

Communication Skills Learned during Service-Learning Projects

Excerpts from: Tucker, M. L., McCarthy, A. M., Hoxmeier, J. A., & Lenk, M. M. (1998). Community service learning increases communication skills across the business curriculum. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 61(2), 88-99.

Project Design

The students were divided into competitive teams to design and implement solutions to these applications. The groups dealt with all aspects of systems integration including the acquisition and installation of hardware. The project consisted of the following stages:

- Definition of the problem
- Analysis of the user requirements
- Design of a prototype
- Acquisition of hardware and software
- Implementation of the design
- Development of the system including menus, screens, and reports
- Testing of the system using test data provided by ELTC
- Development of system documentation and training materials
- Installation of the system and training

Project Communication Learning Outcomes

Classroom instruction included a combination of traditional lecture, work product review, and demonstrations. The students learned about relational database theory, specific system features, application design, and team product reviews. In addition to improving their computer system skills, students increased communications skills by:

- listening carefully to client needs
- negotiating with classmates in determining which organization to serve
- developing documentation and training materials
- presenting a technical solution in a language that the non-technical clients could understand