

Building a Regional Collaboration of
Higher Education Institutions and Community Organizations:
The Western New York Service-Learning Coalition

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The Importance of Collaborative Service-Learning Coalitions for Campus-Community Partnerships: The Origination of The WNYSLC

In the Buffalo-Niagara region, there is a strong case for engaging students in service opportunities in our region's non-profits and for sharing resources related to doing so. The Buffalo-Niagara region is home to a range of colleges and universities, including the University at Buffalo, the largest in the 64-campus State University of New York system. The current higher education members of the Western New York Service-Learning Coalition are Buffalo State College, Canisius College, Daemen College, D'Youville College, Erie Community College, Medaille College, Niagara University, Trocaire College, and the University at Buffalo. The combined total full-time undergraduate student population of these colleges and universities is over 58,000. Each college and university in the WNYSLC has service within its mission and has service-learning incorporated into parts of its curriculum.

While the region's undergraduate student population is abundant, many of them are transient. There is increasing concern among residents about the "brain drain" in our region and the impact of this flight on the future vitality of the region, and the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls especially. The University at Buffalo Regional Institute *State of the Region Report* (2006) acknowledges that, "between 1970 and 2000 the proportion of young adults aged 0-24 declined from 45% to 34% of Western New York's population." Connection of colleges and universities to the community, and the capacity to engage youth in our region's fabric, is a great concern to some residents. Connecting students to our region is a unifying theme among members of the Coalition, both representatives from higher education institutions and the non-profits.

Collaboration among community organizations is especially important in our region, where we are facing a decrease in resources yet an increase in demand for services. Buffalo is also the second poorest city in the nation (Rey and Sommer, 2007). Of the 257,758 residents in the city, 29.9% live below poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The region's non-profits are facing an increasing demand for their services and a shortage of resources, including volunteers. *The 2006 Report Card on Charitable Giving in Erie County* (April, 2006) includes information on 60 non-profit organizations in Erie County. An article in *Business First of Buffalo* (Drury, 2006) on this report noted, ". . . 22 percent [of non-profits] said they would look to use more volunteers, up from 12 percent in 2003." Some funding agencies, like the John R. Oishei Foundation, have announced to some local non-profits that provide similar services that they must collaborate in order to receive funding.

That community organizations actively seek volunteers and that the higher education institutions in our region offer service-learning offers a natural opportunity to collaborate in order to meet mutual needs. What further lends itself to collaboration is how the community organizations view undergraduate students engaged in service: as volunteers or volunteer interns. Major, discipline, and institutional affiliation are secondary to the skills a student might

offer an organization. In essence, community partners are not concerned with how higher education institutions stand out from one another. What is of most concern to the community organizations is the *service* that the students are providing and how they help the community organizations meet their mission and provide services. The ideal situation for a community partner is having enough or an abundance of qualified volunteers. This perspective minimizes not just disciplinary distinctions, but institutional distinctions as well. This is not to say that community organizations do not understand competition. Non-profits, and especially those in our region, are in the position of competing with others to raise funds and recruit volunteers, facing the same contradictory ethos that in order to help others, they must compete with others with similar goals in order to do so. Higher education institutions have the mission of graduating future leaders, yet the institutions compete with one another for students, grants, and public recognition. While approaches and timelines may vary, the issues and challenges faced by community organizations and higher education institutions are in fact strikingly similar, and can serve as common ground for fostering collaborations among and between higher education institutions and community organizations. If we hold on to our insular practices of competing with one another for the same resources, we will not survive. We must first work together to be more resourceful with what we have, and then consider how we might generate resources from beyond our region.

How an Idea Developed Into an Active Collaboration

In May of 2001, Edwin Clausen, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Daemen College invited representatives from Daemen College and Niagara University to meet to discuss ways to collaborate, share service-learning resources, and best serve local students and Western New York. The group discussed the idea of engaging other higher education institutions and in addition, K-12 schools, service organizations, government agencies, and private organizations that are experienced in or new to service learning. In June of 2001, the two institutions hosted a lunch for the Western New York Grantmakers at Daemen College to discuss the vision of the collaboration. We asked to present to the WNYSLC Grantmakers to peak their interest in possibly funding the Coalition, and to seek their input on additional community organizations that might be interested in such a collaboration. The group shared that the purpose and goals of the Coalition were to:

- Develop and encourage curriculum and resource sharing for Service Learning Directors;
- Create a dialogue to help local colleges best transition from community service to service learning;
- Coordinate efforts and develop new ways to improve living conditions for all people in Western New York;
- Establish an electronic network among the members for shared resources, dialogue, and integration as to more effectively serve the needs of the Buffalo-Niagara region
- Develop an evaluation plan to measure the success of the service-learning projects and provide ongoing evaluation of the program;
- Demonstrate to partner organizations the Colleges' commitment to collaboration and best serving Western New York; and
- Work together to leverage local, national, and possibly federal resources to benefit Western New York.

Following the luncheon with the Western New York Grantmakers and the input provided at the forum, the founding members of the Coalition met approximately once every other month to discuss ways to realize these goals. We invited representatives from other higher education institutions and community organizations that had a long track record of hosting service-learning students. After discussion, the group agreed to the name The Western New York Service-Learning Coalition and developed a mission statement, which later evolved and changed.

A critical component of our collaboration was the executive-level support for the Coalition. Edwin Clausen founded the Buffalo-Niagara Council of Chief Academic Officers as a vehicle for sharing ideas and resources among the region's higher education institutions. In 2004, Dr. Clausen requested \$1000 for the WNYSLC, and the chief academic officers agreed. The commitment of the executive-level Academic Vice Presidents has served as strong show of institutional support from each institution for the work of the Coalition. In 2006-2007, Edwin Clausen requested that the colleges and universities increase their contributions to \$1200, and they agreed. The following are dues-paying members: Buffalo State College, Canisius College, Daemen College, D'Youville College, Erie Community College, Medaille College, Trocaire College; Villa Maria College, Niagara University, and University at Buffalo. These funds have been instrumental in allowing the Coalition to fund speakers, brochures, events, the domain name and hosting of the website, and begin planning toward a shared database. In addition, we were able to leverage this commitment in three grant proposals, which will be spoken to later in this chapter.

Practices that Create an Environment for Effectively Collaborating Between and Among Higher Education Institutions and Community Organizations

Since its inception (with the exception of the strategic planning process), the Coalition has met regularly every other month. These consistent scheduled meetings have proven critical in generating ideas and keeping momentum. I served as the facilitator of these meetings and sent to the listserv an agenda prior to each meeting with the items we would be discussing. Generally the meetings last about an hour to an hour and a half. We have rotated the meetings and held them both on campuses and at non-profit agencies. When we have worked on special projects such as events or grant proposals, members self-selected to work on short-term subgroups that would report back to the larger group.

One of the most appealing aspects of the Coalition is that, thus far, no higher education institution has declined joining. One of the smaller institutions did decide to not renew membership for 2007 and stated its strategic initiatives focused on its immediate surrounding community, as opposed to broader Western New York. A few prospective institutions have not yet been able to make the commitment to pay dues, but they have expressed interest in participating. These prospective members are on the listserv, encouraged to participate in events and meetings, and they have been invited to join the strategic planning team. The importance of inclusion and commitment by all institutions in the region, and arguably the rarity of this, cannot be overstated and is one of our strongest selling points to other institutions as well as to community organizations and prospective funders. In addition, we have welcomed all community organizations.

Resources that can be Shared as Well as Leveraged through a Regional Coalition

The participants in the coalition have reported that the informal networking is one of the most valuable aspects of meeting together regularly and participating in the Coalition. The non-profits have noted that face-to-face meetings with service-learning administrators have helped in their service-learning volunteer student recruitment efforts.

Early on, the group developed a list serve (hosted by one of the colleges) to easily and cost-effectively share information with the whole group. The listserve has been used to share information about meetings as well as service-learning opportunities available in the community. The group purchased a domain name and web hosting services from a Buffalo-based company at a low non-profit rate. I have website design experience and volunteered to develop the site and currently maintain it. The Blackboard Academic Suite™ has been another valuable and cost-effective tool for resource sharing. Dr. Joseph A. Gardella, Jr., the representative from The University at Buffalo for the WNYSLC, developed a user-friendly, online classroom for the Coalition. As a virtual learning and teaching environment, Blackboard™ offers resourceful technology for collaborations with the breadth and scope of the coalition. We have posted minutes of the meetings and archived notes on the site.

Since our inception, the WNYSLC has planned and hosted collaborative events that have been open to both faculty members and non-profits. On September 19, 2003, the WNYSLC hosted “Nuts and Bolts of Service-Learning: Bringing Civic Engagement into the Classroom.” This day-long workshop featured two speakers who are experts in developing, implementing, and overseeing service-learning programs. This workshop was popular, and on March 30, 2004 we hosted “Beyond the Nuts and Bolts: Reflections on Successful Service-Learning Workshops” During this presentation, faculty and students from four local institutions and their respective community representatives spoke from their perspectives on how they developed the ideas for the service-learning projects, what they entailed, and how these experiences impacted their work and lives. On September 10, 2004, we hosted a service-learning fair. This one-day event featuring over 30 community agencies, colleges and universities, and a roundtable discussion following the event. The faculty members who attended noted that the information roundtable was highly valuable in answering questions and gathering ideas related to service-learning. On April 14-15, 2005, the WNYSLC hosted Paul Loeb, who spoke on themes relating to his books *Soul of a Citizen: Living With Conviction in a Cynical Time* and *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen’s Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear*. On Friday, April 15, 2005, Paul Loeb offered two workshops for faculty entitled: “Teaching For Involvement/ Education For Democracy.” A session was held at Niagara University in the morning and was repeated at Canisius College during the afternoon. On August 3, 2005, the WNYSLC hosted a forum entitled "Incorporating Service-Learning into your Organization." The free event, hosted by The Morlock Foundation, was developed jointly by service providers and faculty and was designed especially for volunteer administrators seeking ways to recruit and retain service-learning students and volunteers. The forum featured individuals from local colleges and universities who oversee service-learning programs and agency representatives with successful service-learning projects in place at their non-profits. All of these events provided valuable opportunities for faculty, service-learning administrators, and representatives from community organizations to network and share and learn about effective service-learning practices.

Transition: Moving from a Series of Collaborative Events to a Sustainable Coalition

Up until 2006, the Coalition was structured, but not sustainable. In 2001, my supervisor, Ed Clausen, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Daemen College, asked me to attend the meetings as there may be grant possibilities. My own role with the group grew and transformed over the years as I set up and ran meetings, sent meeting notes to the list serve, set up the list serve and website, contacted organizations to become involved, and developed and organized some collaborative workshops. I brought to the coalition my own principles and values about the importance of collaboration, and strived to keep a consistent schedule of meetings and agendas. The Coalition met every other month at a location of one of the partners. We rotated this location to include community organizations and colleges and universities to encourage as many individuals to attend as possible. Between meetings, various project-based subgroups met.

As the Coalition continued to grow in size, I became increasingly aware that I could not or should not continue to be the only person facilitating the group. It was too tenuous. A recurring suggestion of the community organizations was for the colleges and universities to develop shared procedures and practices related to service-learning. The colleges and universities all offer service-learning courses, community service opportunities, or service-oriented internships. At the same time, each institution has varying requirements for student service as well as a diverse range of service-learning projects. There is no one standard for the paperwork, evaluations, orientation, and training required by the colleges and universities which can make supervision of service-learning students cumbersome for non-profits, some of which have students from multiple institutions. The higher education institution representatives were fully supportive of the idea of working toward standardizing paperwork and evaluations relating to service-learning. One of the challenges facing this idea was organizing representatives from all the colleges and universities as well as the community organizations to dedicate time to this project, and to see it through.

If the Coalition was to be sustainable and fully realize its collaborations, it would need much more than consistent meetings and one facilitator. First, as we were all volunteers with full-time positions, we could only dedicate limited time to the Coalition. Through the Buffalo Niagara Council of Chief Academic Officers, colleges and universities made voluntary contribution of \$1200 per year, but there were no definitions for use of this funding and what this funding meant in terms of guiding decisions. Some of the representatives from the community organizations mentioned that they wondered if they truly had a voice in the decisions of the Coalition. Membership simply was not defined.

This lack of definition of membership became especially challenging in decision making. Some of the colleges and universities had multiple faculty members participating from a range of departments. There were no attendance requirements, and what often happened is that a component of meetings were spent catching up on what others had missed for the past couple months. Decisions were made only by those at the meetings themselves. There was no voting structure or quorum or any formal so if an individual did not attend, he or she might not be represented.

In the Fall of 2005, the members of the WNYSLC agreed to contract an independent Buffalo-based database developer. The vision was that the database would as a clearinghouse for all Western New York organizations seeking undergraduate service-learning student volunteers. Agencies would be able to list service placements in one central source—rather than having to send out individual notices to all the high schools and colleges in the area or making phone calls. The network would significantly reduce the burden of paperwork, reduce time and

costs invested in mailings and phone calls, and offer an accessible database of opportunities for students and faculty to access from their own computers. It would significantly reduce the workload of agency supervisors of service-learning students, streamline efforts of organizations and institutions, and improve service-learning supervision, opportunities, and experiences, dedicating more time to the provision of direct services and the revitalization of Western New York.

The database project was unlike other collaborations we had worked on. The listserv and website were easy—one person volunteered to maintain information. The events entailed the commitment of multiple volunteers, at the same time, they were one time events and so the commitment of the volunteers was not long-term. When we set up meetings for the database, we were disappointed that only a few members attended. The database developer spoke with the small group about the option of developing a fully customized database from scratch or to see if a database such as Volunteer Match or Volunteer Solutions (used by the United Way), might be able to meet our goals, and then assist the group with customizing the group and providing training. We sought to work with the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County and see if we could customize the Volunteer Solutions database to include service-learning. Because of licensing restrictions, we were told by the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County that we could not use their database, an issue that in and of itself frustrated some participants in the Coalition. Even though we had met multiple times relating to the database, the group was treading water on this. There was little agreement on how to move ahead, and at one of our meetings, a faculty member who had not been at a meeting for over a year asked if we even needed a database.

There were additional challenges facing the stability and growth of the Coalition. There was competition among the members for grants. The LEAP National Leadership Council acknowledges that, “Faculty reward systems almost invariably emphasize individual rather than collaborative excellence in both scholarship and teaching, which results in systemic disincentives for faculty members to spend their time in the collaborative redesign of undergraduate education” (p. 47). It was inevitable that the Coalition would run into this dilemma. Each institution could apply independently for grants relating to service-learning, or the Coalition could apply as a whole with one institution serving as fiscal agent. In one case, two Coalition member institutions applied for a federal Learn & Serve grant that the Coalition had discussed applying for as a whole. We agreed that it would not be fruitful to submit two grant proposals from one region to a federal agency as it would demonstrate that we were not collaborative. This situation precluded the coalition from applying. In an environment where grant procurement is expected by faculty or considered criteria for promotion, the Coalition has struggled to diminish competition among the partners.

Similarly, a challenge faced by some of the members is that applying to a local foundation in partnership with the Coalition might preclude their institution or non-profit from applying. This was actually the case with the John R. Oishei Foundation when we first met with them in 2002. Fortunately, this foundation has taken a lead in supporting collaboration in our region and has said that any institution can serve as the fiscal agent for the Coalition and that this would not preclude them from submitting a grant on behalf of their own institution for another program. In an environment where non-profits are equally competing for funds, the Coalition can serve to leverage funding that may not be available to non-profits applying on their own. At the same time, and as was the case with the Oishei Foundation, the Coalition can also be a voice for grantseekers who aim to participate in collaborations and also consider the interests of their

organizations; members can request that a coalition application not preclude the individual faculty member or institution from applying to an external sponsor.

While we had had great success with certain initiatives such as one-time workshops, the larger collaborative projects that would involve a sustained commitment from most or all of the members had proven nearly impossible thus far. They would take a sustained, intensive commitment, and a willingness to change. We realized that, as volunteers, we had reached the maximum of what we could accomplish among ourselves without any outside help. We needed a process in place to bring ideas to the group, make decisions, and then implement them. We needed to work toward formalizing our structure.

The John R. Oishei Foundation proved instrumental in supporting the Coalition's expansion. The members had originally hoped to submit a full three-year proposal to the foundation, which would include a full-time executive director, administrative assistant, and funds for projects and the database, and in the summer of 2006, we submitted this concept paper. Our program officer, Blythe Merrill, had worked previously in the community as a strategic planning consultant. She suggested that the goals in our original concept paper were broad and ambitious, perhaps too much to accomplish with one grant and in a three year period. She suggested that we reconsider submitting a full proposal and consider submitting a proposal for a strategic planning consultant to guide the group in honing our goals and objectives. This was in fact what the Coalition needed, and was a welcome surprise. Foundations traditionally do not fund such infrastructure development; as a Coalition, we could not have moved ahead without it.

Developing Infrastructure and Deepening Collaboration: Strategic Planning and Pilot Projects

In the summer of 2006, the John R. Oishei Foundation invited the Coalition to outline our collaborative vision and need for an outside strategic planning consultant to help us fully realize our vision. The WNYSLC was awarded \$22,000 from the John R. Oishei Foundation towards our strategic planning process. The budget included the fees for the strategic planning team as well as extra compensation for an administrative assistant to take minutes and help with coordinating meetings, which was an invaluable resource. The stated deliverables of this plan were: 1) a three-year written strategic plan; 2) a written governance structure that includes members, board or offices, and policies and procedures for decision-making; 3) a membership model that includes responsibilities and expectations as well as the fee structure for the higher education institutions, and possibility a fee structure for the non-profits; and 4) a budget to accompany the goals and objectives for the three-year plan.

We selected the Canisius Center for Professional Development as our consultant. They held our first planning meeting with over thirty representatives from ten colleges and universities and twelve non-profits on October 26, 2006. The Coalition participated in a total of four general strategic planning meetings between October 2006 and February 2007, all facilitated by the Canisius Center for Professional Development. In many ways, the strategic planning reinvigorated and brought fresh ideas to the group. We were encouraged by our consultants to bring in a representative from an arts organization, which we had not previously considered, and she added new insights to the group.

At our first strategic planning meeting, The Canisius Team guided us in identifying the core task areas that we would develop. The four core task groups were identified as operations, marketing and branding, membership, and governance. The Team asked for volunteers to

participate in each of the groups, and each group was co-chaired by a representative from higher education and a representative from a community organization. These task groups met between the general strategic planning meetings. We developed a listserv to share minutes of these minutes and we used the Blackboard classroom site for all strategic planning team members to log-in, upload, and view minutes from each task group's meeting.

The marketing and branding group task revised the tag line and mission statement, created a vision statement, and developed a benefits statement for participation by each constituent. In addition, one of the volunteer participants who is a graphic designer developed two logos for Coalition. One of the key realizations of the marketing and branding group was the importance of developing a definition of service-learning that was mutually agreed upon by community organizations and higher education institutions. This definition would also need to provide an inviting and clear definition of service-learning to those who were not familiar with the term. The marketing and branding group developed a new definition, which was refined through discussions with the general marketing group and is now available on the Coalition's website:

Service-learning is an educational experience that goes beyond volunteering. Service-learning connects students to the community by integrating academic curriculum with active participation in service, offering structured opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences, and striving to ensure that the service placements are mutually beneficial to students, the organizations, and the community as a whole. (2007).

During the spring 2007 semester, the WNYSLC was invited to be a community client for an undergraduate service-learning communications class as well as a graduate-level communications class at Buffalo State College. This was an exciting opportunity for the Coalition to engage students in our mission. The undergraduate students assisted with articles and a brochure, and the graduate-level class worked on a semester-long public relations campaign. I worked with this class, and am currently awaiting their full plan for outreach to non-profits.

The membership group was charged with defining what it means to be a member of the Coalition. In our grant proposals and marketing materials, we listed the dues-paying higher education institution members. I then would list the non-profits that had participated in our events. It was challenging in grant proposals and on brochures to list who constituted a member because some non-profits had attended an event, others belonged to our listserv, and some participated with great commitment. In essence, the definition of membership had never been established.

When I was discussing the strategic planning process with our program officer at the Oishei Foundation, she recommended that we enter into our discussions the possibility of membership fees for non-profits in order to ensure sustainability of the Coalition. The feasibility of membership dues for non-profits as well as the amount of this fee was also a charge of this membership group.

The idea of whether non-profits would pay any membership fees was arguably one of the most heated discussions. There were non-profit representatives as well as higher education institutions on both sides. Thus far, all events and activities had no charge to any of the participants; all speaker fees, food, and materials were provided through the WNYSLC account and space was provided in-kind. This had worked because the operating expenses of the

Coalition were minimal. As we considered the long-term sustainability of the Coalition, I was concerned that we did not drain our budget on food for events, rather that we would be able to sustain our new staff members. We began to address the idea of membership fees by considering a break-even fee for events that would simply cover food and printing of brochures. Even this was met with resistance by some members—both those in higher education and in community organizations. After discussion, the group agreed on continuing the annual membership dues for higher education institutions, then charging a modest fee (e.g. \$10.00) for events that non-profits would attend which would simply allow the Coalition to break even. The group also agreed that the registration fee would be waived for community organizations that might not be able to afford the event.

The governance task group was assigned with developing a governance structure that would represent the Coalition. An important component of the governance would be how decisions would be made. The governance group drafted by-laws, which went through multiple iterations, and were finalized at the last strategic planning meeting. The Coalition had discussed becoming a 501(c)(3) in order to ensure autonomy and fairness among the members and to do independent fundraising. The group has not pursued this and the general consensus has been that there are too many non-profits in Western New York and that we are able to management our current revenue and expenses and by having Daemen College serve as the fiscal agent for the WNYSLC account.

The governance task group developed a draft of by-laws, which we finalized in October of 2008. The key items that were formalized in the by-laws include:

- Criteria for membership and an application process;
- Decision-making procedures;
- Structure for the steering committee as well as standing committees;
- Commitment to scheduled regular meetings and an annual meeting;
- Terms and roles of officers;
- A process for amending the by-laws.

A significant transition was the Coalition was the formalization of the steering committee and standing committees. To distribute leadership, it was decided that the steering committee would be comprised of six individuals, three representatives from higher education and three from non-profit organizations. In addition, the steering committee members could only have representation from one institution per member. In addition, each standing committee would be co-chaired by two individuals, one representing a non-profit and one representing a higher education institution.

The operations group focused on areas where members of the WNYSLC might share resources and how this would be operationalized. One of the challenges the community organizations faced was filling out different forms from each of the higher education institutions, and the amount of time this took. The task group endeavored to collect these forms and work toward developing a standardized form that would be used by all the service-learning programs in the region. This group also focused in on the database project. Given the scope of this project, the database group became a separate task group. This group worked to identify the feasibility of a shared database for service-learning, how it would function, and costs.

The team identified an existing program called Service Learning Pro, which is the only database that has been developed specifically for service-learning programs. The original program was built to meet the needs of Boise State University's service-learning team. (2007).

Service Learning Pro also had the potential with redesign, to be shared by multiple colleges and universities in a region. The group developed a specification during the strategic planning project, and in January of 2007 entered into an agreement to develop the database.

In November of 2006, the WNYSLC had the opportunity to apply for a subgrant through New York Campus Compact and Pennsylvania Campus Compact, who were awarded a Learn & Serve consortium grant to establish and to expand campus/community partnerships through eight subgrants to higher education institutions in PA and NY. While we were in a period of transition, we had maintained the same collaborative goals prior to and throughout the strategic planning process funded by Oishei. We applied for this subgrant and were awarded \$40,879 in January of 2007 to expand our regional network, using the funds toward specific goals, including non-profit and faculty development workshops and piloting the shared paperwork and evaluations.

Through the NYCC/PACC subgrant, we were awarded \$25,000 toward twenty-five faculty fellowships to revise courses. Each NYCC member (Daemen, D'Youville, Niagara, Buffalo State, and University at Buffalo) would be responsible for matching the fellowships 1:1, for a total of \$2000 per faculty fellow. We formed an advisory board of non-profit partners and service-learning coordinators and drafted a request for proposals. The requests for proposals were sent to the faculty listserves at each of the institutions and responses were submitted to point persons at each of the institutions. The faculty members would then be expected to then teach the course in the fall or spring semester, attend a workshop with the other faculty prior to beginning course revision, submit the course syllabi to be posted online, participate in piloting the shared evaluation, and participate in the spring symposium, in which the faculty, community partners, and students will come together and present. The idea is that faculty from each of the five institutions will meet together as a cohort, serve as resources to one another, and provide input towards standardizing some of the paperwork and requirements to facilitate service-learning supervision for the non-profits.

One of the immediate lessons we learned after submitting the RFP was that not all faculty members who might apply were motivated by the stipends. Some would have preferred reassign time, others travel to conference to disseminate information. In addition, we found that it was challenging for some of the representatives from the institutions to identify a budget-line for the cash match. In addition, the amount of \$2000 was too low for some colleges and universities and too high for others.

In addition, and of most significance, the Coalition came to the conclusion that providing funding to New York Campus Compact member institutions at the exclusion of non-NY Campus Compact members went against the mission and vision of the Coalition. The NYCC/PACC advisory board shared these thoughts with NYCC and PACC. It was a learning process for everyone. We agreed at that point as a Coalition that, in the future, we would not apply for or accept grants if we could provide incentives or resources to only some members of the Coalition.

There were many positive outcomes from this grant. We held a workshop with the selected faculty fellows and non-profit partners, which lead to additional collaborations and service-learning placements. With the NYCC grant, for the first time we did a direct mailing to non-profits and volunteer administrators in the region. We put out a call for presentations. Over 140 individuals attended the one-day, held in August of 2007, and we agreed to hold a summer workshop each year specifically targeted for non-profits. Again, individuals at the workshop mentioned that the networking opportunities were highly valuable, and to next time allow even more time for informal networking.

In the summer of 2007, we developed and submitted a proposal to the John R. Oishei Foundation to fully implement the strategic plan. In September of 2007, the Coalition was awarded a three-year grant of \$485,654 to implement the Coalition's strategic plan. Funds were requested for:

- Personnel, including a full-time executive director and support staff;
- A region-wide database for use by students, service providers, and faculty;
- Training, development, and collaborative activities that serve to strengthen the capacity of non-profits to supervise and engage students and the capacity of faculty to teach service-learning courses in a way that meets community-identified needs.
- Evaluation of the project, engaging the Canisius Center for Professional Development as evaluators.

Vision for the Future: Increased and Sustained Collaboration

The vision of the WNYSLC is to become the hub for service-learning in Western New York. There are multiple areas in which non-profits and higher education institutions can collaborate to deepen the quality of the service-learning experiences for faculty, students, non-profit agencies, and the clients they serve. One of the action items of the Coalition's strategic plan coalition is to standardize paperwork and evaluations. Additionally, through our network, we aim to provide collaborative orientation and training sessions for faculty and students. Another objective of the WNYSLC is to create the region-wide service-learning database, which is now underway. The network will significantly reduce paperwork, reduce time and costs spent on mailings and phone calls, reduce the workload of agency supervisors, and improve service-learning recruitment, supervision, and experiences for everyone involved.

Arguably the most ambitious goal of the Coalition is to open up service-learning courses to enrollment by students in the region. For example, if U.B. has an environmental service-learning course, students from Canisius or Daemen could enroll in this course for transferable service-learning credit. This type of resource sharing will allow students in the region to tap into the expertise of faculty already teaching service-learning courses, increase the impact of the service-learning placement for the non-profits at which students are placed, and establish our region as a national model of campus/community partnership and collaboration.

We were fortunate in that when we endeavored upon our larger collaborative visions that we had a combination of resources and support in place: spoken and monetary executive-level support from Academic Vice Presidents in our region, the support of The John R. Oishei Foundation and then the New York and Pennsylvania Compacts, the expertise of The Canisius Center for Professional Development, and the support of Doris Murphy the Administrative Assistant who helped to set up meetings and take minutes of meetings. Most importantly, we had the passion and dedication of the community partners, faculty members, and service-learning administrators who believe in the value of service-learning for our students and for our region.

Sustainable collaborations require an investment of financial resources and human resources coupled with visionary leadership, participation and input by those who will be impacted by the changes, and time. If we had taken away any of these components, we could not have come as far as we did. The Coalition is at an exciting place—it has a successful track record of collaborative projects and a team of committed, energized, experienced, and engaged members. If we strive to be the hub for service-learning in the Western New York region, we must actively listen to and respect one another. We need to stress continuously within the

Coalition's membership that we are a resource to each other, work to maintain this foundation, and expand awareness of the Coalition with members who have already participated in activities. It is only in doing this that we will be positioned to grow. I believe we can do this effectively if we continue to keep our focus on what we are all striving to achieve: a better community for students, our non-profits, and residents of our region as a whole.

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