributes significantly to the sustained improvement of all service learning initiatives.

The service learning activities of the different faculties are well-represented on the [UFS Service Learning website](#), which is a comprehensive resource that lecturers, students and external participants can and should use on a regular basis. Lecturers and students provide us with photos and information about their practical experience in the communities. They also provide us with articles whenever they have something exciting to share with others. When articles are published in the local newspapers, we also try to add these stories to the website. Specific sections of the website in this regard are [Service Learning Modules](#), [Partners and Projects](#) and [Resources and Articles](#).

Service Learning Funding per Faculty for 2013			
Faculty	Number of modules involved	Total staff members involved	Total amount allocated per Faculty
Economic & Management Sciences	5	4	R33 000
Education	2	2	R10 000
Humanities	14	30	R205 000
Health Sciences:			
School of Allied Health Professions:			
Dietetics & Nutrition	4	3	R95 000.00
Occupational Therapy	5	3	R120 000
Optometry	1	3	R18 000
Physiotherapy	2	2	R70 000
School of Medicine	3	3	R90 000
School of Nursing	8	13	R130 000
Law	3	2	R120 000
Natural & Agricultural Sciences	8	11	R85 000
Theology	5	5	R24 000
Service Learning Projects			R60 000
TOTAL	60	81	R1 060 000

Service Learning Capacity Building for Staff at the UFS

The 20-credit Service Learning module (HES717) for staff members that forms part of the Master's programme in Higher Education Studies (HES) was offered again by Prof. Mabel Erasmus and Dr Luzelle Naudé during the second semester of 2013. Due to the fact that this Master's programme will be replaced by a Post-graduate Diploma in HES the module will not be offered in its current format in future.

Promoting Transcultural Learning through Service Learning

The University of the Free State (UFS) has embarked on the Difficult Dialogues Project 2013 through collaboration between the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice. The purpose of the project is to empower staff members to encounter controversy more effectively in teaching and learning and to engage students in explorations of controversial issues relating to curricular content by means of civil discourse.

In support of the project to enhance the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, the Community Engagement and Service Learning directorate hosted a Staff Development Workshop, which aimed at promoting transcultural learning through service learning. The main purpose of the workshop was to explore teaching strategies which acknowledge the sensitivity related to cultural diversity and also to promote transcultural learning through service learning.

The topic was presented by engaging the participants in discussion through the use of various techniques. One such technique was the circle of objects, where participants presented objects of heritage or symbols of their way of life, which they were requested to bring along.



The objects of heritage and symbols of a way of life which were brought along to the workshop



The workshop presenter, Dr Deirdre van Jaarsveldt, with some of the attendees during the session

What do Service Learning and the Notion “Human Capabilities” have in Common?

Prof. Melanie Walker from the newly established Centre for Higher Education and Capabilities Research (CHECaR) at the University of the Free State presented an engaging session to service learning practitioners around inclusive learning and teaching endeavours, based on the human capabilities approach.

Prof. Walker, presented a conceptualisation of human capabilities applied to Higher Education (HE) practices. Although the idea is being globally taken up for its relevance to HE, it is a relatively new concept in our own South African context.

During the discussions it became evident that human development requires an enabling environment for communities to live creative lives in order to broaden their choices. Such modern realities challenge universities to educate and train students who do not only excel in their respective professions but who are also equipped for engaging in a global development discourse, for example, as emphasised by the Millennium Development Goals.

Since both Service Learning and CHECaR call attention to the concept of human capabilities, they are able to align students towards the demands of the 21st century through building capacity in individuals and communities for transformative societies. A specific contribution offered by Service Learning would be to produce students with values, knowledge and skills to prepare them for the realities of life, thus supporting the human capabilities approach which promotes capacities such as informed vision, resilience, integrity, emotional reflexivity, confidence, solidarity, knowledge and skills.

International Engagement and Partnerships

Human Geography Project by Dr Daniel Hammett and Colleagues

In July 2012 Dr Dan Hammett, Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, visited six Non-profit Organisations (NPOs) that are service learning partners of the UFS to discuss future collaboration. In March 2013 he brought two colleagues and a group of students to conduct a human geography fieldclass project focusing on development issues at these NPOs in Bloemfontein.

Part of the students' assesement for the course was to produce a mapping product and a short "policy brief" which would be an accessible document aimed at providing research findings to the NPOs.

"... my intention is for the students to recognise that development organisations and NPOs do not exist to support researchers but to support local communities and achieve specific goals ... I am committed to trying to make sure this fieldtrip is not extractive (i.e.. that we come, look and leave), but is of mutual benefit and that our student's research can be of use to your organisation" (Dr Dan Hammett).



Prof. Mabel Erasmus, Dr Dan Hammett and two other staff members of the University of Sheffield



Students from the University of Sheffield reporting on the first day of their research activities

Preliminary Discussions on International Partnerships

Discussions have been started with potential partners from Mount Holyoke College and Massachusetts University – Beverly Bell and Dave Clark are planning to accompany students to South Africa, and especially the University of the Free State, during July 2014.

Conclusion

It is much appreciated that funding to the value of R1 000.00 was allocated for service learning modules in 2013. This provided lecturers and other staff members involved in service learning modules and partnerships with the requisite sense of knowing that the University supports their commitment to providing potentially life-changing, transformative learning experiences in collaboration with their external partners in a broad variety of community-based settings.