



**CARLOW ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS**

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## The Next Great Need: Curriculum as Mission

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KARYN SPROLES, PHD, CARLOW UNIVERSITY

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.*

—“A Prayer for Guidance” – Thomas Merton (1915–1968)

*In this strange Labyrinth how shall I turn?  
Ways are on all sides while the way I miss...*

—“A Crown of Sonnets Dedicated to Love” – Lady Mary Wroth, (1586–1640)

As we begin to revise our undergraduate curriculum at Carlow University, I have been ever mindful of the Sisters of Mercy’s guiding question: What is the next need? I have come to see that now, as before, our students are the next need. This has always been the answer to that question, but as their needs change we too must change in order to meet our students where they are. We must make transparent the value of the liberal arts—recognizing that for our students, that value will be actualized in economic sustainability, which now demands life-long learning as they face the challenges of continual retooling for career demands we cannot foresee. We have always recognized the value of knowing how to learn; now it is a market requirement.

Part of the problem we have in communicating the value of our programs is a national problem. Not only does our nation fail to value—or even understand—the liberal arts, but there is also a pervasive lack of understanding of the basic differences between institutional types. I have noticed an almost universal failure to recognize the differences between large, public, research universities and small, private, liberal arts institutions. I have seen this lack of understanding expressed by transfer students, university seniors, and affluent college-educated parents of high school seniors. Location and cost are the primary differentiators between institutions, not size or mission. One thing we all need to do is educate the public about education. We need to help our students understand who we are and what we have to offer them. We, at Carlow, need to better understand the implications ourselves and design curricula that take advantage of our small size rather than struggle against it. Because we are small, we cannot offer multiple sessions of every class every semester, but we can offer unique and innovative programs with access to faculty, labs, and research opportunities students at larger institutions only have at the graduate level. We offer students powerful relationships with knowledge and one another. We offer patient guidance to students seeking a path that will bring them to a fulfilling future.

Beyond our commitment to the liberal arts, which we share with most small colleges and universities, I have been wondering what we, as a Mercy institution, have to offer that our ever-changing society needs? To this need, as to all needs, we offer a merciful heart. Let us take heart, then, and help our students see that education is not just knowledge and skills but also the ability to

engage in creative problem solving with empathy and emotion. Let us help them see the connections between science and art. Let us show them that communication is an act of caring and that education is a Mercy mission. Let us help them understand themselves as learners and discover their own values and vision.

The most difficult thing for me as an instructor has always been the realization that my students often neither want nor value the same things that I wanted and valued when I was a student. I wanted an education that would give me access to cultural knowledge, and I trusted that a career direction would evolve from that. I wanted to work hard, and I knew that I did not know what to read or where to go. I wanted teachers. I am not sure that my students have ever wanted that. When I first started teaching composition in 1982 I believed that access to literacy was a matter of social justice. I still do. I understood then that I had to prove to my students—many of whom were older than I was—that I could write well so that they could see that I knew something they wanted to learn. At that time I was in Buffalo, N.Y., and many of those students were laid-off steel workers. They understood that improving their communications skills was their ticket out of unemployment. Our students today also want a good job at a living wage. They do not understand as clearly that it is knowledge and skills that will help them succeed. They just know they need a degree. How can I help them see that the degree represents an education? How can I help them see the value of a liberal arts degree or general education requirements? In other words, how can I make Carlow’s mission transparent in the curriculum?

The Carlow community is currently engaged in revising our undergraduate curriculum to once again reflect our institutional mission. The goal of this paper is to document a process of curriculum revision that is transparent and grounded in women-centered pedagogical practices, such as sharing power. I raised the question of how we could better connect curriculum with mission at the Carlow Roundtable in order to engage other Mercy institutions in this conversation. The insights that emerged from that engagement will continue to inform our on-going work of revising the Carlow curriculum.

Participants in the Roundtable shared a few of the ways each institution’s mission is transparent in the curriculum and other programs on campus, and I want to add their voices to the conversation:

- Gwynedd-Mercy College has a required service learning course in each major that relates Mercy to the discipline.
- Mercyhurst College has a vice president for mission integration, ambassadors, a Center for Mercy and Catholic Studies, and a Catholic Studies program.
- Mount Aloysius College has a Mercy Presidential Scholar’s program.
- The College of Saint Mary has a program for mothers on campus.
- In addition to sponsoring the Roundtable, Carlow University makes the mission visible by the presence of a convent on the campus along with gardens dedicated to each of the core values; Carlow recognizes its Mercy heritage through the McDarby Institute and Founders’ Fortnight, which includes Mercy Service Day.

All of our voices together spoke of a shared commitment to making our Mercy heritage visible on our campuses.

The conversations we had during the Roundtable were part of a series of conversations we have been having at Carlow as we try to find our new curriculum. Some of these conversations have already led to change. During her first year at Carlow (2009-10), the provost, Margaret McLaughlin, PhD, held a series of discovery sessions. I continued this practice when I became dean of the College of Arts and Sciences the following year (2010-11). I asked members of the campus to share the topics of greatest concern on enormous post-it notes hanging on the walls of my office. The concerns that were shared during the “Post-It” discovery focused the subsequent discovery sessions on retention and the core curriculum. These discussions prompted further conversations that led to a proposal for a revised first year seminar and learning community we are piloting in fall 2011 and a proposal for a student success center. Other conversation groups formed around creating a digital learning culture, healthy organizations, and faculty mentoring. A discussion group on race continued from the previous year. The Epiphany 2011 retreat launched a series of Friday lunch-time conversations about re-envisioning the undergraduate curriculum. Every Friday during the Spring 2011 semester two dozen faculty, staff, and students gathered together in the dining hall for food and conversation. All of this work was shared at a two-day conference on Carlow’s undergraduate curriculum in August 2011.

As we go forward with this work of re-envisioning the undergraduate curriculum, every member of the Carlow community has been invited to join together in discussing our shared academic vision and to participate in a process in which we may take different roles, but in which we all have a voice. In preparation for the August 2011 conference on developing a mission-centered undergraduate curriculum, I asked departments, programs, and divisions to work together in whatever groups make most sense to them to talk about the following questions:

1. For each program of study in your area, list what graduates should know and be able to do. This list is intended to focus on academics; e.g., conduct independent scholarship in the discipline and document it accurately. These are the learning outcomes for the program of study.
2. For each of the items on the list, indicate where in the curriculum it is introduced, developed, and assessed.
3. Where are the gaps in the curriculum that need to be filled in order to complete question 2? What curricular revisions, major or minor, does this suggest we need to consider?
4. What makes Carlow’s program of study distinctive? How might it be made to be even more distinctive and transparent in its communication of institutional mission? [Keep this question in mind throughout the exercise.]

For my part, at the August 2011 conference, I challenged myself to turn all of the conversations we have had so far into a core curriculum in which Carlow’s mission is evident. I have listened hard to faculty, staff, and students, and similar things began to rise up again and again: thematically there is a commitment to mission, the liberal arts, service, and advocacy; pedagogically there is a commitment to experiential learning, team teaching, and interdisciplinary courses. Bearing in mind the difficulties of scheduling, being realistic about our size (the ability to be creative but the need to limit how much we can offer), and recognizing our students need for academic support, flexible schedules, and increased choices, I asked myself what a curriculum like this would look like. When I returned from

Ireland, as a result of all of these conversations, I had a vision of just such a curriculum. I was talking with Sheila Roth, chair of our Social Work department when I said, “what we need at Carlow is a Mercy Core.” As soon as I said it, I knew what it was. This was just another moment in which the vision of the Core emerged as a result of conversation.

Nationally, the role of comprehensive masters granting universities is to educate the local workforce in a liberal arts foundation in the context of clear professional direction. For Carlow this is not just an institutional description; it is also a matter of social justice that stems from the Mercy values that founded and continue to guide this institution. Thus, Carlow’s academic vision is to provide an opportunity for the student body we serve to have a future that only they can create for themselves. Our purpose is underpinned by the sanctity and dignity of the individual, and it dictates high standards against which we will measure our curriculum and all else.

Consistent with Carlow’s women-centered mission and central to Carlow’s academic vision are learning experiences that enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values that will lead them to be successful contributors to a just society. We are committed to learner-centered pedagogies that help students understand how they learn in order to find their futures. This is not just our vision—it is a promise we make to our students to take forward with them.

Springing from Carlow’s roots in Mercy values, the future of Catholic education and social justice lies in the revelation that learning is the next need. To this end, I offer an academic vision for Carlow as a 21st Century Learning University. This vision has arisen from listening to the conversations that have occurred this past year. In these conversations I have heard a strong and consistent commitment to mission through advocacy, recognition of the power of experiential learning, and energizing excitement over team-teaching and interdisciplinarity. I have asked myself how to translate these conversations into an undergraduate curriculum in which our mission is transparent. In August 2011 I shared the vision of a core curriculum that has emerged after a year of careful listening. I proposed the creation of the Frances Warde College of Undergraduate Studies in recognition of our founder and in order to more closely connect all of our undergraduates to the mission and to the learning community that is this institution. Within the College is the Mercy Core Curriculum, a series of team taught, interdisciplinary courses organized around a theme central to Carlow’s Mercy Mission (21 credits minimum). The foundation of the Mercy Core is the Carlow Learning Community—an interdisciplinary first-year seminar paired with a writing/speech course (6 credits) in the fall and an interdisciplinary quantitative reasoning course paired with a research course (6 credits) in the spring. I imagine offering three or four first-year seminars, each one team-taught by three faculty members from different disciplines and enrolling 60 students. The thematic focus would give students a real sense of choice and allow students to discover others with shared interests. The configuration of the course would allow the instructors tremendous pedagogical flexibility, since they could meet as a group or in any number of subgroups throughout the semester, depending on the learning needs of the students and the demands of the material. Instructors could take turns delivering lectures to the entire group; they could meet in “classes” of 20 or in smaller discussion groups. Students would take a combined writing and speaking class with half of their seminar group; this class would also have a great deal of flexibility in its configuration, with two faculty members meeting with 30 students in whatever combination makes the most sense for the occasion.

During the sophomore/junior years, students would take two interdisciplinary service-learning courses (6 credits). A capstone seminar in the senior year would connect the major to Carlow's Mercy Mission, Catholic and Women-Centered Identity, and the Liberal Arts (3 credits). A variety of one-credit courses that address essential competencies would be offered on-demand to support student success. Annual assessment will allow students to demonstrate proficiency and receive guided support in creating a personalized learning program (variable credits). Pre-requisites would be determined by the major (variable credits).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Sisters of Mercy at their founding was that they were not cloistered. For this reason they were referred to as the walking women. The College of Saint Mary, in Omaha, has a statue of a walking woman on campus that has come to be an icon for mission. My goal was to imagine an undergraduate curriculum where the mission walks. As I talked with faculty and staff members about this idea of creating a core made up of interdisciplinary courses with mission-driven themes, the most exciting ideas began to emerge. Many faculty members immediately thought of favorite courses that already functioned in such a way. Sheila Roth (social work) thought of a course in death and dying that she team teaches with Stephanie Wilsey in psychology. The course on the history of the Civil Rights movement that Linda Schifino describes in this proceeding works perfectly in this way. Katie Hogan (women's studies) team teaches a course on girl culture with Csaba Toth in history. Courses we offer in Irish studies could also serve. Bill Stewart (philosophy) imagined a course team taught by faculty in philosophy, theology, and mathematics called "Infinity." Linda Burns (sociology) imagined a course on people's relationship with their pets. If nothing else, this proposal sparked the creative energy of the faculty and paid homage to their engagement in teaching and collaboration.

In the two epigraphs for this essay, I put Thomas Merton into conversation with the English Renaissance poet, Lady Mary Wroth. Both Merton and Wroth, unsure of the way forward, ask for guidance. Wroth describes her situation as like being in a labyrinth with many ways to go, none of which seem right. In the end, Wroth writes that the only recourse is to follow "the thread of love" (line 14). Wroth's sonnet was particularly resonant when I spoke to the Roundtable at Glendalough, the site of the monastic settlement founded by St. Kevin about 570 A.D. Then and now Glendalough is a place of pilgrimage. When we arrived it was crowded with folks visiting the monastic ruins, tying cluties on the hawthorn tree at St. Kevin's well, and prayerfully walking the labyrinth. I walked the labyrinth at Glendalough asking, as I often do, for an open heart. I began this pilgrimage seeking guidance. I found it in conversation. Sister Sheila Carney opened the Roundtable with a reading from Margaret Wheatley: "I've seen that there is no more powerful way to initiate change than to convene a conversation" (22). The voices that joined together to create a vision of our shared Mercy mission at work in the curriculum initiated a powerful change in my vision of how to proceed. Maureen Crossen began the retreat we held at Carlow on Epiphany 2011 by reading a letter from Catherine McAuley in which she likened life to a series of English country dances, in which the dancers execute an elaborate set of curtsies, bows, and jigs as they take hands and change places. McAuley writes, "We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about, our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back. Oh may He look on us with love and pity and then we shall be able to do anything He wishes us to do, no matter how difficult to accomplish or painful to our feelings." Putting Catherine McAuley into

conversation with Margaret Wheatley gives us a magnificent image of dancing and conversation centered on mission. We can take up Lady Mary Wroth's thread of love standing in a labyrinth with God at the center knowing, with Thomas Merton, "that the desire to please you does in fact please you and I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. // And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road although I may know nothing about it" (lines 4-5).

Thomas Merton, Lady Mary Wroth, Margaret Wheatley, and Catherine McAuley join the conversation around the curriculum by giving us comfort. We do not know the answer to the question of how to best serve the next great need, but we know to ask the question. Having asked the question, we can only walk forward, walking women (and men) guided by our mission and the faith that together we will find the right road.

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# Service Learning in the Sciences: Mercy Values and Civic Engagement

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## ABSTRACT

Like other Mercy institutions, Mount Aloysius College seeks to add unique value to an education system where academic focus is paramount. In the Science and Mathematics Department, the Mercy Critical Concern to “reverence Earth and work more effectively toward the sustainability of life and toward universal recognition of the fundamental right to water” has captured the attention and activism of the faculty and students. In the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania, a history of coal mining has left a legacy of abandoned mine drainage (AMD) with acidic and alkaline discharges affecting more than 3,800 miles of Pennsylvania streams. While this allows unique opportunities to discuss and demonstrate biology and chemistry concepts, there are also prospects for service learning and undergraduate research. In the context of the Mercy values to “develop competence with compassion, put talents and gifts at the service of others, and assume leadership,” this presentation will share strategies to engage students in real, local issues to further their scientific understanding and develop citizenry skills.

Students have created and distributed brochures and restaurant flyers to educate the public about AMD and remediation strategies. Students have developed and performed monitoring techniques involving water chemistry and biological diversity indices, such as macroinvertebrate sampling and diatom research. Such activities have led to collaboration in grant writing with other regional colleges, and hosting of workshops for high school teachers to maximize outreach impact. Most recently, students in a water ecology course developed Science In a Bag modules which were donated to a local elementary school. In each module a book about water quality was used as a resource to initiate scientific thinking, and instructions utilizing household materials were included to engage children in the scientific method. Modules included such topics as density, the water cycle, surface tension, and pollution run-off and were directly tied to Pennsylvania Department of Education standards for the appropriate target age. College students report that these projects require a greater effort on their part, but that the rewards are intellectual growth and commitment to good citizenry.

## BACKGROUND

### The Context of Science and Mathematics at Mount Aloysius College

The job outlook of biological scientists is projected to grow much faster than average with a 21 percent increase from 2008–2018, according the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Biological scientists might focus their studies on plants, animals, microbiology, or some other specialty; with

biotechnology applications such as biofuel production, medical diagnostics and treatment, and applied research on crop yield all driving job growth. Medical scientists, considered separate from biological scientists, are also anticipated to “much faster than average growth” with a 40 percent increase from 2008–2018 (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Although the Science and Mathematics Department at Mount Aloysius College traditionally functioned as a “service department” for health care fields, to teach human anatomy and physiology and similar courses, a major in general science was implemented in 2004 and a major in biology was implemented in 2006. These programs have dramatically changed the scope of courses offered by the department, led to an increase in full-time faculty from three in 2000 to eight for Fall 2011, and attracted students with a wide variety of career goals and interests. For example, some students seek pre-professional coursework to prepare them for physical therapy, occupational therapy, or physician assistant graduate programs. Others are interested in MS or PhD programs in biological science in fields ranging from environmental science to molecular biotechnology. Student enrollment in the biology major alone has grown from four students in Fall 2006 to 38 in Fall 2010. Additionally there were 55 students in Fall 2010 enrolled in pre-professional (Pre-PA, Pre-PT, or Pre-OT) majors (Mount Aloysius College Assessment Data). This growth has been an exciting time for the department, and one of the emphases of teaching and research we have identified as a niche for ourselves is the study of abandoned mine drainage (AMD). This topic can be used as an interdisciplinary net to teach and research in courses as diverse as chemistry, water ecology, and laboratory techniques, as well as social sciences such as history and writing. It also dovetails with the Sisters of Mercy critical concern to “work more effectively toward the sustainability of life and toward universal recognition of the fundamental right to water” (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas).

AMD is considered the major concern in Pennsylvania’s four major river basins as a result of more than 200 years of coal mining history. Though mining served and continues to serve an important economic role, polluted drainage from abandoned mines is estimated to impact more than 3,000 miles of Pennsylvania streams (Figure 1). The runoff contains metals and ions with the potential to be toxic to all stream life from macroinvertebrates to fish (EPA, USGS).

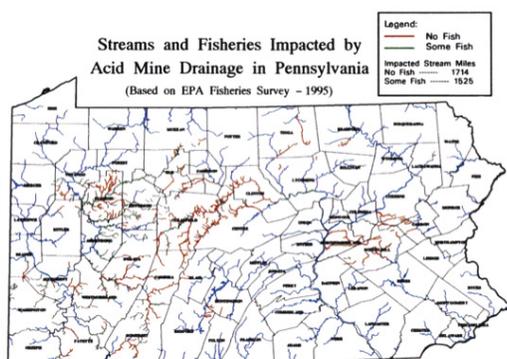


Figure 1.

*Streams in Pennsylvania impacted by AMD.*



Figure 2.

*Hughes Borehole, Portage Pa. Photo by M.G. Anderson, May 2011.*

Most of the mines near Mount Aloysius College contribute acidic runoff, some with a pH as low as 2.98, although it is equally likely at sites across the state for the drainage to be alkaline. Initial identification of the sites now used in teaching and research, primarily Hughes Borehole and Puritan

Discharge, occurred when local Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) officers requested assistance in stream monitoring in 2005. Early on, departmental faculty recognized the potential for applying scientific theory to a relevant local issue, as well as opportunity for students to engage in real world scientific method. These sites are within 10 miles of the college and are accessible with short walks from the main roads near them. Early projects included helping to net fish during electrofishing by DEP (Figure 3) and building hay bale dams to slow and reroute runoff (Figure 4). Those activities were spurred by requests from local organizations and were recognized as a unique opportunity to promote student application of theoretical concepts.



Figure 3.

*DEP officer Scott Alexander (center) and students, Bobby McMaster and Martin Fox. Photo by M.G. Anderson, April 2006.*



Figure 4.

*Students built a dam of hay bales to slow runoff of AMD into a nearby stream. Photo by M.G. Anderson, April 2007.*

## METHODS

### Service Learning and Science in a Bag

In October 2005, Mount Aloysius College confirmed a commitment to engaging students in local issues by adopting a service learning plan outlining active participation and reflection experiences. An ongoing discussion has ensued at the college to distinguish service learning from volunteering and other outreach. Applying course content in a way that benefits both student and community is the overarching goal. At the end of each academic year, usually in March, a Service Learning Exposition is held on campus to present projects conducted throughout the year. Students may choose poster or oral presentation format. It was straightforward to implement existing science projects and create new ones in the format of service learning. Since 2005, the Science and Mathematics Department has been well represented at the Service Learning Exposition.

In Fall 2010, the idea of Science in a Bag emerged in SC 406, Water Ecology. There were 14 students enrolled, majoring in fields ranging from biology, general science (secondary education option), to elementary education. Students worked in pairs and developed an activity-filled bag targeted at preschool and elementary age children. Each bag contained one book related to the topic, objectives matched to standards from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and an activity guide written by the students. Each bag was intended as a stand-alone unit, with terminology and concepts fully explained. Some open-ended questions were included as a means of utilizing the scientific method of experimentation and conclusion. As topics and activities were identified, the students also developed a request for the on-campus Service Learning committee for monetary

support of \$120.00, which was successfully awarded. Although some money was needed, mostly to purchase the books, students were encouraged to develop activities with common household items so the bags would not require a lot of upkeep once they were disseminated. The bags were donated by the admissions department. The materials were assembled and tested in class by swapping bags and attempting the activities. Instructions for activities were edited based on feedback. Topics included the water cycle, pollution, surface tension, acid rain, oil spill, stratification, and macroinvertebrates. Examples of several of the finished projects are shown in Figure 5. Simple methods such as dripping vinegar on chalk were used to simulate acid rain effects. Although the original idea was to donate the bags to the public library, the bags were actually donated to a local elementary school for use in their library and by classroom teachers. The project was presented at the Service Learning Exposition in March 2011.



Figure 5.

*Examples of Science in a Bag projects created by students in the Water Ecology class. Photos by A.T. Millheim, December 2010.*

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

### Service Learning and Science in a Bag

Using the IDEA form feedback collected in Fall 2010, students reported a great sense of accomplishment from their self-created Science in a Bag projects. Most felt it was challenging to match activities to Pennsylvania Department of Education standards, but understood the need to make it stand-alone and self explanatory. One shortfall in the timing of the activity was that they were due so close to the end of the semester it did not leave adequate time to actually try the activity with the intended audience. Subsequent reports by teachers at the school are being collected for a sense of how well the topics were received and how they might be improved or applied to other science topics. Beyond the intrinsic value of donating education modules to the local school, Mount Aloysius students also learned the value of teamwork, communication skills, and the application of knowledge and principles learned in the college course. In a larger scope, this type of activity fits the theme of the Sisters of Mercy to promote education on water quality and environmental sustainability.

Recently, Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) initiatives began to emerge nationally. STEM seeks to “dramatically increase the number of students (especially females, minorities and the underrepresented) entering STEM-related careers while recruiting new workers and retraining the incumbent workforce in these critical fields.” As an investment in the future STEM workforce,

organizations like the National Science Foundation and the Departments of Education, Labor & Industry, and Community and Economic Development developed initiatives to support scholarship, research, and education in K-12 and higher education. States developed task forces to create infrastructure and collaborative networks of STEM educators (PA STEM Initiative). Mount Aloysius College has begun to train pre-service teachers in science and has long participated in community events such as Super Science Saturday, where our college students demonstrate science concepts at a local elementary school on a Saturday morning. STEM formalizes such relationships and offers opportunities for interdisciplinary training through collaboration. Specifically, the National Science Foundation offers funding in projects such as Transforming Undergraduate Education in STEM (National Science Foundation Funding) for which Mount Aloysius College has submitted a phase II grant under the direction of Nancy Trun, PhD of Duquesne University, with application pending. Although a successful grant would provide much needed funding for research, equipment, and events, even the networking required of the grant development is an asset for a small college. Trun served as a guest speaker in spring 2010, and a student from the Mount is now attending graduate school at Duquesne in molecular biology, indirectly as a result of these interactions. Additionally, Mount Aloysius has partnered with Juniata College under the direction of Michael Boyle, PhD in a successfully awarded project titled RCN-UBE Incubator: Transforming Undergraduate Education through Increased Faculty Access to NextGen Sequencing Runs (National Science Foundation Awards) which will provide access to equipment at The Pennsylvania State University. This grant will be implemented in summer 2011. Abandoned mine drainage will be the focus of the Mount's participation in this grant, with an emphasis on identification of the microbes inhabiting AMD.

Projects such as Science in a Bag can be a springboard to larger collaborative networking, and college students are very excited to be a part of such efforts. Students at Mount Aloysius College and other Sisters of Mercy institutions have a unique opportunity to learn and act on the teachings set forth by Catherine McAuley. Challenging our students to utilize the Mercy values in creative and reflective ways can be the foundation for systemic change towards sustainable environmental practices.

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# **SIFE as an Effective Tool for Engaging Students in the Work of Empowerment**

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CHRISTOPHER MINGYAR, MBA, CMA, MOUNT ALOYSIUS COLLEGE

When considering the general theme of “Bringing Mercy to Light,” many things may come to mind, for Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy have built a rich heritage of meaningful service to those in need. In order to narrow the focus a bit, I would like to identify the aspect of that heritage that forms the basis for this paper.

It is probably true that all participants at the Roundtable are familiar with the story of Catherine McAuley. But in order to provide an appropriate context for this paper, those elements of her story that inspire the ideas herein shall be briefly summarized.

## **THE HERITAGE**

When Catherine came into her inheritance from Catherine and William Callaghan and constructed the building on Baggot Street, she started a magnificent ministry, core to which was the education and sheltering of poor women and their children—many of whom were previously living on the streets of Dublin. She hoped to educate them and train them to have employable skills; and she hoped for much more support from the local businesses and people of affluence than she initially received. In spite of the unconventional nature of her approach, and the obstacles it attracted, she was driven to stay focused on her mission and to do what had to be done for poor and disenfranchised women (Mercy International Center).

Her vision of empowerment is the vision that continues to this day in the global Sisters of Mercy ministries of teaching, serving the poor, and promoting good health. In the Americas that ministry includes 21 elementary schools, 43 secondary schools, and 16 colleges and universities (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas). It is this heritage of education and empowering that intersects with the purposes of Students in Free Enterprise, or SIFE.

## **STUDENTS IN FREE ENTERPRISE**

Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) is an international organization of university students, faculty, and business leaders which challenges college students to undertake community outreach projects that empower other people. Students at individual universities form teams that identify needs in their communities and areas served by the university, and develop projects that help people in need. Currently, SIFE operates in 40 countries on more than 1,500 campuses, and involves over 42,000 participating students (SIFE 3). The mission of SIFE is:

To bring together the top leaders of today and tomorrow to create a better, more sustainable world through the positive power of business. (SIFE 20)

In one sense, by garnering the support from businesses and people of affluence and influence, SIFE has incorporated a key element in Catherine's original plan that was, in the beginning, somewhat elusive for her.

All SIFE teams are organized around a core purpose, embodied in the single criterion that all projects are to follow:

Considering the relevant economic, social and environmental factors, which SIFE team most effectively empowered people in need by applying business and economic concepts and an entrepreneurial approach to improve their quality of life and standard of living? (SIFE 20)

A couple aspects of the criterion should be explained for those who are not familiar with SIFE. The phrase "...which SIFE team..." alludes to the competition element of SIFE programming. Toward the end of each academic year, SIFE teams on campuses compete at regional events (in SIFE USA), with regional winners moving on to national competition. National winners advance to the SIFE World Cup to compete for the global championship. The teams are judged on their effectiveness in having a demonstrable positive impact in their respective target markets.

This deserves a bit of pause and reflection. SIFE has established a system wherein college students try to outdo one another in doing good for others. Incorporating a competitive element into the picture is quite effective in motivating students to develop meaningful projects which positively impact other peoples' lives. This type of effective incentive to do good, especially when one considers the network of universities and businesses established to support it, is unique.

## **TYPES OF SERVICE**

In serving others, there are a variety of meaningful and effective approaches. When applied to specific activities, at least three levels of service may be observed. The first level is one in which there is no direct or indirect interface between the service provider and the object of the service. The second level is one in which there is an indirect interface between the two parties. The third level is one in which there is a direct interface between the server and the one being served.

These levels may be applied to the example of a "soup kitchen." As used here, a soup kitchen is understood to be a public place where food is served to people who are not able to provide food for themselves. In the first level of involvement, one may engage in fund raising to buy food and to pay operating expenses for the operation. This can be done without the person who is doing the fundraising ever visiting the enterprise or having direct knowledge of what, specifically, is being done by the enterprise. The motivation for action is typically a desire on the part of the fundraiser to "do good" for an entity that is perceived to be benefitting the community. No needs analysis is

conducted, and the effectiveness of the service is not evaluated. This level does not directly create an interface between the fundraisers and the targeted entity.

The second level of involvement would have a volunteer serve food at the soup kitchen. Here, the server is having indirect contact with clients. By becoming a part of the service delivery mechanism previously established by the operation, the server acts as a conduit for carrying out the organization's mission. The activities at this level are typically determined by someone other than the server, and the server "plugs in" to the system.

The third level asks the question: "What needs do these people have that cause them to be here in the first place?" Stated another way: "What can be done to help these people become self-sufficient so they will not need the services of the soup kitchen?" Activities are then devised that have a direct impact on the condition and capacity of the client. The actions typically involve person-to-person interaction between the server and the client.

The third level differs from the other two levels in three significant ways. First, the action is directed by a consideration for needs, with the server conducting the needs analysis. It is not a pre-established activity determined by a third party. Second, the action is intended to somehow directly improve the situation and capacity of the one being served. Third, it requires direct communication between the server and the client.

It must be recognized that all three of the aforementioned levels of service are good and are necessary. Most charities could not remain viable without non-paid workers attending to all these activities. However, in the context of a college-level program that is intended to provide a meaningful interface between the students and the community, and which is intended to provide the best learning and growth opportunities for students, it is the third level of service that is most highly valued in SIFE competitions.

Thus, our Mercy heritage of being actively engaged in empowering others is effectively incorporated into the purpose and function of individual Students in Free Enterprise teams.

## **ADDRESSING COLLEGE MISSIONS**

To be sure, the overall efforts of Catherine and those of SIFE do have a couple of notable differences. First, Catherine was a devout Catholic and was just as adamant about teaching the faith as she was about teaching job skills. SIFE is secular; it does not have any religious affiliations, or purposes related to any religion. Secondly, Catherine's original mission was to women. But just as the Sisters of Mercy have broadened their ministries over time, so SIFE seeks to empower all people to be economically self-sustaining.

Given that reality, it is fair to question how SIFE can serve the various missions of both secular and religiously-sponsored universities, particularly those of the Mercy colleges. One of the beneficial aspects of SIFE is that its primary function revolves around the universally accepted principle of helping people in need. It would be difficult to find a college or university in the United States

which did not expressly value community service. Because of this, its mission can be adapted to the missions of each host college. It is the common desire to improve the economic condition for people in need that provides the critical intersection between Mercy and SIFE, allowing SIFE to be an effective tool in the advancement of the Mercy heritage.

To provide an example of how that intersection can be codified, we can compare the mission of Mount Aloysius College (MAC) to the mission of MAC SIFE. The mission of Mount Aloysius College is stated as follows:

The mission of Mount Aloysius College is to respond to individual and community needs with quality programs of education in the tradition of the Religious Sisters of Mercy. Each student is provided the opportunity to acquire knowledge and to develop values, attitudes, and competencies necessary for life-long learning within an environment that reflects a liberal arts orientation and a Catholic, Judeo-Christian heritage. (Mount Aloysius College)

The Mission of MAC SIFE is stated as follows:

The mission of Mount Aloysius College SIFE is

- to put our talents and gifts at the service of others,
- to reach out to members of our community, and
- to teach values, attitudes, and competencies necessary to sustain an ethical, free enterprise system.

The spirit that animates both the mission of the College and the mission of MAC SIFE is the example of Catherine McAuley. Reaching out to help others is done around the globe in the name of many different inspirational sources; but the inspiration provided by Catherine is the foundation for the actions of the SIFE team at Mount Aloysius College. While other universities have different inspirational foundations, the existence of those various inspirations does not negate the effectiveness of SIFE in motivating students to continue the empowering work that is also the work of Mercy.

## **EXAMPLES OF HOW SIFE EMPOWERS PROJECT BENEFICIARIES**

### **Ghana Soap Project**

A few years ago, the SIFE team from the University of Ghana developed a project in which villagers were taught to make soap from naturally available ingredients. The making and selling of soap improved the quality of life in the village. This story of how a village was able to improve its economic welfare is the portion of the total story that is often told, but there is a deeper part of the story that is not as well known.

When the SIFE team at the University of Ghana was identifying local needs, they became aware of a village that had an exceptionally high rate of infant mortality—that is what attracted them to this particular village. Bringing experts to the village to examine the situation, they discovered that infants were dying from infections—infections that were a result of unsanitary conditions and hygiene.

They taught the villagers how to properly wash the babies, and the infant mortality rate was dramatically reduced. However, bringing soap into the village on a continual basis was not a sustainable activity. That is the point at which they taught the villagers how to make their own soap, and then sell it also.

### **Women’s World: Business by Women for Women**

As women in developing countries gradually gain more civil rights, their lack of vocational skills often serves as a roadblock to being able to take advantage of the emerging opportunities. SIFE teams are helping women develop skills to become employable and to become entrepreneurs.

The SIFE students at Tajik State University of Law, Business, and Policy in Tajikistan helped poor women acquire sewing skills, in addition to business skills, which helped many become entrepreneurs. One of these emergent tailor shops called M&M now produces dresses, kimonos, hospital gowns, and bedding, and has even made stunning gowns worn by regional beauty pageant contestants (SIFE Project Stories).

### **RUMBA ROAST: IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE, ONE CUP AT A TIME**

Fair-trade coffee is much in the news and is the focus of many social justice activists. The SIFE team at Belmont University in Nashville helped small-scale coffee bean farmers in Latin America gain access to the American coffee market and, in the process, also helped poor Latino immigrants in Nashville. Working with a local coffee company and Conexion Americas, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the Hispanic population in Nashville, they developed a business to identify high quality coffee bean growers; and then import, roast, and sell fair trade coffee beans.

Most of the profit from the business, which has been transferred to local Hispanic immigrants, is reinvested in projects to benefit the Hispanic population in Nashville. “Rumba Roast is more than just great coffee; it has raised the quality of life and standard of living for Hispanic families in Latin America and Nashville, giving them ownership over their futures” (SIFE Project Stories).

### **WESTSIDE MARKET: COMMUNITY MARKET REVITALIZES HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD**

In West Augustine, Florida, local and state leaders approached the Flagler College SIFE team to help reverse a downward trend in their local area. Unemployment was high, and the average family income was \$16,000. The SIFE team developed and marketed the West Side Market, which allows local residents to have an entrepreneurial opportunity to supplement their meager incomes.

The Westside Market is now open each Saturday and features a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, prepared foods and crafts, all produced and sold by local vendors. “The Westside Market has brought economic opportunity and a sense of pride back to the 6,000 residents of West Augustine. The market regularly attracts more than 500 customers and has a vendor base of 25 local residents, who have each substantially improved their financial condition” (SIFE Project Stories).

## **CLOSER TO HOME**

At Mount Aloysius College (MAC), our SIFE team has helped elementary school children learn the value of saving, helped high school students understand the benefits and perils of credit cards, sponsored professional ethics forums on our campus, organized major electronics recycling efforts, and helped the unemployed of the area learn how better to prepare themselves for job searches.

SIFE is interdisciplinary, and many projects are more effective when students of various majors collaborate. One of the past projects at Mount Aloysius involved occupational therapy majors working with an accounting major to develop a lunch seminar for small business owners. In this seminar, the business owners learned how to make their businesses handicapped accessible, and learned what tax credits and deductions can help in the effort.

Another project at MAC involved our Central American States for Scholarships (CASS) Program students. Our CASS students were at Mount Aloysius as part of a larger nationwide program sponsored by the Department of State and administered by Georgetown University to bring Central American and Caribbean basin students to the United States for postsecondary education. Mount Aloysius College was the only college in the consortium that hosted deaf students.

MAC SIFE created a multicultural experience involving CASS students, who were hearing impaired, and interpreter training majors. The resulting project was called the International Extravaganza, an international educational opportunity for elementary and middle school students.

In this project the Central American students each developed a display table of articles representative of their home countries, which were displayed in the gymnasium of the school. When the middle school students entered the gym, they were given a page of 10 questions about the economic realities of the countries represented. Answering the questions required the youngsters to interact with the Central American students. An interpreter training major was at each table to facilitate communication. While one group of students was in the gym, another group was learning dance and music native to the Central American countries, and another group was learning the basics of sign language by playing a type of charades game.

The middle school students became aware of the cultures of other countries, and became very much aware of deafness and the value of sign language.

Because the SIFE system creates an environment of continuous improvement, each year projects are developed that have more benefit for people in need. But SIFE students, themselves, are also beneficiaries of their own work, in different ways.

## **BENEFITS THAT EMPOWER SIFE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS**

In conducting the projects that enlighten and empower others, the college students managing the projects also benefit. Developing needs assessments, project management, and producing measurable outcomes are skills that will serve students well in any future professional endeavor. Students also

have opportunities to hone their communication skills by preparing proposals, project materials, and giving presentations in a variety of venues.

Just as important are the intangible benefits. Students' self-esteems are improved; they also begin to appreciate more fully the opportunities that they have been given, and develop an "attitude of gratitude." Most importantly, they develop the habit of helping others.

Participating students also benefit from the many corporate partnerships that are an integral part of the SIFE system. At the global and national levels, SIFE receives financial and other resource support from major companies. Among the most recognizable are Wal-Mart, Coca-Cola, Campbell's Soup, Walgreens, Lowes, Unilever, and KPMG (SIFE Donors).

These corporate partners provide funding, actively recruit SIFE students for jobs and internships, and sponsor special projects for focused needs. Below are a few corporations and the projects they sponsor.

### **Campbell's Soup: Let's Can Hunger Challenge**

This program, sponsored for SIFE teams in Canada, the United States, and Mexico, challenges students to develop projects in three target areas: improving hunger awareness, helping to provide urgent hunger relief, and helping to break the cycle of hunger.

### **Sam's Club: Environmental Sustainability**

In this program, SIFE teams work with a local Sam's Club and an area business to help that business become more environmentally responsible, and to improve the business's profitability by doing so.

### **Lowes: Community Improvement Challenge**

In this program students seek to improve community living conditions by addressing structural needs of community, educational, municipal, or residential facilities or operations.

## **SUMMARY**

One of the important forces of our Mercy heritage is the awareness of the need to do good things for others—to help other people improve their lives, and to help them live life as fully as possible. Foundational to this is the belief that all people should have the opportunity to succeed in life, and experience the fullness of social justice. Mercy helps people succeed. SIFE helps people succeed. That intersection of purposes—an intersection that focuses on empowering other people—is the essential link that allows SIFE to be an effective mechanism for carrying out actions inspired by our Mercy heritage.

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## Assisting Students to Incorporate the Value of Service through Curricular and Co-curricular Activities

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Institutions of higher education aim to educate students for roles in society that reflect the core values of their institution. Gwynedd-Mercy College (GMC), a Catholic college sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, located in southeastern Pennsylvania, considered this a priority and created several curricular and co-curricular avenues to assist students in incorporating the value of service. Gwynedd-Mercy College has a strong foundation in the liberal arts. The academic distinction lies in the intersection of excellent programs in health care, education, and business administration, which prepares students to become leaders in the region's powerful and growing life-sciences industry ([www.gmc.edu](http://www.gmc.edu)). One of GMC's core values, the "development of professional competency with the Mercy tradition of Service to society," aims to prepare graduates who not only find jobs but to also create lives and careers with deep meaning ([www.gmc.edu](http://www.gmc.edu)). Flowing from the mission and the core values are the expected learning outcomes for all students. Becoming a leader in society is an expected outcome. Students are influenced to be citizens of character and to make their lives count. To do so, individuals need to understand the complexities of our world, ways to begin public involvement, and how to connect with groups that take a stand on these issues (Loeb3). Faculty (and staff) must be aware of their role in assisting students. At GMC, new faculty members are mentored for mission. Mentoring for mission builds ownership of the mission and collegiality (Simone et al. 107).

In order for students to incorporate the value of service, and sustain that value after graduation, it is necessary that colleges and universities make the value explicit. Students need to witness these values within and outside of the classroom. This exposure increases the comfort level of students in expressing behaviors and in witnessing the significance. Since an outcome of Gwynedd-Mercy College is to develop leaders in society, the importance of service to society and expectations of students must be a priority for faculty and staff and infused into the routine life of college students. Curricular and co-curricular activities were developed in hopes of allowing students to continually be exposed to their role of service to society and the importance of social change and justice, and to allow students to engage in constructive activities of service to the community in light of the Gospel tradition, as experienced through the Mercy charism that shapes the college ([www.gmc.edu](http://www.gmc.edu)).

### CURRICULAR INITIATIVES

To assist students in understanding the need for service to society, dedicated curricular requirements were incorporated. The First Year Experience: Service Course and the signature and capstone courses in the student's major were added. The First Year Experience: Service Course (FYE1001) is a mandatory course for all incoming freshman students. This is a one credit course taught by a multidisciplinary team that explores the history, ministries, mission, and core values, as well as the

local and global relevance of the Mercy heritage in the Catholic tradition. It is part of the general education curriculum. One purpose of the general education curriculum is to guide students toward the development of habits of thought and behavior that will assist them to understand and develop humane values that incorporate the ideals of integrity, compassion, and mercy. The signature course component of the general education offers the opportunity to communicate to our students what is distinctive about Gwynedd-Mercy College as a Catholic, Mercy institution by embracing as a theme the hallmarks of a Mercy education: regard for the dignity of the person; academic excellence and life-long learning; education of the whole person: body, mind and spirit, through action and education; and promotion of compassion and justice toward those with less, especially women and children ([www.gmc.edu](http://www.gmc.edu)). The First Year Experience: Service Course (FYE1001) nurtures student development for service to society within the Mercy tradition through participation in a service activity, as well as a guided reflection on this activity. In addition, the course emphasizes student empowerment and the development of leadership skills to foster personal responsibility. Students are enrolled in a class of 15-20 students of various majors. There is a minimum five hour service requirement with reflection. Capstone courses in the student's major are designed to both culminate and assess overall learning and how Mercy influences a particular discipline.

## **CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Co-curricular activities are crucial in teaching and reinforcing the Mercy value of service out of the classroom. Many of the college's service activities are coordinated through Mercy Works, a program established within the Office of Campus Ministry to reflect and enhance the commitment to the Mercy tradition of service to society. The goal is to connect the talents of GMC students with people in need in the wider community, as well as to offer students opportunities to reflect on their experience of service. Mercy Works begins coordinating service experiences for freshman students during the New Student Orientation which begins a few days prior to the start of classes for the academic year, during Welcome Weekend. Welcome Weekend provides an opportunity for students to be introduced to the college, and its mission, as well as to Catherine McAuley. This first service activity is generally scheduled for four hours, with service sites both on and off campus. Students are generally assigned to a First Year Experience course instructor and class so that they can begin making connections. Having a service experience requirement during a student's first days on campus reinforces the importance of service.

Some other service activities that students can elect to participate in through Mercy Works include Habitat for Humanity, Cradles to Crayons, Manna on Main Street—a local soup kitchen and food cupboard, and the Greenhouse Project—growing fresh vegetables on campus to benefit Manna on Main Street. Mercy Works also organizes Alternative Winter Break where students can volunteer at local Mercy sponsored projects such as project H.O.M.E.—Housing Opportunities Medical Education—which is designed to “empower people to break the cycle of homelessness, address the structural causes of poverty, and attain their fullest potential as members of society.” Mercy Works also coordinates disaster relief efforts on campus and a holiday outreach program for Thanksgiving and Christmas. These opportunities assist students in exploring the many ways that they can deepen connection with God, self, and others through the offered programs.

## **ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK**

Spring break has become a ritual at many colleges and universities for students to “let loose.” At GMC, an alternative to that “let loose and party” experience is Alternative Spring Break (ASB), part of the college’s commitment to combine education for competency with the Mercy tradition of service to society. College students, faculty, and staff who participate in these trips share a desire to serve others, to grow in their Mercy identity and spirituality, and to learn more about poverty and social justice. Spending time in a different culture and reflecting together on their experience gives our students a deeper understanding of the struggles of people everywhere who are poor and vulnerable, helps them to grow in self-knowledge, and moves them to continue service on their own. In 2011, 27 students participated on three different ASB trips to Cincinnati, Oh.; Baltimore, Md.; and the Bronx borough of New York, N.Y. ([www.gmc.edu](http://www.gmc.edu)).

Nursing students can choose to go to the Dominican Republic during spring break with nursing faculty at the Frances M. Maguire School of Nursing at Gwynedd-Mercy College. This program started in 2006 and has been a rewarding experience for students, faculty, and the local people of the Dominican Republic. Students go to bateyes (shantytowns) where they set up medical clinics, see patients, take blood pressures, and provide screening and medications to the individuals of the bateyes. Students also visit a day care/school (crib room), tour the local hospital, and give educational presentations in an orphanage. Students witness poverty unlike they have previously experienced, return with a renewed sense of service, and report the experience as life changing.

## **CONFERENCE OF MERCY HIGHER EDUCATION**

The importance of service is reinforced at GMC by taking advantage of Conference of Mercy Higher Education sponsored opportunities. Two opportunities in which GMC students recently became involved with were Mercy meets the United Nations: May 23-25, 2011 which brought together students, faculty, and staff from eight Mercy colleges and universities; and the Power of One, a student leadership conference held at Saint Xavier University, Chicago, Ill. in 2008.

## **MERCY INTERNATIONAL CENTER IN DUBLIN, IRELAND**

The Dublin Pilgrimage for Young Mercy Leaders (August 2011) was organized by Mercy International Centre in the original House of Mercy built by Catherine McAuley in Dublin, Ireland. College students and upper-level high school students from all over the world participated. The heart of the pilgrimage was a three-day conference featuring presentations by Sr. Marilyn Lacey of Mercy Beyond Borders and Sr. Adele Howard of Fraynetwork Digital Storytelling, as well as breakout groups exploring a variety of Mercy themes. Ten Gwynedd-Mercy College students, accompanied by two faculty members, also had a pre-conference experience of several days’ duration in Northern Ireland that immersed students in the peace process. This trip engaged the students with the history and charism of Mercy, so when they returned to ordinary life, they were better equipped to be Mercy leaders in our college and in our world.

## **COLLEGE COMMITTEES**

Students have the opportunity to participate on the mission and values committee of the college. This committee is composed of faculty, staff, students, campus ministry, and the special assistant to the president for mission and planning. This committee engages the college community in mission and values and celebrates Mercy Week. The committee also celebrates and defines the mission and values theme for the year, communicates the theme to the campus community, and partners with other faculty governance or college committees and departments.

## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM SPORTS TEAMS, STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS, AND CLUBS**

Service is reinforced in the various clubs, organizations, and sport teams on campus, strengthening the student's experience with Mercy values, especially the value of service. One example of such an organization is Gwynedd-Mercy College's chapter of the National Mercy Honor Society, Sigma Phi Sigma. It is dedicated to the ideals of fidelity, scholarship, and service. This is a working honor society; members meet two or three times a semester, participate in a minimum one service and one academic event each semester, plan one Sigma Phi Sigma event per year, and serve as ushers at various college events.

Students who join the GMC chapter of the National Nurses Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP) are required to participate in a minimum of two service activities each year. Two opportunities that students can take advantage of include: Manor Care Senior Care, in which they plan games and participate in crafts with longtime residents of this nursing home, and the Hearts for Babies drive. During this effort, GMC SNAP partners with Catholic Social Services of Philadelphia to provide infant diapers, formula, toys, and clothes for babies of disadvantaged teenage single moms.

Sports teams also incorporate service requirements with the goal of strengthening students' Mercy values. The goal is to incorporate social responsibility into team responsibilities. The types of activities vary with each sports team, but the requirement is universal. The men's soccer team participated in organizing fundraisers and creating get-well cards for a local brain tumor patient. The tennis team participates in Touch of Tennis which is run by Coach Jim Holt from GMC. A tennis clinic for special needs individuals, Touch of Tennis offers student athletes and special education students the opportunity to interact with and support individuals with special needs.

## **IT TAKES THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY**

In conclusion, GMC recognizes that efforts to assist students to incorporate Mercy values must extend throughout the institution. This process requires involvement of the entire college community and a curricular and co-curricular emphasis on service. Examples of social responsibility, education, and reinforcement involve opportunities for students to experience justice issues, such as hunger, homelessness, and poverty; gender equality and empowerment of women; environmental sustainability; and nonviolent actions. Increasing students' awareness of service learning, strengthening their regard for the dignity of persons, and developing their own sense of responsibility will make a difference in the world.

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# For a Just and Merciful World: Bringing Mercy to Light in the Teaching of Social Movements

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*“We witness to Mercy when we reverence the dignity of each person”*

*Constitutions*, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, paragraph 8.

## INTRODUCTION

The work of social justice is no small undertaking. Yet, the Sisters of Mercy respond to the challenge of building a just and merciful world in the light of Catholic Social Teaching, in the context of the Mercy characteristics, and through a focus on the Mercy Critical Concerns. With a regard for the dignity of all persons, a commitment to the common good, and propelled toward action for the transformation of sinful social structures, Catholic Social Teaching and the Mercy charism inspire the teaching of social movements.

The power to create social change in order to bring about a just and merciful world is clearly evidenced in the study of social movements. Social movements are grass roots struggles that seek to rectify societal injustices. Social movements are essential moral strivings toward the good (Stewart, et al). Catholic Social Teaching and the Mercy characteristics help us navigate these moral struggles as they shed a light on how we understand *the good*. As Farley puts it, “it is Mercy that illuminates justice and propels it into action.” (Farley) This paper will explore how Catholic Social Teaching and the Mercy charism inform teaching and learning about social justice. I will conclude by offering a case study of one course—The Roots of the Civil Rights Movement.

## UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements are grass roots moral struggles that encounter opposition in promoting changes in cultural assumptions and values concerning issues of social justice (Stewart, et al). As grass roots struggles, social movements are organized from the bottom up, which distinguishes them from lobbying organizations and special interest groups. The goal of social movements is to attain justice by striving for a new understanding of *the good*. Striving for the good presumes knowing the good. Consequently, social movements usually involve an argument for re-defining the common good. Social activists work to transform perceptions of what is a just society; they point out a need to see the world differently. Since social movements are about changing societal perceptions and behavioral norms, they always encounter opposition. Social movements are counter cultural; accordingly, they are not initiated and sustained by people who follow the rules.

Social movements also involve education since they depend on conscious-raising. Gandhi believed that in order to cure an injustice, you first need to make the injustice visible. Thus, creating awareness and understanding of societal injustices is a key element in bringing about social change. Conscious-raising also legitimizes the movement. For a social movement to be successful, its cause must be seen as legitimate in the eyes of institutions, government, the public, and potential advocates.

Social movements are inspired by a desire for justice and propelled by a willingness to sacrifice to cure the injustice. Social advocacy requires courage, conviction, and a moral compass. Catholic Social Teaching and the Mercy characteristics provide a foundation for understanding the good and for navigating society's moral struggles.

## **CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING, THE MERCY CHARISM, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

With a focus on the societal dimension of Catholic identity, Catholic Social Teaching offers a moral framework for building a just society. The principles of Catholic Social Teaching<sup>1</sup> are rooted in love and respect for the other and serve as a guide for the teaching of social movements. Catholic Social Teaching calls attention to our human dignity, and thus brings awareness to sinful social structures that institutionalize indignities. It educates students about their social responsibility and motivates them to be active citizens. In what might be called “an evolving social message,” Catholic Social Teaching always has currency (DeBerri and Hug). Principles of social justice continue to serve as a framework for addressing contemporary injustices. Thus, Catholic Social Teaching provides a context within which Mercy institutions inspire social advocacy.

The Mercy charism further supports the teaching of social movements through its mission to instruct the uneducated in the light of a just and merciful world. Mary Sullivan explains the need for instructing the ignorant and uneducated with regard to issues of human dignity:

“We all know people—and it is probably true in some ways even of ourselves—who have PhDs, and yet are spiritually ignorant of the value of and need for certain humane, and indeed essentially human, attitudes and practices. Otherwise, where does our contemporary greed, and deceit, and torture come from?” (Sullivan)

One of the key elements in the Mercy characteristics is to ensure conscious raising opportunities to focus on those who have less (Stevens). Illuminating justice necessitates bringing light to injustice.

Teaching social movements also draws from the critical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Whether the concern is for nonviolence, racism, reverence for the earth, concern for women or for immigrants, the Mercy Critical Concerns are framed around a need to cure injustice. When developing the Roots of the Civil Rights Movement course, I drew, in particular, from the concerns for nonviolence and for unrecognized and un-reconciled racism.

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<sup>1</sup>Principles of Catholic Social Teaching have been thematically organized by various scholars and institutions. In my teaching, I draw from the principles compiled by Amata Miller, IHM.

The need “to deepen and assimilate more consciously the practice of nonviolence” is an integral aspect of the charism of Mercy (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas). The commitment to nonviolence is usually associated with anti-war movements and peace initiatives. Yet, a commitment to the practice of nonviolence lies beneath all social movements. Since social movements seek to change societal norms and power structures through education, inspiration, and communication (rather than revolution), social movements are inherently nonviolent. Additionally, the practice of nonviolent resistance, which is rooted in the philosophy of Gandhi<sup>2</sup> and was advanced by Martin Luther King, Jr.,<sup>3</sup> serves as a grounding principle for many social movements and was the hallmark of the American Civil Rights Movement.

The Mercy Critical Concerns also address the indignities of racism with a direct call to “deepen our response to the unrecognized and un-reconciled racism, past and present, within our community.” (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas) If we understand racism within the context of Catholic Social Teaching, we recognize that racism is an affront to the principle of human dignity and, therefore, a crime against the humanity of the other. The attitudes and practices of racism not only produce individual injustices, institutionalized racism creates systemic injustice with political and societal consequences. Racism creates sinful social structures.

With a commitment to curing societal injustices, the Mercy charism gives energy to Catholic Social Teaching and provides a context for teachers in Mercy institutions to infuse social justice into our pedagogy. In this way, we instruct the ignorant; in this way, we help learners to understand social justice in terms of human dignity; in this way, we empower our students with knowledge that can inspire them to advocate for social change.

## **COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: TEACHING THE ROOTS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

### **Background and Rationale**

If Catholic Social Teaching and the Mercy charism provide us with a moral grounding for social justice, then rhetoric provides us with the vehicle. Social movements are reliant on public communication. In order to educate society about an injustice, to argue for a change in the way we view societal norms, and to stand up to opposition, social advocacy requires effective communication and skilled communicators. From speeches, to protests, to media coverage, public communication is the vehicle for creating social change. Agents for social change use rhetoric to raise consciousness, to craft an argument for new perceptions of *the good*, to motivate political will, to mobilize a following, to inspire foot soldiers to continue the struggle, and to give hope to the hopeless. Thus, the study of rhetorical artifacts serves as a useful entrée to understanding social movements.

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<sup>2</sup> Gandhi’s pacifist philosophy, a central concept of which is *satyagraha* or *truth force*, argues that justice can never be achieved by force. See Richard Gregg’s *The Power of Nonviolence* for an in-depth discussion of Gandhi and nonviolence.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. drew on Gandhi’s nonviolent philosophy to create his principles of nonviolent resistance. See King’s “My Pilgrimage to Nonviolence” in his 1958 publication, *Stride Toward Freedom*, for more insights into King’s philosophy of nonviolence.

The rationale for teaching a course specifically on the Civil Rights Movement is rooted in respect for the value of studying the history of advocacy. Yet, the study of civil rights is also necessitated by the sad fact that racism is still part of the American landscape. The currency of exploring civil rights and race in America is evident in every aspect of American life. From Dr. Laura Schlessinger’s “N word” rant to the firing of Shirley Sherrod over misrepresentations of her speech to the NAACP, race relations are front and center in the American media. Our first African American president is in the White House, yet a recent CNN revisit of the 1939 Kenneth Clark study shows that American children still demonstrate a white bias. And, while our president has called for us to work toward building a more perfect union, our national conversation on race is punctuated with polarizing rhetoric and accusations of racism. It seems that Faulkner was right when he said that the past isn’t dead; it isn’t even past.

An examination of the events and the rhetoric that propelled and sustained the American Civil Rights Movement demonstrates how communication can be used to advocate for social justice and racial reconciliation. As one of the most powerful examples of social movement struggles in American history, the Civil Rights Movement is overflowing with rhetorical eloquence, political agility, and media savvy. Accordingly, this movement serves as a rich and textured model for studying justice and social change.

### Course Description

In the summer of 2010, I taught a six credit course, *The Roots of the Civil Rights Movement*, that critically analyzed the historical, moral, and rhetorical elements of social change as exemplified by this movement. The course considers the principles of human dignity and social justice that inspired the fight for racial equality. The 2010 course included traditional classes on Carlow University’s campus as well as a nine day tour of the South where students visited the people and places that memorialize the birth of the American Civil Rights Movement. Course objectives and learning outcomes were:

- To demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of social justice and advocacy
- To demonstrate an understanding of the nature of rhetoric for social change and the character of social movements
- To demonstrate a knowledge of the history of the civil rights movement in America, including the history and impact of racism on American society then and now
- To critically examine how communication events inspired and propelled the Civil Rights Movement
- To engage in firsthand encounters with the people who participated in the movement and the places that commemorate the Civil Rights Movement

In preparation for their encounter with history, students were given readings that would provide them with theoretical grounding and would situate their learning on the tour. Reading assignments included book chapters and articles on rhetoric and social movements, the *Principles of Catholic Social Teaching* (Miller), speeches on racial equality from Frederick Douglass to Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as Jim Crow laws and associated cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. the Board*

of Education. Students also studied and discussed Ghandi’s philosophy of nonviolence as well as King’s adaptation of nonviolence resistance. Then came pedagogy outside the classroom—teaching, traveling, and learning with the students.

For nine days in June 2010, the students and I traveled by bus covering over 2,300 miles through Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Major sites included the Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery, Ala. the lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute in Selma, Ala., as well as churches and other famous locations that commemorate the Civil Rights Movement.

The tour also gave students the opportunity to speak with people who were part of the movement. Students met Dr. Samuel “Billy” Kyles, who persuaded Dr. King to come to Memphis to speak in support of the sanitation workers and who stood beside King on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel when he was shot. Many of the key speakers were women. Ruth Harris, a preacher’s daughter from Albany, Ga. who was one of the original Freedom Singers, spoke about how song told the story of the movement and how it was used to create unity. One of the highlights for the students was when Miss Harris taught them freedom songs and conducted a sing-along. Tour participants also met Juniata Abernathy, widow of Dr. Ralph Abernathy, who witnessed the movement from the ground up and who spoke of the importance of student activists. We also met with Minnijean Brown Trickey, one of the Little Rock Nine who talked about the indignities suffered during the integration of Little Rock’s Central High School, as well as Joanne Bland, who at age 11 participated in the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma that became known as “Bloody Sunday.” These powerful speakers served as human touch points in studying the struggle for racial equality.

While traveling, we held class each day. Students were assigned readings—many were speeches from leaders of the movement—that connected to the people and the events that they would encounter each day. Class was often a discussion over dinner to explore the meanings and context of the day’s events. The shared experiences of the day and the informality of our ‘classroom’ invited class discussions that were different from any others I have experienced. Students self-disclosed about their life experiences regarding issues of race; discussions were sometimes emotional (we cried together); and students were empowered to create their informal learning environment—this was egalitarian, feminist pedagogy at work.

### **Course outcomes**

*“If there is a change I want to see, then I should work toward it; I should be that change.”*

—Carlow University Student

Through the course, students produced a variety of work products from the traditional, such as short papers and a major research project, to the less typical, such as videos, photography, and Facebook pages. Their work examined various aspects of communication and the Civil Rights Movement. Examples included papers that discussed the relationship between the Black Baptist church and the movement, the impact of media coverage and photo journalism on the success of the movement, and the philosophy of non-violent resistance as exemplified by the Greensboro Four.

Perhaps most importantly, students came away with what one called a “life changing experience.” As they reflected on their personal transformation, students discovered meaning that transcended the study of this one snapshot in history. I am reminded of Fr. James Keenan’s definition of Mercy: “the willingness to enter into the chaos of others” (Keenan). Learners who participated in this course and tour entered into the chaos of racism—they saw the impact of advocacy, the capacity of Mercy, the consequence of ignoring injustice, and they witnessed the power to create social change.

This transformative learning experience compelled the students to share what they learned. So, in October 2010, the students gathered in Kresge Theatre at Carlow University to share their experiences from the course and tour with their community. They sang songs, showed video clips, discussed their research projects, and offered personal reflections. The event celebrated their learning and transformation.

## **CONCLUSION**

This course and tour brought together nine students—both African American and White and from different majors and disciplinary perspectives—for an experiential study in social justice. Together, they bore witness to the pain of racism, and they saw firsthand the power of Mercy to cure injustice and to create social change. Ultimately, the seeds were planted to help these young learners make broader connections to other social movements and human rights causes. The students have come from this experience with a sense of responsibility to be advocates, but also to be story tellers. As one student stated, “we know too much; we have to pass this along.”

While courses in social movements exist in a variety of educational contexts and disciplines, this course benefits from its roots in a Mercy institution of higher learning. Catholic Social Teaching and the Mercy charism provide a context within a context for teaching social movements and for inspiring students to learn, to advocate, and to build a just and merciful world.

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# Operation S.M.A.R.T.™

## Teaching Preservice Teachers: The Mercy Way

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MERRYELLEN TOWEY SCHULZ, PHD, COLLEGE OF SAINT MARY

*Sisters of Mercy are women who commit their lives to ... serving God's people, especially those who are sick, poor and uneducated. In the spirit of the Gospel, our mission is to help people to overcome the obstacles that keep them from living full and dignified lives.*

—Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Website

### ABSTRACT

The primary goal of Operation S.M.A.R.T.™ at College of Saint Mary (CSM) is to provide enabling experiences, for both young girls and pre-service teachers, that will help them develop positive attitudes toward and powerful skills in math, science, and technology. Preservice teachers at College of Saint Mary, a university dedicated to the careful education of women, learn to nurture in *all* children a love of learning and to teach them knowledge and skills for success in their lives and careers. They learn through the modeling and instruction of professors who teach them not only *what* to teach, but also *how* to teach to all children. Young girls in the program experience hands-on learning in mathematics, science, and technology in an environment that expects girls to succeed in and enjoy these traditionally male-dominated subjects.

### INTRODUCTION

Half of the population of American students is female, and, though some progress has been made to increase the numbers of young women entering careers that require skills in math, science, and technology, less than 30 percent of jobs in science and technology are held by women. The statistics are worse for most minorities, with only 4 percent of such jobs held by African Americans and 3 percent by women of Hispanic descent (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Reasons for this disparity in equity are many and complex, but an important factor is that girls, especially those from lower socio-economic levels and minority populations, do not take high school coursework in mathematics, science, and technology that will prepare them for college work necessary for careers in science and technology. Economic, social, and cultural traditions influence student attitudes and beliefs about careers. Minority families are more likely to live in poverty than are Caucasian families, thereby reducing children's access to experiences and opportunities that might lead them to choose to take courses and develop attitudes that will lead them to careers in science or technology. Psychological factors play a role in women's choice of nontraditional careers. "Resisting pressure to follow gender-traditional career paths requires exceptional strength and self-reliance" (Stephenson and Burge 161). This is particularly true for Hispanic and African-American girls. Operation

S.M.A.R.T.™ includes learning experiences that will help girls overcome negative attitudes toward their abilities in math and science and help them develop confidence to pursue careers formerly denied to them because of gender, socio-economic status, or ethnicity.

The young girls served in the CSM Operation S.M.A.R.T.™ program attend public and parochial schools in Omaha, Neb., most of them from low socioeconomic and minority populations. The program has been recognized nationally and locally for its contributions to preparing girls to consider nontraditional careers, especially in professions that require skills in math, science, and technology. The Francis Warde medal was awarded to the program in 2000 and in April 2011 CSM and Girls Inc. were honored to receive the Outstanding Community Partnership in Education award from Nebraska's First Lady, Sally Ganem.

Young girls from lower socio-economic groups and minority populations frequently do not envision themselves attending college. In fact, many do not know what college is. One of the most unique and important features of the program is bringing the girls to the campus to learn from and interact with college students.

Many of the resources available to promote equity for women and girls have focused on high school age students. Recent research indicates that this might be too late. By the time girls are in high school, it is very difficult to succeed in rigorous math and science courses if they have not previously developed skills and attitudes that will contribute to success in math, science, and technology at higher levels. Girls in grades four through six are making decisions about their futures. Research shows that early development of positive attitudes and skills in math, science, and technology will cause girls in those grades to choose higher-level coursework when they attend high school (Bowman, 18).

The majority of preservice elementary teachers are females, many of whom, for the same reasons stated above, exhibit less confidence in teaching math, science, and technology than they do in teaching language arts. "Math-anxious teachers can result in math-anxious students" (Martinez, 117). Preservice teachers are taught to understand how important their influence is in overcoming the myth that girls do not perform well in those subjects and should avoid them. Cruikshank and Sheffield (1992) wrote that teachers need to implement seven important measures to avoid causing their students to learn math-anxious behaviors. These measures suggest that teachers (a) show that they like mathematics; (b) make mathematics enjoyable; (c) show the use of mathematics in careers and everyday life; (d) adapt instruction to students' interests; (e) establish short-term, attainable goals; (f) provide successful activities; and (g) use meaningful methods of teaching so that math makes sense. Education researchers recommend reducing stress on speed tests, drills, and competition among students in order to decrease the chances of math anxiety. Communicating about math and reflecting on the mathematics that occur in the classroom and everyday life increase mathematical understanding (Reys, Suydam, and Lindquist).

Operation S.M.A.R.T.™ activities, based on models developed by Seymour Papert, creator of LOGO software, Jerome Bruner, David and Roger Johnson, and others. Papert's model is intended to help very young children develop skills and attitudes early that will motivate them to learn and

explore math and science in elementary and middle school. Papert maintains that children, especially minority and low-income children, given time to work on self-directed projects with a teacher who is also exploring and facilitating but not forcing their learning, benefit socially and cognitively from the experiences. According to Clements and Sarama (341) mathematics activities involved in continuous problem-solving should be included in the preschool curriculum for the benefit of all students, particularly for children from minority and low-income groups who are at risk for experiencing considerable difficulty later on in math.

## **COLLEGE OF SAINT MARY (CSM)**

The only Catholic college for women in a five-state region, College of Saint Mary offers undergraduate and graduate education in an environment dedicated to calling forth potential and developing leadership. College of Saint Mary, located in Omaha, Neb., with an enrollment of 1,000 students, is an HLC (Higher Learning Commission) accredited, independent women's college. Associate and bachelor degrees are offered in 26 fields of study, including biology, chemistry, business administration, occupational therapy, paralegal studies, and teacher education. Master's degree programs are offered in nursing, occupational therapy, organizational leadership, and teacher education. Men are admitted to the graduate programs, because the exception in civil rights laws that allows single sex education does not apply to graduate programs (OCR). Founded in 1923 by the Sisters of Mercy, the university maintains its tradition of offering a values-centered education that combines liberal arts with career preparation. Distinctive programs include a residence hall designed specifically for single mothers and their children, a teacher education program with hands-on exposure to teaching beginning with the first year, and a Distinguished Scholars program for juniors and seniors to do actual research with faculty members.

Inside the classroom, students benefit from a technology rich environment, a 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio, and learn from professors who really come to know their students as well as the content of their disciplines. CSM is equipped with computer labs and wireless connectivity throughout the campus. All classrooms are equipped with Internet access and multimedia equipment. Outside the classroom, students may participate in residential music and theatre programs; work on a leadership skills certificate; engage in internships and service opportunities; and represent College of Saint Mary in intercollegiate sports: soccer, volleyball, basketball, softball, cross-country, golf, and swimming.

The College of Saint Mary Teacher Education Program prepares undergraduate and graduate career changers to become highly qualified teachers for children from birth through grade 12. The program has long been dedicated to equity for women and girls with emphasis on leadership in meeting the needs of all children.

## **OPERATION S.M.A.R.T.™**

Operation S.M.A.R.T.™ is a joint venture between Girls Incorporated (Girls Inc.) of Omaha and College of Saint Mary, designed to cause long-term changes in the nature of math, science,

and technology education for women and girls and to develop positive attitudes toward consideration of careers in science and technology fields. The project was initiated in 1992 as a response to the gender gap that existed then (and still exists today) in the number of women pursuing careers in math, science, technology, and related fields. Minority students from low-income families and female students, in particular, are often at a disadvantage in acquiring the skills necessary for those disciplines.

The mission of Girls Inc. is to serve girls and young women by providing experiences that will help them with career choices, employment opportunities, and development of leadership roles that have historically been denied them. “Girls Incorporated is a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.... Girls Inc. responds to the changing needs of girls and their communities through research-based programs and advocacy that empower girls to reach their full potential and to understand, value, and assert their rights” (girlsinc.org)

Within the Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup> experience at CSM, 60 to 100 first through sixth grade girls of diverse backgrounds receive instruction in natural and social sciences, math, and technology. Girls from Girls Inc. are transported to the campus for an after-school program twice a week each term for eight weeks for instructional activities. “Classes” of ten girls learn from pairs of preservice teachers. The learning activities emphasize “hands-on” natural/social science and math experiences and gender equity. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige was quoted as saying, “*By harnessing technology, we can expand access to learning and close the achievement gap in America*” (ED.Gov). Preservice teachers and the young girls in the program work extensively with computers, handhelds, digital cameras, and other technology.

Many young girls from lower socio-economic groups and minority populations do not envision themselves attending college. In fact, many do not know what college is. The following reflection from a preservice teacher vividly illustrates the importance of bringing the girls to the college for Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup>.

I was reflecting on my latest S.M.A.R.T. (sic) session, thinking about the time it takes to really get started on our lesson[s]. I realized that every day when the girls come in, we spend the first five minutes answering questions about college life. I realized what an amazing opportunity this is for the girls from Girls Inc. They are so excited to be here. One girl told me that her cousins are “jealous ‘cause I go to college.” Every day the girls have more questions for us. How do you get to go to college? What do we do here? They talk about what it will be like for them in college. I am so proud to be a part of this program. It truly does enhance my educational experience. Now I see how much it truly enhances their lives as well. Just think, one day when they are grown and sitting in their dorm room studying, they will remember S.M.A.R.T.(sic) and think, “this is where it started.”

Though an integral part of the Teacher Education Program, Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup> is not included in the College of Saint Mary budget and relies on grant funding. Careful management keeps the program going, and new funding is constantly sought for continuation and updating of the program.

## PEDAGOGY

CSM sophomore teacher education students enrolled in teaching methods courses—natural/social science in the fall and mathematics in the spring—plan and deliver instruction in math, science, and technology to the girls in grades kindergarten through six. Women preparing to be teachers frequently lack confidence in their math and science abilities and contact with individuals of diverse backgrounds (Beilock 1860-1863). In the courses, students learn pedagogy, content, and classroom management, and develop more positive attitudes toward math and science, which they are able to apply in the 64 practicum hours they complete within the program. Working in pairs, they prepare standards-based, hands-on lessons, create positive learning environments, and conduct the lessons they have prepared.

In keeping with the mission of the College of Saint Mary, a service-learning component is integrated into lessons during the fall term. CSM students write service-learning lesson plans and submit proposals for mini-grants to fund their projects. The proposals are reviewed and students are awarded approximately \$100 per class to complete the projects with their students from Girls Inc. and to provide a science-related “souvenir” of the projects for their students. With this project preservice teachers learn a process that will be valuable in their future teaching careers and the young girls learn about service to others.

The objectives of the Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup> program are adapted from the objectives and goals of the trademarked national Girls Inc. Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup> program. These are:

1. Provide girls with basic knowledge in the fields of science, math and relevant technology.
2. Encourage girls to explore possible career paths in S.M.A.R.T. areas, which are typically underrepresented by women.
3. Increase girls’ aptitude, interest and an additional shift toward the belief that they can be successful in math and science (girlsinc.org).

Girls Inc. describes Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup>’s formula for success as assuming that girls are interested in math, science, and technology. Many girls, especially those of color, receive messages that indicate these areas of study are for “other” people and not for them. Everyone involved with these girls needs to let them know that they believe girls can and will be successful in studying these subjects. This goes a long way toward developing girls who are eager to explore and enjoy things often considered masculine such as machinery, robotics, building materials, and puzzles.

The Girls Inc. formula for success recommends letting girls make big interesting mistakes. Girls need to take risks and solve problems. Instead of being afraid of making mistakes, girls are encouraged to make them and to turn them into science or math investigations. “Supported by adults instead of rescued, girls learn to embrace their curiosity, face their fear and trust their own judgment” (girlsinc.org). Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup> helps girls and preservice teachers get past what Girls Inc. calls the “yuk” factor. They learn that it is not only acceptable, but natural and fun to get dirty and to sink their hands into messy activities. It is a given among Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>TM</sup> participants that girls can succeed in math, science, and technology studies which will lead them to desirable careers in previously male-dominated professions.

## MODELS OF TEACHING

To prepare teachers who meet the goals and objectives of Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>™</sup>, CSM students learn various models of teaching and many strategies to engage the young girls in meaningful science, math, and technology lessons. They learn to use cooperative learning, guided discovery learning, project learning, and direct instruction appropriately. Cooperative learning has been found to be especially beneficial to minority students in problem-solving situations, resulting in higher scores on assessments of reasoning, creativity, and problem-solving (Johnson and Johnson). Guided discovery and inquiry-based learning (Bruner 21-32) are constructivist approaches which encourage students to explore and experience learning rather than just consuming it as in lecture-type environments. With guidance from careful teachers, children can seek answers to their own questions to learn large amounts of information through experimentation and investigation. Project and problem based learning are vehicles which provide open ended opportunities for students to explore and investigate and use the math, science, and technology skills they are developing. Direct instruction is used effectively to teach the young girls important basic information and to help them with memorization as is necessary with math facts (Stockard 1-16).

Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>™</sup> at CSM also includes a strong literacy component. Reading and writing are essential skills that students need to learn and be able to use genuinely in other disciplines. Preservice teachers read stories to prompt student inquiry, have students write lab reports, and describe mathematical or science processes in their own words, often using computer word processing to write. Significant use of technology, including computers, video and still cameras, GPS devices, and handhelds integrates the acquisition and application of technology skills into learning. Participants in the program have produced videos, documentaries, surveys, spreadsheets, and treasure hunts using technology.

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The young girls come to CSM late in the day, sometimes tired, and often carrying the stresses of the whole school day and some family issues with them. This, along with the fact that children sometimes misbehave, can cause some management problems to arise. The CSM Teacher Education Program sees this as an opportunity for preservice teachers to learn and practice classroom management strategies. Instructors provide them with proactive methods for preventing many behavior problems and strategies for mediating situations when they occur. For example, it is important in schools to be able to move students from one area to another without disturbing other classes. Taking the young girls from the buses through the university halls, upstairs, and into classrooms enables the future teachers to develop the important skill of conducting quiet passage through hallways. When a situation demands it, instructors will step in to assist, but only after the preservice teacher has attempted to use the strategies she has been taught in class.

## RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM

Results of Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>™</sup> are measured and evaluated each term to assure that the goals and objectives of Girls Inc. and CSM Teacher Education are met. Various instruments and methods are used for data collection. These include:

1. Teacher-produced, preservice teacher-produced and student-produced learning artifacts;
2. The effect on student achievement in science as measured by pre- and post-assessments;
3. The effect on student attitudes toward science as measured by pre- and post-assessments;
4. The effect on student achievement in math as measured by the *Classroom Mathematics Inventory* (Guillaume);
5. The effect on student attitudes toward math as measured by the *Classroom Mathematics Inventory Attitude Assessment Protocol* (Guillaume) and interviews with parents/guardians of Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>™</sup> participants;
6. Changes in preservice teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward technology as measured by first-class session scientist drawings, math stories, and learning and practicum reflections;
7. Changes in teacher aptitude and attitude as reflected in the utilization of technology in the classroom;
8. Changes in young children's attitudes toward using computers as measured by semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

Evaluations reveal that the more a girl participates in Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>™</sup>, the more favorable her attitude toward studying science and math. Girls told evaluators that due to Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>™</sup>, they would use science and math as adults (girlsinc.org).

## CONCLUSION

*“No work of charity can be more productive of good to society than the careful instruction of women.”*

—Catherine McCauley

These words, mounted in metal letters to a large garden in front of the plaza, are the first thing one sees upon entering the College of Saint Mary. They are paraphrased from Rule 10 of the Original Rule by Catherine McCauley. Their prominence expresses the importance to CSM of promoting the education of women. The Teacher Education Department carefully educates teachers who, in turn, carefully educate young girls. The Mercy Mission encourages working toward systemic change and commitment to the economically poor and embracing multicultural reality. Through Operation S.M.A.R.T.<sup>™</sup> CSM-educated teachers are able to make systemic changes in education by teaching young girls from economically poor and diverse populations that they can succeed and in the areas of science, math, and technology and have rewarding careers.

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# Self-Efficacy Builds Professional Confidence in the Community Classroom

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## INTRODUCTION

Mercy educators must go beyond the classroom into the community if graduates are to internalize Mercy values of dignity, justice, service, excellence, and stewardship. Faculty preparing course content and academic expectations must present Mercy values so that students, faculty, and community members can identify and appreciate what the values offer.

Boyer (1990) challenged faculty to realize obligations outside of the classroom. Academic and civic dimensions of learning need development for the sake of both changing student populations and emerging needs of society. Educators are encouraged to embrace students in learning partnerships where learning results from an active process rather than passive acceptance. Educators need to be accountable for material taught in the classroom and its relevance to society. The pedagogy of service learning evolved as a means to connect the academic world and civic responsibilities. Changes in health care delivery and increasing complexity of health care require educators to redesign nursing education. Nurses now practice in the reconfigured health care system where the emphasis is maintaining health rather than returning to a healthy state. The role of nurse as teacher plays a significant part in maintaining wellness of clients. For this reason students must build confidence in their ability to teach health care content. The need for health care and health care teaching expands as the community evolves.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Within the framework of academic mission, nursing education, service learning, and self-efficacy educators provide students with a learner-centered means to enhance professional confidence.

### Mission Statement

Curricular service learning is a visual means of articulating a college mission to current and prospective students and the community. Colleges sponsored by religious orders find strong congruence between mission statements and service learning. “Walking the Talk” (O’Rourke, 2009) is historically relevant in Mercy institutions where the first Sisters of Mercy in Ireland were referred to as “walking nuns” because of their presence among people in Dublin. In the Crimean war the Sisters of Mercy sought to relieve both corporal and spiritual ills of the soldiers recognizing the person was composed of body and soul (Gillgannon, 1961). Mary Sullivan (2006) reminded faculty of the importance of good example in modeling, both personally and corporately, all the values an institution seeks to promote. “The challenge these words [i.e., mission statement] present

to Mercy educators may not have fully dawned upon us. We are to be and do what we teach. If we wish to teach mercy, we must speak and act mercifully towards others” (Sullivan, 2006). Redding (2006) validated this perspective when she wrote, “nursing educators focus on the socialization process of individuals entering nursing programs as well as the image of the profession.” The socialization process is evident during service learning reflections when students share what they learned, personal beliefs and biases.

## **Nursing Education**

Nursing educators pursued pedagogies that were more flexible in centering learning in the community rather than the classroom. Health promotion activities in community settings required students and faculty to reflect and respond to community-identified needs as members of interdisciplinary teams. There is a need for clinical experiences in settings where the goal is to improve client health wherever clients are. As partners, faculty and students are empowered to pursue various learning strategies, which require higher level thinking skills. This paradigm change reflected the need for a shift from a teacher dominated environment to learner centered teaching focus (Bevis and Murray, 1990; Myrik and Tamlyn, 2007).

## **Service Learning**

With the refocus of nursing education and nurses in community settings, service learning pedagogy is a logical means of promoting student learning and professional growth. In an attempt to clarify the service learning process, Robert Sigmon (1996) described the focus of the pedagogy using word emphasis. The first step of the model “service LEARNING” puts the emphasis on student learning. This step could include acquiring new knowledge, identifying preconceived ideas/ stereotypes and community needs. Student learning is primary. In the second part of the model, the emphasis becomes “SERVICE learning.” At this point, the student provides a prepared action for a community-identified need in a selected community setting where a partnership is established. Service outcomes for the community are most important. The final step in the service learning model, “SERVICE LEARNING,” is a shared emphasis where reflection by both students and community partners is critical. Reflection by students considers not only the learning value of the experience, but also whether the experience is valued enough to be repeated. The partner considers if the community need has been effectively and efficiently met. Combined reflection determines if a continued partnership or similar partnerships will be pursued. Service and learning goals have equal weight for both the student and the community.

## **Self Efficacy**

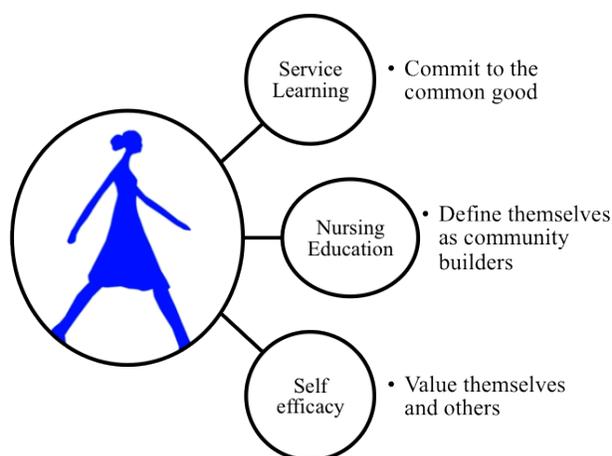
The final piece in the framework is that of self efficacy. By definition, self efficacy is described as a temporary and malleable characteristic which could be applied to a situation or a task. When self efficacy, sometimes compared to, self-esteem, occurs, it is likely the person will repeat the behavior successfully. Pender, Murdaugh, and Parsons (2006) identified five factors which facilitate self efficacy and behavior change. First, models must be available with which the learner can identify. Second, learners must have the opportunity to observe the desired behavior with specific aspects

needed to complete the behavior. Third, learners must have the knowledge and skills to reproduce the behavior. Fourth, learners must perceive benefits from imitating target behaviors. Finally, the learners must have the chance to rehearse expected behaviors. The goal of achieving self efficacy is to challenge rather than threaten the learner to be successful.

Students who experience self efficacy as part of a service learning activity often experienced the bigger picture of the role of the nurse, citizen, and member of the community as it related to health care and social justice (Seifer and Vaughn, 2002). Astin and Sax (1998) described significance in academic outcomes resulting in participation in education-related service. “These findings could also be interpreted as strong evidence for the efficacy of cooperative learning: students become better students by helping to teach others” (257).

Figure 1.

*Internalizing the Mercy Mission*



## Teaching Activity

Students enrolled in a maternal-child nursing course participate in a service learning teaching activity related to decreasing the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The focus of the activity is to inform the public about factors known to in some way influence and decrease infant death due to SIDS. In a classroom setting, students were provided with information, statistics, and resources related to SIDS (i.e. service LEARNING). Each student was asked to identify someone in the community who would benefit from the information and complete the teaching activity (SERVICE learning). Students were reminded the resources should be professional, accurate, and appropriate for the person receiving the teaching. When other resources did not seem effective, students developed language appropriate resources (i.e. a Vietnamese language handout, a picture brochure for a developmentally delayed mom).

After identifying the community participant, students developed a teaching plan and resources to meet specific teaching needs. For example, teaching needs related to an adolescent mom, father-to-be, grandparent, or caregiver. When the teaching project was completed, the student evaluated the experience from the perspective of the teacher (themselves) and benefit/response of the community participant (i.e. SERVICE LEARNING).

## Student Reflection/Outcomes

In a designated seminar, students shared the process and results of the teaching activity first in a small group of eight to nine, and then each group presented to the class of 40–50 classmates and faculty. Reflection is structured this way to encourage all students to participate and not be intimidated by a larger group. Each student group summarized challenges to the teaching activity and how they thought the teaching was accepted. Through discussion, the student groups identified similar challenges from the teaching recipients such as comfort and convenience of bed sharing with infant, flattened skull of infant from supine sleeping position, influence of other family members, and questions they felt unprepared to answer. In shared discussion, students problem solved for how questions could have been answered and resources which would have been helpful should the project be done again.

When asked how confident the students felt about the teaching, the level of confidence varied.

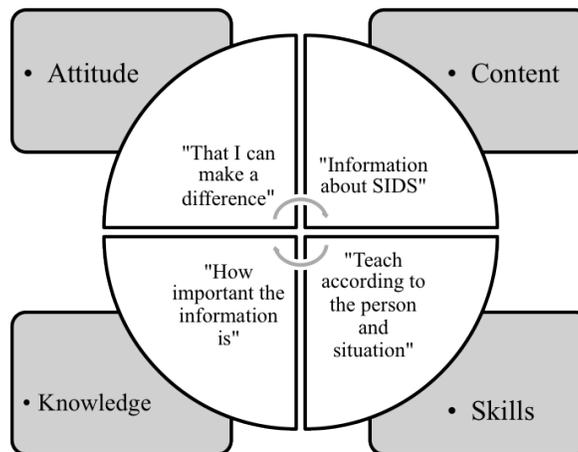
*“The teaching was accepted as well as I felt I could hope for. I felt awkward teaching someone something when I have no children of my own.”* —nursing student

*“I felt my teaching was accepted. I am confident that she understood and will follow through with the guidelines that were taught.”* —nursing student

Four recurring reflection themes were noted: attitude, content, knowledge, and skills.

Figure 2.

*Recurring Student Group Reflection Themes.*



## CONCLUSION

This service learning teaching activity occurs each semester for students enrolled in the maternal-child nursing course. Each semester the students teach 50–60 community members. Over 10 semesters, approximately 600 community members have been served through teaching. While regional and national incidence of SIDS deaths has decreased, the direct benefit to the community cannot be measured. While the direct benefit [i.e., self efficacy] to the student

cannot be easily measured, student statements indicate professional confidence builds with each experience.

*“I was very nervous at first, but then I got into it and felt very helpful”* —nursing student

In the fall of 2011, BSN-RN students enrolled in the Community Health nursing course will have the opportunity to complete a similar service learning teaching project. Faculty will review information looking for similar themes and will consider the following questions. Will students integrate different topics in the community teaching (i.e. knowledge)? Will students introduce new resources (i.e. skills)? Will students share greater depth of reflection (i.e. attitude)?

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## Midwifing Global Citizens: A Call to Transformation

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*I love Jesus, who said to us:  
Heaven and earth will pass away.  
When heaven and earth have passed away,  
My word will still remain.  
What was your word, Jesus?  
Love? Forgiveness? Affection?  
All your words were  
One word: Wake up.*

—Antonio Machado, “Proverbios y Cantares VII”

I have come to believe, over the course of more than three decades of experience, that teaching is a form of midwifery. While a midwife is a person qualified by training to assist a woman through the process of childbirth, the term can also refer to a person who is instrumental in producing something new (“Midwife”). That “something new” for me as a theologian and professor of religious studies is a student-become-world-citizen—one steeped in Mercy values and the fundamental themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Like the Sisters of Mercy and those of us who embrace their critical concerns, I want my students to “agonize over the sufferings of our sisters and brothers around the world and for the earth itself” (Sisters of Mercy). To provide for this possibility, therefore, I invite them to “wake up.” I explain that if they understand “conversion” as a life long process of growth and change in the Christian life, or as Richard Rohr suggests, “the experience by which one becomes an authentic human being,” in Longerganian parlance, “wake up” they will (86).

However, due to diverse and conflicting understandings of the word “conversion” today (Conn 5-10), I decided to refer to this process as “transformation.” Richard Rohr also claims that “transformed people transform people” (86). Pedagogically, this is my hope and the goal of all the student learning outcomes on my syllabus for a course I teach called, “Liberation, Religion and Society.” Here I desire to midwife them, intellectually, politically, and spiritually, in ways that will allow them to rethink their worldviews. This course, in particular, is an invitation to see the world differently, employing both Mercy values and key themes of Catholic Social Teaching as complimentary lenses. What I long for them to “see” is the reality of our brokenhearted world. I want them to ask fundamental critical questions about what has shaped that reality—all in a collegial classroom environment where they can safely unmask their ideological biases in an academic context that is explicitly Christian, Catholic, and Mercy (Rausch 52-54).

Demographically, my students are diverse in terms of their religious backgrounds, if they have one at all. I can assume no common body of shared knowledge, even though all will have taken a pre-requisite introductory religious studies course. Moreover, many choose Liberation, Religion and Society as their second level requirement merely because it fits into their schedules.

Conscious of these issues and other challenges (students socialized in an excessively individualistic, noisy, superficial, and consumerism-obsessed culture, etc.) my hopes in teaching this particular course are:

- 1) *to provide my students with what Patricia Cranston refers to as “emancipatory knowledge. . . gained through a process of critically questioning [them]selves and the social systems within which [they] live;”* ( O’Murchu 92)
- 2) *to facilitate student-centered dialogue* about economic globalization, liberation theologies, role models of mercy and justice, etc., that will encourage them to become “participant citizens;”
- 3) *to require a service learning experience* which will allow them to apply what they have learned through direct contact with marginalized communities in Erie, Pa.

Obviously, “emancipatory knowledge” can be offered to students in a variety of ways, methodologically speaking. In *Liberation, Religion and Society*, I a) introduce my students to critical discussion and term-long reflection on their worldviews, and b) require reading, homework, and student-led discussions of several texts, in particular, *Meeting the Global Citizen in You*, by Deirdre Mullen, RSM and A’ine O’Connor, RSM, as well as Daniel Groody’s, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*.

Students appreciate discovering the concept of “worldview,” how it is formed and why their worldviews matter. Most have a sense of what the term means, but have rarely reflected critically on how their own has been formed. Nor have they considered why it matters that they “wake up” to the impact it has on the kind of global citizens they become.

I give them a working definition of worldview as “the lens through which we view reality.” Then we discuss how it is socially constructed. Invited to name the influences upon their respective worldviews, they become more conscious of how they have been socialized into perceiving reality the way they do. We examine the role ideology plays in this process. They begin to recognize how easy it is for citizens to become “ideologically captive” when they fail to reflect critically on their worldview.

On the final exam, students indicated this new knowledge liberated them:

“My worldview has changed drastically since I started this class in September. I have a whole new understanding of society and where I fit into it.” (Kristen)

“My worldview, due to this course, has been expanded. I am better able to distinguish between positive and negative ideologies within the context of my socialization after ten weeks. Therefore I have become a better global citizen, more aware of the world around me.” (Lexy)

“When [we] began this class with the term worldview. . . I had not the slightest idea of what [Dr. Snyder] meant. . . Going into class, my understanding of the world around me was not mature. . . The lessons taught in *Liberation, Religion and Society*, have made me a better person. [They] have helped me to grow, not only personally, but spiritually as well. . . As I complete college and move on in the world as one more global citizen, I will be practicing to make this world a better place for future generations.” (Christopher)

Reinforcing my prior efforts to emphasize the significance of their worldviews, Mullan and O'Connor write in *Meeting the Global Citizen in You* that "The most important change that people can make is to change their way of looking at the world... People have to see with new eyes and understand with new minds so that they can truly turn to new ways of living" (12). This tiny but influential text challenged my students to become global citizens; it was an essential "tool" in my role as midwife. It also gave them a broader awareness of the identity and ministries of the Sisters of Mercy. In the students' words:

"One thing that taking Liberation, Religion and Society has taught me is how to be a global citizen. As defined in *Meeting the Global Citizen in You*, a global citizen is someone who 'is aware of the wider world and has a sense of his or her own role as a world citizen' (17). This is an important concept to learn because it teaches people not only to act locally, but also to think globally. The world and its people are intertwined with one another, and the actions that we take all have an effect on each other, no matter how little. Before taking Liberation, Religion and Society, I never had a sense of this concept." (Darren)

"This course has allowed me to become more globally aware of the challenging situations occurring by broadening my worldview and teaching me to live life as a global citizen. . . This class has not only helped me recognize how to become a global citizen and how to make a change, but also what other people are doing to make a change for others, such as Latina theologians." (Steve)

The other text that awakened my students and transformed their self-understanding was Daniel Groody's *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*. More than any other of the nine chapters in this book, however, the chapter on Catholic Social Teaching had the greatest impact on my students. Many of them are loosely affiliated at this time in their lives with any type of organized religion. Remarks by two of the students in this course illustrate this:

"As a child I was raised in a strict Catholic environment. I became somewhat disillusioned with Catholicism because the ideas had been forced upon me. Because of this I tend to look very critically at any Catholic teachings. In spite of my critical nature, I found myself agreeing with several of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching. . . arranged into the acronym A GOD OF LIFE." (Megan)

"As I stated above, I had completely lost faith in the Catholic tradition upon entering our class. However, one day Dr. Snyder introduced us. . . to Catholic Social Teaching. I was immediately drawn to the acronym 'A GOD OF LIFE' . . . I will forever remember, the 'D' in 'A GOD OF LIFE.' The "D" stands for 'dignity of the human person.' I have realized that dignity for all is a right no matter what." (Lindsay)

Daniel Groody's book is a brilliant pedagogical tool. Besides giving my students a positive view of Catholic Social Teaching, it captured their imaginations and gave them a sense that they can make a difference for good in the world. Groody writes:

All of modern Catholic Social Teaching in one way or another speaks about A GOD OF LIFE who challenges the human community to build a civilization of love. If we look at A GOD OF LIFE as an acronymic matrix . . . we can identify ten themes in Catholic Social Teaching:

- 1) A—analysis of social reality
- 2) G—gratuity of God
- 3) O—ordering of society toward the common good
- 4) D—dignity of the human person
- 5) O—option for the poor
- 6) F—freedom as rights and responsibilities
- 7) L—life as a sacred gift
- 8) I—involvement of all people in creation of a new social order
- 9) F—family of blood and family of humankind
- 10) E—environment and ecological stewardship. (101)

This way of presenting Catholic Social Teaching had enormous appeal for my students. As two of them indicated in their final exam:

“The ‘A’ in A GOD OF LIFE stands for an analysis of social reality. As Groody states, “Catholic Social Teaching starts with the reality of pressing social questions of each day and age and then analyzes them under the light of the Gospel. . . “ This teaching requires one to have an awareness of issues of injustice and to take action to connect these issues. I have slowly come to realize during this course how many of the issues of poverty, or inequality, or injustice are caused by a lack of awareness.” (Megan)

“Daniel Groody’s book, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, established an acronym for the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching: A GOD OF LIFE (Groody, 101). One of these principles that helped my spiritual journey was an option for the poor. This means working side by side with the poor to help end oppression. . . An option for the poor changed how I viewed people who are poor.” (Chelsea)

Students shared these comments in a seminar style final exam where they listened to one another’s analyses, judgments, and syntheses regarding their experience of the course. However, such conversational opportunities are embedded throughout the course via homework assignments done on Blackboard, followed by almost daily student-led discussions on those assignments. For example, the first homework question I posted in the discussion board on Blackboard was this: “*What quotation from Meeting the Global Citizen in You has made you reflect most critically on the kind of citizen you are? Explain.*”

One student responded:

“Is there a gap between what I really care about and how I spend my time?” (28)

“In the end we shall be asked only one thing: ‘Were you merciful?’ . . . Mercy. . . is not reducible to any of its works, for ‘Were you merciful?’ will be a question of the heart”

“I actually liked two quotations and found them very challenging. I want to spend my time in a very methodical and merciful way, helping others as much as possible. . . I struggle to find time to do merciful, service-oriented activities sometimes. I think this is because I’m in seemingly such a self-centered part of my life right now—I’m learning to get myself ahead in some ways. Instead, I should try to change this understanding to one of ‘I’m learning so that I can better serve others.’ I feel that if I started to view how I used my time as a call or a vocation to serving God through others then my activities would start to reflect that. I want my time to be filled with human contact, where others see God’s mercy through me. I think these two quotations are related because God will ask me how I spent my time and if I was merciful unto others. My actions and the things I spend my time on must reflect what my beliefs are—and mercy is definitely a part of my belief system.” (Kristen)

Furthermore, my students have to earn their class participation grade. Answering the homework questions on Blackboard and leading one or more discussions on the homework are two of four opportunities to do this.

While I yield “control” by allowing for student-led discussions on the homework assignments, I find they appreciate hearing one another’s perspectives. My hope is that both the quality and content of such discussions will provide them with an increased capacity for truly civil and value-laden discourse. It is also a methodological tool that provokes awareness in my students of one of our core values, namely, “compassionate hospitality.” Ideally, this encourages them to traverse intellectual, political, geographical, and spiritual boundaries they may heretofore have been afraid to cross.

Finally, and perhaps most poignantly, my students’ participation in our class service learning project is what appears to transform them and their worldviews the most. It is an opportunity for them to be “ambassadors of service,” another of our core values at Mercyhurst College. Many have had no experience of those who are marginalized, ostracized—of those who have not succeeded in life as our individualistic culture expects they should. In particular, the ideology of individualism often leads our students to have a punitive attitude toward the poor. In preparation, we review *A GOD OF LIFE*, especially the dignity of the human person and the option for the poor. I suggest that this service learning project is an opportunity for them to be “Other Christs,” and that such “table-fellowship” was an integral part of Jesus’ ministry—one of many ways he embodied the Reign of God. This is their opportunity to do the same. I remind them that in doing this, they are ambassadors of Mercyhurst College, its mission and values, in the larger Erie community.

The class divides into two teams; one team prepares a special dinner for residents and then eats that meal with the residents at the Lodge on Sass, a former hotel that now houses single people who would otherwise be homeless. The second team does the same thing for residents of the Emergency Shelter; this is also a facility for the homeless, but it is designed for adults with children. Both places are operated by Community Shelter Services, a local non-profit agency dedicated since 1973 to providing housing for those who would otherwise have none in the city of Erie. My students are the only group in the Erie community who offer this unique form of service through table fellowship. Several shared what this service learning experience meant to them:

“The Service Learning Project that I participated in was not only a joy, but it was also educational. I was at the Lodge on Sass. . . The real lesson learned . . . was being in solidarity with the poor. . . This was an experience that I will never forget and it was truly gratifying knowing that my fellow classmates and I could come together, from different backgrounds, through plenty of communication problems, for a common good, and do something that actually made a difference in the world today.” (Darren)

“My final lesson occurred during the Service Learning Project when we made dinner and interacted with the residents at the Emergency Shelter in the city of Erie. Through this project we saw how impoverished people live and learned, as individuals, we can make an option for the poor. . . I believe that Archbishop Desmond Tutu would be proud of us and consider us Ubuntu people—‘people who are welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous.’” (Alicia)

It was not until I read their final exam essays that what my students learned became apparent to me. Mercy values collided with the key themes of Catholic Social Teaching. My students felt the impact. Many were empowered by the call to transformation this course issued to them: “WAKE UP!” “*Some did,*” replied the grateful midwife.

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