



The Student as Applied Anthropologist: Combining Research & Service Learning for Enhanced Impact & Funding

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA

E. E. Cooper

Department of Anthropology, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL

Abstract

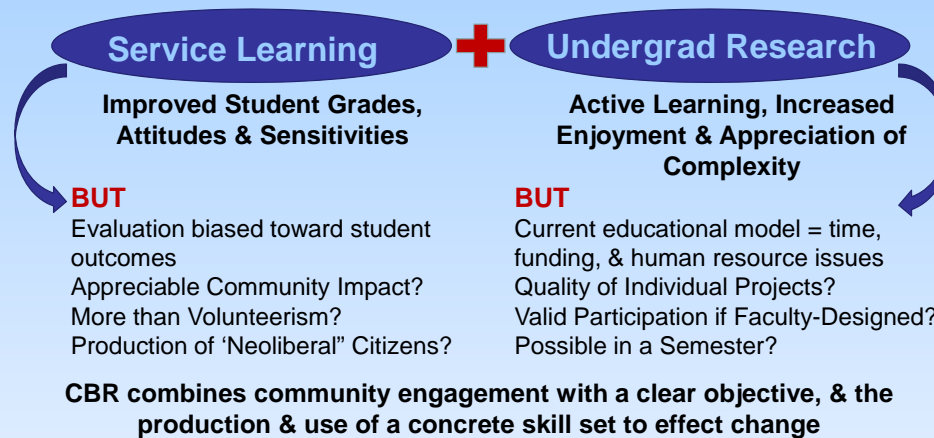
In 2010, the Association of American Colleges and Universities identified **service learning** and **undergraduate research** as two of five high-impact practices for enhancing student learning and personal development. The **Community-Based Research (CBR)** model combines these two proven pedagogical techniques and their associated benefits by engaging students in research that contributes to improving the lives of community members. This poster:

1. Profiles the CBR approach as a general technique and
2. Outlines its modification and use in an upper-level, undergraduate course on ethnographic research methods at the **University of Alabama (UA)**.

Conceptualizing the university as a community in the larger sense of the term, this course challenges students to adopt the role of **applied anthropologist**, partnering with University Libraries stakeholders to develop a tailored research plan that address on-going changes in information technology and the impact of such changes for UA students (particularly the extent to which student needs are met by current collections and services).

Students model the research process as professionally practiced. They communicate roles and expectations with client stakeholders, develop testable hypotheses, operationalize variables, and determine a realistic budget, timeline, and scope for their proposed project. This involvement in the full spectrum of research— from design issues to data collection and analysis – allows students to function as true **change agents**, working with administrators in the larger university community to identify potential problems and produce actionable data. Moreover, training students to address university priorities provides access to novel **funding streams** as demonstrated by this UA case study

Community-Based Research (CBR)



Stakeholder's Questions

Do students know what resources and services are available to them?
What additional resources and services would students like to access?
Does the student's time of day for library use or progress toward degree impact knowledge and desire?

Selected Methodology

- Free Lists and Structured Interviewing
- Quota Sample (n=204)
 - Students collect 12 free lists each (sampling grid)
- Participant Observations
- 17 student ethnographers
 - 2 months data collection

Freshman		Seniors		Graduate Students	
AM Peak (10-2pm)	PM Peak (6-8pm)	AM Peak (10-2pm)	PM Peak (6-8pm)	AM Peak (10-2pm)	PM peak (6-8pm)

UA Model: Student-Driven Library Ethnography

Goals

- Provide students with :
- Active & collaborative learning for increased engagement
 - A marketable skill set
- Provide UA Libraries with:
- Actionable data on their users



Design Overview

- Variation of Designated Class Project
Blending of CBR & Business Model
- University as Community
 - UA Libraries Representatives as Stakeholders
 - Enrolled Students as Applied Anthropologists
- Taught at 400-level
Engages greatest number of students in "serious fieldwork"

Overview of Student Findings

- Students have a clear vision of Gorgas Library
- Books being overtaken by electronic resources & basic needs: food and coffee
- Little agreement on specific improvements
General desire for more & better versions of existing resources
AM users recognize resources for independent work, while group resources are more salient for PM users
Academic maturation impacts library perception but requires further investigation

Outcomes

- 17 students trained in professional, anthropological methods
- 4 students present at Society for Applied Anthropology
- 2 students present at UA Undergraduate Research & Creative Activity Conference
- College retention initiative funding replaced by UA Libraries funding for project continuation

Course Timeline for Spring 2012

Week 1: Introduction to Course & Project	Weeks 2-4: Introduction to Research Methods & Study Design	Week 5: Meet with University Libraries Stakeholders	Week 6: Finalize Design & Begin Participant Observation	Weeks 7-8: Continue Participant Observation (Await IRB Approval)	Week 9: Receive IRB Approval! Begin Collecting Free-Lists	Weeks 11-13: Continue Data Collection	Week 14: Data Analysis	Week 15: Present Research Findings & Deliverables
--	--	---	---	--	---	---------------------------------------	------------------------	---

For Further Information:
www.libraryculture.ua.edu
eecooper@ua.edu