EVALUATING SERVICE LEARNING AT RIT: STUDENTS WORKING WITH NEIGHBORS BUILDING NEIGHBORHOODS
A SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

Prepared for:
RIT/NENA Partnership

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EVALUATION SERVICE-LEARNING AT RIT
STUDENTS WORKING WITH NEIGHBORS BUILDING NEIGHBORHOODS

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SUMMARY

RIT's *Students Working with Neighbors Building Neighborhood* project, funded by a three-year grant from the Corporation for National Service, proposed the development of a unique university/ community partnership between RIT and Rochester's NorthEast Neighborhood Alliance (NENA). The goal of this university/community partnership was to propel the implementation of the NENA Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan while broadening and deepening the educational experience for RIT students.

CGR has served as the project evaluator, working in conjunction with project staff, students, faculty, and NENA leadership, to employ qualitative and quantitative methods to measure and track the partnership's impact on the following: 1) students participating in service learning activities in conjunction with the grant, 2) NENA and residents of Sector 10, and 3) RIT faculty and RIT as an institution. This report highlights the key evaluation findings as the project's initial three-year funding period draws to a close.

Student Awareness Surveys

Campus-wide Student Awareness Surveys conducted among the general student population at RIT in 2001 and 2002 to ascertain students' level of interest in community service activities indicate that nearly three-quarters of students *do not* feel that they have a good understanding of the needs and problems facing the Rochester-area community. However, over half of the total respondents felt that they could have a positive impact on the community in which they lived.

❖ More than 75% of students indicated that they learn course content best when connections to real life situations are made. Nearly three-quarters of students also indicated that the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning through courses would help them in selecting a career path. More than half the respondents desire more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community.

❖ Nearly half of total survey respondents felt that the opportunity to combine classroom learning with assignments in the community was important or extremely important.

Service Learning Courses: Student Pre- and Post-Tests

Pre- and post-tests completed by students enrolled in community-based learning courses offered in conjunction with the Students Working with Neighbors Building Neighborhoods project measured students' perceptions of community service, learning, and leadership both before and after their community-based learning experience.

❖ While two-thirds of pre-test respondents reported having a "good understanding of the needs and problems facing the Rochester-area community," only a quarter of the general student population indicated so.

❖ A substantially higher proportion of post-test respondents (82%) believed they could have a positive impact on the community in which they live, compared to about two-thirds of the general student population.

❖ Eighty-five percent of students who were involved in the service learning courses indicated a desire for more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community, compared to about 60% of the general student population.

❖ Three out of four students indicated that their community-based learning experience had met their expectations.

❖ Two-thirds of post-test respondents rated the community-based learning course more interesting than other courses taken at RIT. A similar proportion indicated that they experienced a higher level of learning compared to other courses.

❖ While pre-test respondents as a whole expressed a higher degree of awareness and interest in community issues and community-based learning opportunities compared to the general student

population, there was also frequent improvement when comparing the community-based learning cohort's responses over time as measured by pre- and post-test responses.

Faculty Reflection

CGR conducted in-person interviews and a focus group with faculty teaching community-based learning courses in conjunction with the partnership. Faculty generally reported positive experiences with their courses, community projects, and student outcomes, though they frequently noted important lessons learned and things that they would do differently in the future. Key issues included:

❖ The time commitment required to prepare for class and to advise students outside of class time frequently exceeded initial expectations. In particular, faculty generally underestimated the time needed for coordination with NENA staff.

❖ Faculty felt they may have underestimated or not clearly communicated their expectations about the amount of time students would be expected to invest in the project outside the classroom.

❖ Fitting a community-based learning experience into RIT's ten-week quarter system is difficult.

❖ It is important to clarify expectations between NENA and faculty *before* the project begins.

❖ *All* parties need to be on the same page at the beginning of the quarter. Students, faculty, and NENA need to understand and agree to the desired outcomes and deliverables from day one.

❖ Consider developing a community-based learning curriculum that provides students with more than a "one time experience in the community." Enhanced planning and support at the Departmental and College levels would send the message that RIT values service learning.

❖ Students were exposed to invaluable "real world" experiences that they would not have had but for the partnership.

Community Impact

In interviews with CGR, NENA leadership conveyed their overall satisfaction with the partnership and a desire to see the relationships and activities associated with it continue to grow.

NENA leadership noted that while the evolution of the partnership has been largely a process of learning to trust and developing respect among all parties involved, that trust and respect between RIT and Sector 10 is firmly established. NENA also cited a number of initiatives that would not exist but for the partnership and a number of initiatives that have been enhanced through the resources RIT has contributed.

Considerations for the Future

The following are highlights of recommendations and suggestions for strengthening the learn and serve initiative and increasing its impact on students, RIT, and the community, as offered by various stakeholders.

❖ Consider ways to broaden RIT's point of contact at NENA and improve coordination between RIT faculty and NENA.

❖ RIT and NENA ought to engage in longer-range project planning.

❖ Identify faculty to act as service-learning advocates within Colleges or Departments. Their role would be to promote service learning among faculty and students, and to work with other faculty, community partners, and institutional leadership to identify and develop projects (and potentially funding to support the projects and their implementation).

❖ Create processes whereby students, faculty, and NENA formalize the objectives and anticipated outcomes associated with their community-based learning experience and projects. Consider developing contracts between students and NENA.

❖ Stakeholders cited a strong need for clear RIT institutional commitment to the concept of service learning.

Project Goals

In its original application for funding from the Corporation for National Service, RIT proposed an innovative pilot program to establish a unique partnership, a true university/community *partnership* based on the principles of co-equal power-sharing, between RIT and NENA. That partnership has been firmly established and continues to grow to meet the needs and goals of both RIT students and NENA/Sector 10 residents. The partnership has produced tangible results in terms of business plans for NENA enterprises, the production of a community

magazine, design plans, mapping projects, etc., and myriad other intangible benefits. Overall, the project has achieved the following goals:

❖ The development of a partnership with NENA that targets real community needs;

❖ The establishment of a community-based learning/technology transfer exchange between NENA and RIT;

❖ The mobilization of RIT and its resources (human and technological) as important community resources;

❖ Institutional recognition of service learning as a pedagogical tool that enhances student learning; and

❖ The partnership brought together individuals with diverse backgrounds who have established trust and built relationships.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Staff Team

Kimberly Hood, MPA was the primary data analyst and author of this report.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Background and Purpose

CGR (Center for Governmental Research Inc.) was engaged by the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) to serve as the independent evaluator of its three-year Learn and Serve America grant, *Students Working with Neighbors Building Neighborhoods,* funded by the Corporation for National Service. This grant proposed a unique university/community partnership between RIT and the NorthEast Neighborhood Alliance (NENA).

NENA is a resident-driven planning and coordination initiative committed to the revitalization of three neighborhoods in Northeast Rochester through citizen empowerment and ownership. These three neighborhoods comprise Sector 10 in the City of Rochester's Neighbors Building Neigborhoods Program, and NENA serves as the Sector 10 Planning Committee. NENA's goal is to build local self-reliance for individuals, families, and neighborhoods in Sector 10.

The goal of the RIT/NENA university/community partnership is to propel the implementation of the NENA Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan while broadening and deepening the educational experience for RIT students. In its original application for funding, RIT proposed an innovative pilot program in service learning that would:

❖ develop a partnership with NENA to target real (versus perceived) needs of the community;

❖ establish a "community-based learning/technology transfer" exchange between RIT and NENA through service learning;

❖ mobilize RIT as an important community resource;

❖ build organizational capacity and expertise for service learning as a pedagogical tool that enhances learning; and

❖ bring together individuals with diverse backgrounds.

This report will summarize the evaluation findings as the project's initial three-year funding period draws to a close.

Methodology

The key objective of the evaluation plan was to measure the impact of the RIT/NENA partnership on the following: 1) students participating in service learning activities in conjunction with the grant, 2) NENA and residents of Sector 10, and 3) RIT faculty and RIT as an institution. To measure the various objectives of the project, CGR, working with RIT and NENA, used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data over the life of the project. Data collection efforts included: in-person interviews with students, faculty, and staff at RIT engaged in the initiative; pre- and post-test surveys of students participating in service learning activities; monitoring service learning curriculum development and institutional support for service learning at RIT; and interviewing NENA leadership and staff to assess the project's impact at the community-level.

Year one of the project was devoted to the initial planning and process development phases of the project. CGR, RIT, and NENA had many discussions about how to evaluate student performance; defining desired outcomes for students, faculty, and the community involved in service learning; what to measure/how to measure the project's impact on students, faculty, and the community; and establishing processes for data collection. Much of CGR's activity during the first year of the project focused on developing measures to be used throughout the evaluation and the development of a process to allow for ongoing data collection and objective third party feedback to RIT and NENA as the project evolved. CGR completed a review of evaluation models used by other service learning projects, and identified several existing evaluation instruments that we built on and modified for use locally.

During year one of the project, CGR, RIT, and NENA worked through many "start-up issues" inherent in a project of this magnitude. Years two and three were devoted to data collection, analysis, and providing feedback to project staff. The current evaluation framework will allow for ongoing data collection into the future.

Organization of the Report

This report includes eight Sections:

❖ **Section I: Introduction.** This section describes the background, purpose, and methodology used in developing this report.

❖ **Section II: Overview of Student Awareness Survey.** This section presents findings from surveys administered in 2001 and 2002 to gauge the level of awareness and interest in community service and leadership activities among RIT's general student population.

❖ **Section III: Overview of Pre- and Post-Test Results.** This section compares student responses to questions about community involvement before and after their experience in a community-based learning course.

❖ **Section IV: Student Reflection.** Students provided feedback following their experiences working on projects with NENA or in Sector 10.

❖ **Section V: Faculty Reflection.** At the completion of each quarter, faculty participating in the partnership were asked to reflect on their community-based learning experience.

❖ **Section VI: Perspectives of NENA Leadership.** This section presents highlights from CGR's interviews with NENA leadership, focusing on what the partnership has meant to NENA and Sector 10.

❖ **Section VII: Perspectives of Institutional Leadership.** This section presents highlights of CGR's interviews with RIT's institutional leadership.

❖ **Section VIII: Lessons Learned and Considerations for the Future.** A final summary of key lessons learned during this three-year partnership, along with suggestions for future consideration.

SECTION II: OVERVIEW OF STUDENT AWARENESS SURVEY

Student Awareness Survey

A campus-wide baseline Student Awareness Survey was administered in the fall of project year two to gauge the level of awareness and interest in community service and leadership activities among RIT students. The evaluation plan called for this survey to be administered each fall in order to identify and track trends in student attitudes and interests. In September 2001, a sample of 395 students, representing all of RIT's colleges, completed the 28-item questionnaire. In September 2002, the second annual Student Awareness Survey was administered, with 528 students responding to the survey.

The following summary highlights key findings based on two years of survey data. Note: CGR urges caution when making comparisons between only two points in time. Additional data are necessary to determine whether changes from one year to the next represent trends sustained over time. Responses to each survey item are presented in tabular form in Appendix A.[1]

Respondent Characteristics

The survey questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section asked students about themselves, including their college and program, year, and their involvement in volunteer or community service activities. This chart shows that students from all RIT colleges responded to the survey in both 2001 (N=395) and 2002 (N=528). In 2002, about a quarter of the respondents indicated they were first year students, a slightly higher proportion were second year students, about 21% were third year students,

Student Awareness Survey: College Enrollment
2001 (N=395)   2002 (N=528)
Business, Engineering, Liberal Arts, NTID, Science, CIAS, CAST, CCIS

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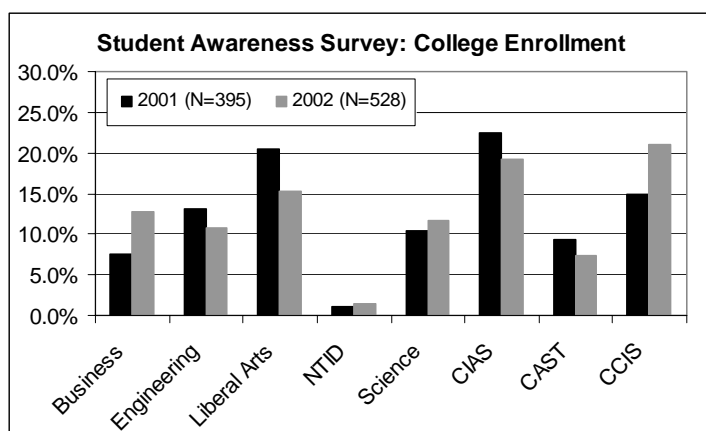
[1]Many of the questions included in the Student Awareness Survey were repeated on the pre-and post-tests described in Section III. The data tables in Appendix A provide breakdowns of responses to individual questions by survey instrument.

19% were fourth year students, and about 6% were fifth year students. This distribution is fairly comparable to 2001 data, which are presented in the Appendix. The ratio of male to female respondents was nearly two-thirds to one-third in 2002, or slightly higher compared to 2001, and the proportion of respondents describing themselves as White or European-American was fairly consistent at about 80% in both years.

In each survey year, slightly more than half of all respondents indicated they were currently working for pay, with the vast majority (75% in 2001 and about 80% in 2002) of those employed working 20 hours or less per week.

While half of all students said that they had participated in volunteer or community service activities in the past 12 months, substantially fewer students, only 16% in each of the survey years, reported that they were *currently* involved in such activities. However, nearly 40% of the respondents in 2002 (44% in 2001) indicated that while they were not currently involved in community service activities, *they would like to become involved in such activities.*

While it is encouraging that a substantial number of students indicated an interest in engaging in community service activities, slightly more than a quarter of respondents in each of the survey years indicated that they were not aware of *how* they would go about doing so while at RIT.

In 2002, of the 477 students responding to the question "Do you plan to remain in the Rochester-area following graduation?", 10.9% indicated "yes", 39.8% indicated "no", and 49.3% were "unsure". These proportions are comparable to responses provided in 2001. Student feedback presented in later sections of this report suggest that for some, the "hands-on", "real life", and "eye-opening" opportunities afforded them through the community-based learning experiences emanating from the partnership have heightened their interest in the Rochester-area community.

Attitudes about Learning and Community

In Part II of the survey, students were asked to indicate their agreement with series of statements about learning and the community using a five point scale where "1" represented "Strongly Disagree", "2" was "Disagree", "3" was "Neutral", "4" indicated "Agree", and "5" represented "Strongly Agree".

❖ In 2001 and 2002, about one quarter of students felt they had a good understanding of the needs and problems facing the Rochester-area community. Nearly 42% reported that they *did not* have a good understanding of the area's needs and problems.

❖ 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: "I feel comfortable around people from different racial and ethnic groups."

❖ In each survey year, more than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I am motivated by courses that contain hands-on applications of theories to real life situations." *Nearly three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would choose a course with such hands-on application over one without it.*

❖ In both 2001 and 2002, *more than three-quarters of respondents (79.1% and 77.6%, respectively) agreed or strongly agreed that "The opportunity to engage in hands-on learning through my courses would most likely help me in selecting a career path."*

❖ *More than half of all respondents indicated that they would like more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community.* However, as noted above, when asked if they knew about opportunities/knew how to become involved in community service at RIT, slightly more than a quarter *did not*.

❖ In both 2001 and 2002, *about two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they believed they could have a positive impact on the community in which they lived.*

❖ In 2002, about 40% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "The knowledge and skills of community members are valued by this institution", up slightly from 37% in 2001.

Involvement in Community

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of statements using a five point scale where "1" represented "Not Important at All" and "5" represented "Extremely Important".

❖ As shown in the chart below, in 2002 nearly one-half of all respondents indicated that it is important or extremely important to become involved in a program to improve the community and/or help others. This proportion decreased slightly between 2001 and 2002.

Importance of Involvement in a Program to Improve the Community and/or Help Others:
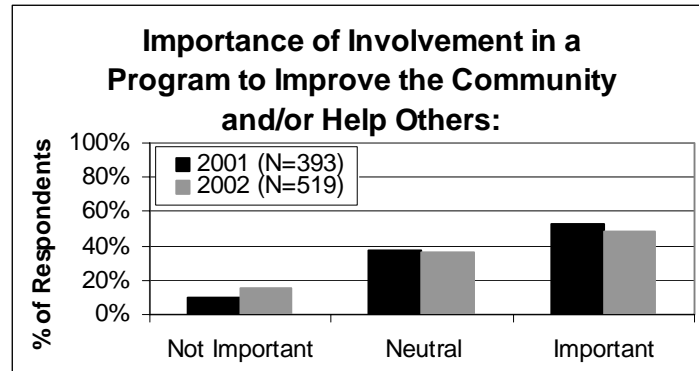
❖ While slightly lower in 2002 when compared to 2001 results, nearly half (47%) of survey respondents felt that the opportunity to combine classroom learning with assignments in the community was important or extremely important.

Importance of Combining Classroom Learning with Assignments in the Community:
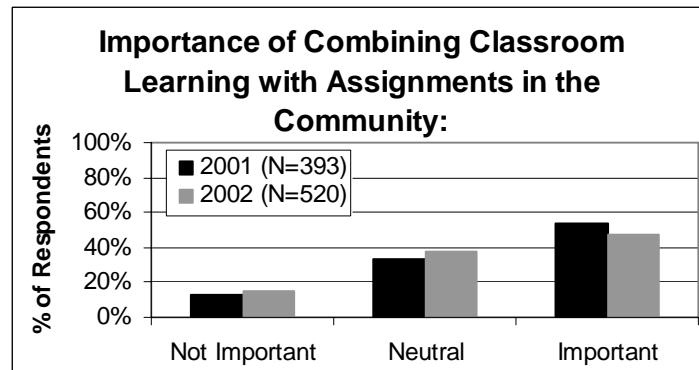
SECTION III: OVERVIEW OF STUDENT PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS

During project years two and three, students in twelve community-based learning courses offered in the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Business, Imaging Arts and Sciences, and Science completed pre- and post-tests (N=122 and N=111, respectively). These tests were designed to gauge students' attitudes and perceptions of community service, learning, and leadership, as well as student characteristics both before and after their community-based learning experiences. Data tables included in Appendix A describe respondent characteristics and also provide a comparison of the pre- and post-test responses to each survey item. For those questions that also appeared on the Student Awareness Survey, the data from each survey year (2001 and 2002) are also included in the appendix table. While the focus of this section of the report is to highlight the pre- and post-test findings, we will also draw attention to questions where the pre- and post-test findings varied from the Student Awareness Survey results.

Student Characteristics

Over the past two years, students from all eight RIT colleges have participated in the community-based learning courses offered in conjunction with the partnership. Well over half of the students participating were enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts or the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences (36% and 27% respectively). Nearly two thirds of respondents were 3rd or 4th year students and 63% of respondents were female. Slightly more than three quarters described their race or ethnic background as White or European American.

While 38% of respondents indicated that they were currently a member of a service or volunteer club or organization or a Greek organization, a higher proportion, 58%, indicated that they had performed volunteer or community service activities in the past 12 months. When asked how many hours per week they performed such activities, responses ranged from less than one hour to fifteen hours per week.

About two-thirds of students enrolled in the community-based learning courses offered in conjunction with the partnership held jobs and were working for pay in addition to their coursework. More than half of those working (53%) reported working 20 hours or more per week.

The survey results provided in graphic form below contrast pre- and post-test results for selected questions. While more than 100 students completed each test, we did not feel that the numbers were sufficiently high to lend themselves to analysis by course type, college enrollment, year, or other variable. Survey results are also presented in tabular form in Appendix A, and for questions asked on both the Student Awareness Survey and the pre- and post-test, the responses from each are broken out.

Connections to Community

Students were asked to respond to a series of questions that asked about their knowledge of community issues, and the degree to which they felt connected to the community.

I have a good understanding of the needs and problems of the Rochester-area community:
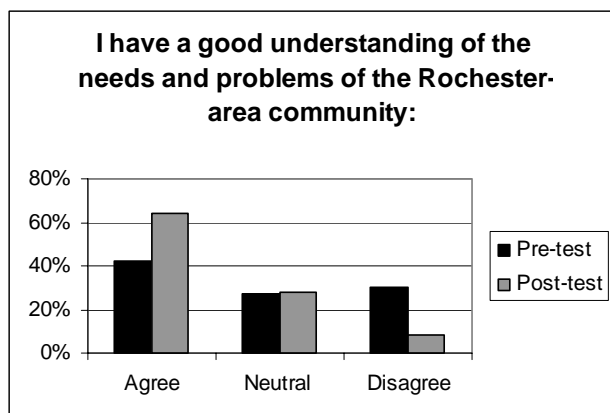
The proportion of respondents indicating that they have a good understanding of the needs and problems facing the Rochester-area community increased from 43% at the time of the pre-test to 64% at the time of the post-test. As revealed by the Student Awareness Survey, this proportion was substantially lower among the general student population— about 25% in both 2001 and 2002.

I feel that social problems are not my concern:
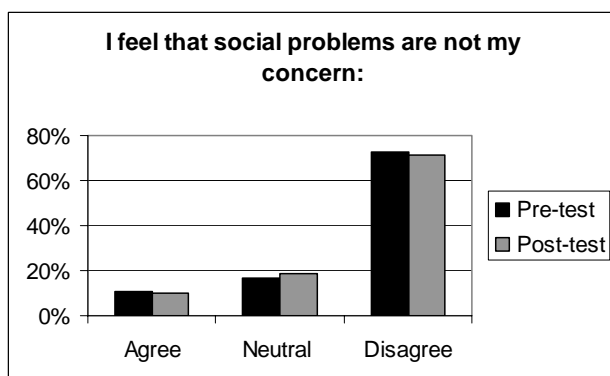
Over two-thirds of students enrolled in the community-based learning courses did not agree with the statement that social problems are not their concern. Responses to this question changed only slightly between the pre- and post-tests.

I feel that I can have a positive impact on the community in which I live:

(Chart: Pre-test, Post-test — Agree, Neutral, Disagree)

Youth are valued resources for solving community problems:

(Chart: Pre-test, Post-test — Agree, Neutral, Disagree)

Having an impact on community problems is within the reach of most individuals:

(Chart: Pre-test, Post-test — Agree, Neutral, Disagree)

I feel that I can play an important part in improving the well-being of my community:

(Chart: Pre-test, Post-test — Agree, Neutral, Disagree)

The proportion of students indicating that they feel they can have a positive impact on the community in which they live increased by about six percent from the pre-test (76%) to the post-test (82%). These proportions were higher compared to the two-thirds of Student Awareness Survey respondents who felt they could have a positive impact on their community.
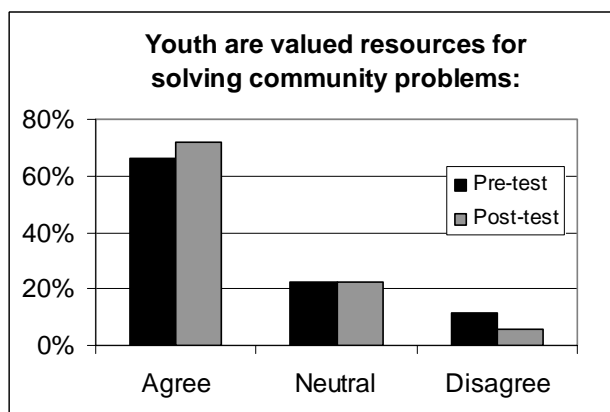
Following their community-based learning experience, a higher proportion of students agreed with the statement "Youth are valued resources for solving community problems" (66% agreed or strongly agreed at the time of the pre-test while 72% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement at the time of the post-test). A substantially lower proportion—around 40%--of the total student body sample indicated agreement with this statement.
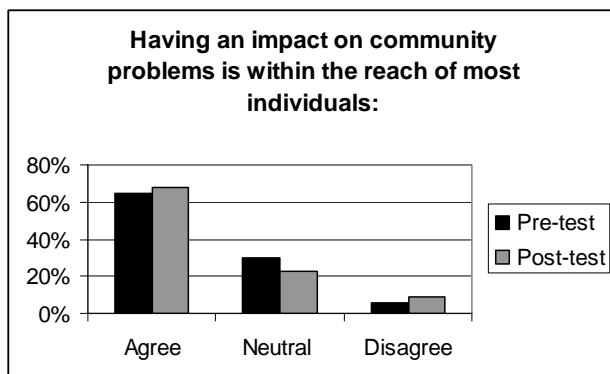
While the proportion increased slightly from the pre-test to the post-test, about two thirds of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Having an impact on community problems is within the reach of most individuals." The proportions of students who were neutral, or did not feel strongly one way or another about this statement declined from 30% to 23%, while those disagreeing actually increased by 3% between the pre- and post-tests.
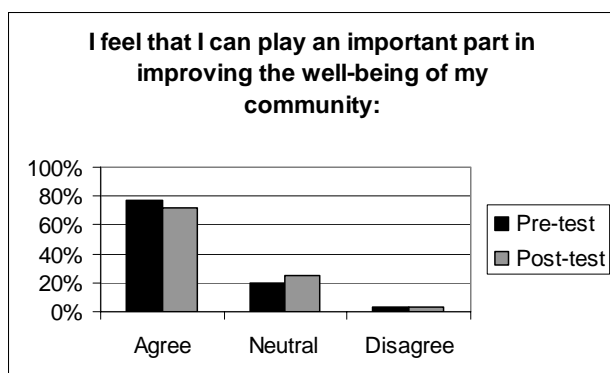
At the conclusion of their community-based learning experience, a slightly lower proportion of students, 72%, were in agreement with the statement "I feel that I can play an important part in improving the well-being of my community" than had been at the beginning of the course (77%).

Perceptions of Self and Others

The following series of questions focused on how students perceive themselves and others related to issues that may affect their interest, ability, and willingness to participate in community-based learning activities.

I feel comfortable around people from different racial and ethnic groups:
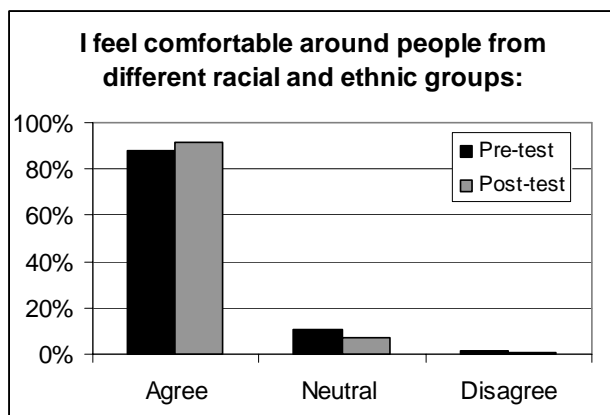
The proportion of students indicating that they feel comfortable around people from different racial and ethnic groups increased from 88% at the time of the pre-test to 92% at the time of the post-test.

The knowledge and skills of community members are valued by this institution:
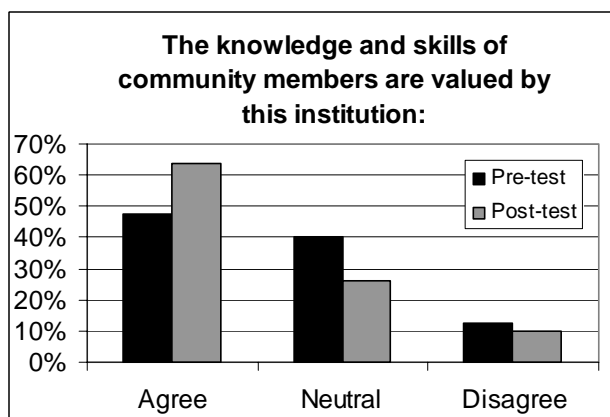
Less than half of pre-test respondents believed the knowledge and skills of community members to be valued by RIT. Upon completion of their community-based learning experience, a substantially higher proportion—nearly two-thirds of respondents—believed that RIT values the knowledge and skills of community members. Less than 40% of the total student sample were in agreement with this statement.

Working with others helps/would help me learn more about myself:
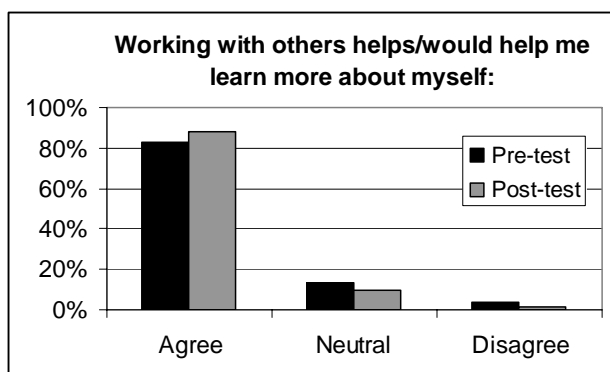
While a majority of service learning students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Working with others helps/would help me learn more about myself," the proportion feeling this way increased from 83% among pre-test respondents to 88% among post-test respondents. Less than two-thirds of the total student sample, or between 55% and 60%, agreed with the statement.

While working on a group project, I can easily accept others' criticism of my work:
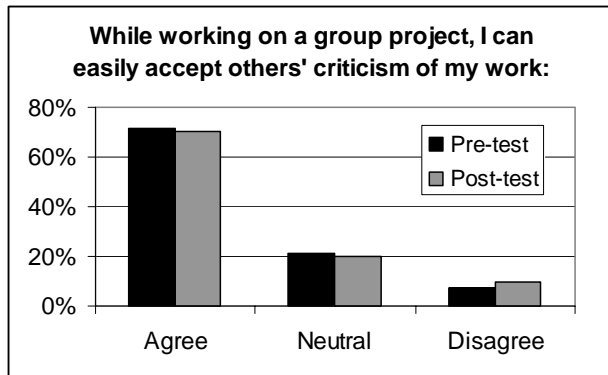
Seventy-one percent of pre-test respondents indicated that they can easily accept others' criticism of their work while working on a group project. This proportion was virtually unchanged following students' community-based learning experience. About 10% of post-test respondents indicated that they could not easily accept others' criticism of their work.

I feel uncomortable working with people who are different from me in such things as race, wealth, and life experiences:
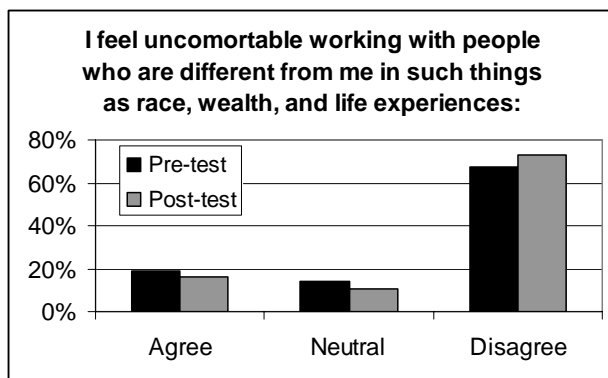
Almost one in five (19%) pre-test respondents reported feeling uncomfortable working with people different from themselves in such things as race, wealth, and life experiences. This proportion declined to 16% among post-test respondents.

Valuing Community-Based Learning Opportunities

Students were asked to respond to a series of questions that focused on learning styles and preferences. Several of the questions asked of students were designed to elicit information on what may have motivated them to participate in community based learning.

I am motivated by courses that contain hands-on applications of theories to real life situations:
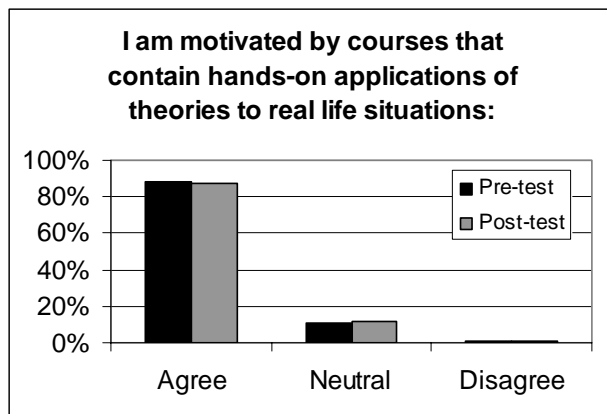
The vast majority of pre- and post- test respondents (89% and 87% respectively) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am motivated by courses that contain hands-on applications of theories to real life situations."

I would choose a course that contains hands-on application of theories to real life situations over one that did not:
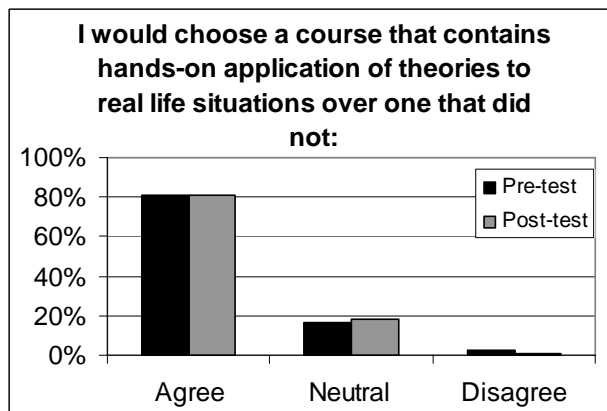
Four out of five students would choose a course that contains hands-on application of theories to real life situations over one that did not. This proportion was unchanged from pre- to post-test. Less than 1% of post-test respondents disagreed with this statement.

I have a realistic understanding of the daily responsibilities involved in the job/career in which I am interested:
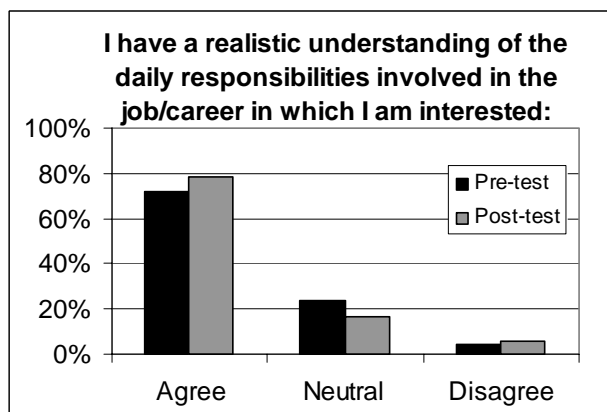
The proportion of students who believed that they have a realistic understanding of the daily responsibilities involved in the job/career in which they are interested increased by 6%, from 72% of pre-test respondents to 78% of post-test respondents. About 5% of post-test respondents did not feel that they had a realistic understanding of these responsibilities.

The opportunity to engage in hands-on learning through my courses would most likely help me in selecting a career path:

Pre- and post-test students overwhelmingly agreed that the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning through their courses would most likely be helpful in selecting a career path: 84% of post-test respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 13% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4% did not believe that hands-on learning would help them in selecting a career path.

I would like more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community:
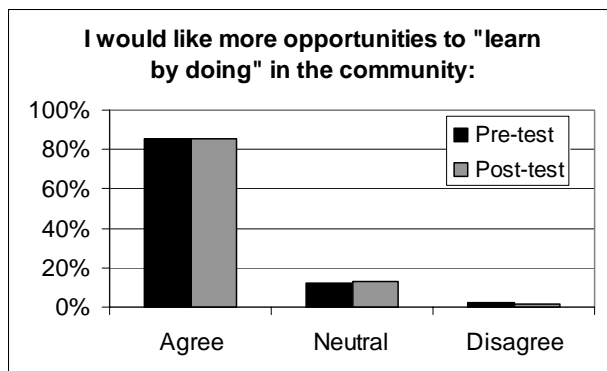
The vast majority (85%) of both pre- and post- test respondents indicated a desire for more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community, compared with about 60% of the student population overall.

Community service will help me develop leadership skills:
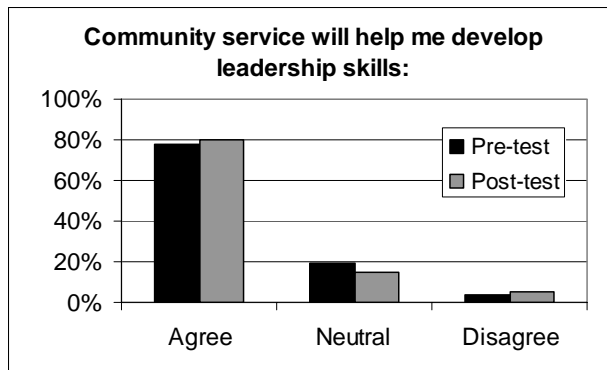
While about four out of five pre- and post-test respondents indicated their belief that community service will help them develop leadership skills, only slightly more than half of the total student body felt this way.

I learn course content best when connections to real life situations are made:
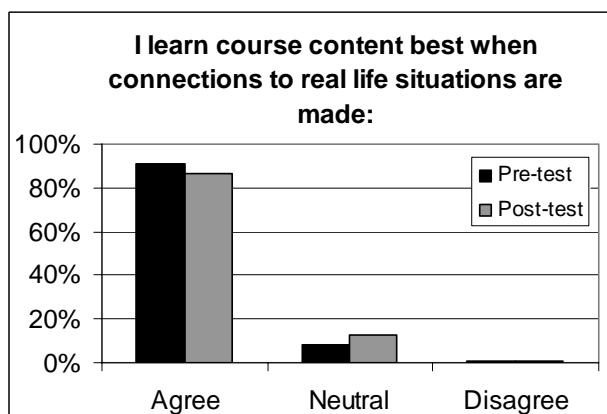
The vast majority of pre- and post-test respondents (90% and 86% respectively) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I learn course content best when connections to real life situations are made," compared with about 80% of the total student population.

Skills and experiences that I gain from community service will be valuable in my career:
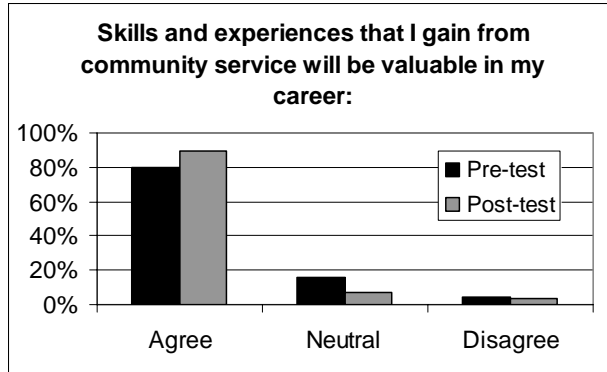
The proportion of students indicating that the skills and experiences gained from community service will be valuable to their career increased from 80% at the time of the pre-test to 89% at the time of the post-test.

Skills and Abilities

Pre- and post-test respondents were also asked to rate themselves with respect to how well they believe they perform a variety of skills and activities compared to others (i.e., worse than most, about the same, better than most). The following are highlights from this series of questions, with complete findings presented in data tables contained in Appendix A.

❖ Seventy percent of pre-test respondents and more than three-quarters of post-test respondents felt they were better than most at "respecting the views of others."

❖ The proportion of respondents who felt they were better than most when it came to communicating their ideas to others increased from 53% at the time of the pre-test to 60% at the time of the post-test.
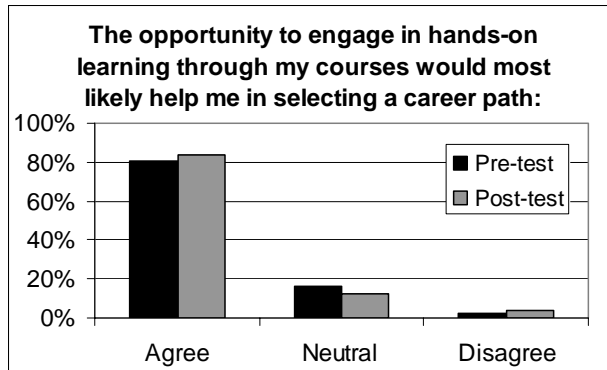
❖ While 55% of pre-test respondents believed that their ability to compromise was better compared to others, the proportion increased to 65% following their service learning experience.

❖ Compared with 53% of pre-test respondents, nearly two-thirds of post-test respondents believed that they performed better than most when it came to the identification of social issues and concerns.

❖ The proportion of students indicating their belief that they are better than most when it comes to being "empathetic to all points of view" increased from 57% at the time of the pre-test to 74% at the time of the post-test.

❖ The proportion of students who believed they were better than most when it came to "knowing where to find information" was virtually unchanged between the pre- and post-test (about 58%).

Student Expectations of the Course

The final section of the post-test asked students to reflect on their community-based learning experience. Eighty-nine percent of post-test respondents felt that the course objectives had been clearly defined, and the same proportion felt that those course objectives had been met. Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated that their participation in the service component of the course enhanced their understanding of the course material.

Slightly more than three quarters of post-test respondents indicated that the service learning component of the course met their expectations. Students who reported that their expectations had been met had the following additional comments:

❖ Just being able to visit/see NENA helped put things into perspective for me.

❖ It encouraged my learning.

❖ Real world applications and problems came up and were solved.

❖ It was interesting to get the community's input about the public space they are living in.

❖ It was very different from other classes and projects that I've had in the past. It was great to actually work on a real project for a real community and know I was helping.

❖ The experience required teamwork, responsibility, research, discussion, understanding, questioning, and sharing.

❖ I think we were well prepared by the instructor for the community involvement component.

❖ This is still new to me, so I'm keeping an open mind.

❖ I wish we had had a little more time for higher quality work.

Students indicating that the service component of the course had not met their expectations provided the following comments:

❖ It didn't really feel like [NENA] wanted our help.

❖ I did not feel connected to the client/project and would have liked to.

❖ I would have liked to have spent more time actually out in the field gaining experience.

❖ Not enough client interaction.

❖ The clients did not fulfill their obligations to the projects.

❖ Difficult to work with group members; too much pressure among group members.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported that their service learning course was more interesting compared to other courses they had taken at RIT. Sixty-two percent felt they had learned more in the current service learning course compared to the level of learning they'd experienced in other courses while at RIT.

Learning Style

Choosing from a list, students were asked to indicate their predominant learning style. Forty percent indicated that they were predominantly *visual learners* (learn by seeing, reading, and visualizing information). Forty percent also reported being primarily *experiential learners* (learn by doing and experiencing). Ten percent were *kinesthetic learners* (learn by moving and physically walking through scenarios). Only four percent considered themselves *tactile learners* (learn by touching and manipulating objects), with the remaining five percent a combination of auditory, verbal, and other learners.

Continued Involvement in Service Learning

When asked if they planned to take additional service learning courses in the future, half of post-test respondents indicated "yes". Slightly more than a third were unsure, and about 14% indicated "no". *Note: Based on comments several respondents noted on the surveys, some of those indicating "no" to this question did so because they were about to graduate.* About a third of post-test respondents indicated that they would like to continue doing volunteer work with NENA outside of a service learning course.

Student Comments and Suggestions

Finally, respondents offered the following comments and suggestions:

❖ [The course] was enough to get a good understanding of and focus on the community without overdoing it.

- ❖ Still feel that there wasn't enough connection with Sector 10. Maybe in the future students could actually work with members of the community.

- ❖ Let students choose the organization that they are going to work with.

- ❖ Make this course an introductory one or create other courses [pre-requisites] that would prepare us for the challenges of this course.

- ❖ Desire more interaction with residents and youth in Sector 10 so they can be sources of information.

- ❖ More time in the field.

- ❖ Continue to offer this course and new and different courses as well.

- ❖ The instructor should break down the assignment more. For example, by weeks 3 or 4, students should all have completed the same part of the process. Same for weeks 5, 6, 7, etc. That allows for more coordination and supervision.

- ❖ Lots of fun. Learned a lot. This class was exactly what I was looking for and exactly what I hoped for.

- ❖ Teach first the "how to" then put us out in the community.

- ❖ I knew generally what we were working towards, but didn't understand the specifics.

- ❖ Co-teaching really gives different perspectives and a good connected feeling. Great for both teachers.

- ❖ Excellent course- would recommend it to others.

- ❖ Great class.

- ❖ This course has truly changed the way I view the environment and community I live in.

- ❖ Wonderful cooperation and teamwork.

Summary of Pre- and Post-Test Findings

Overall, when comparing responses to similar questions among the sample drawn from the general student population (i.e., Student Awareness Survey respondents) and students engaged in the twelve service learning courses offered in conjunction with the RIT/NENA partnership (i.e., pre- and post-test respondents), the students participating in the courses appear to have a higher level of awareness of and interest in community issues and concerns, and a greater willingness and desire to become involved in solving these issues and concerns.

❖ While almost two-thirds of post-test respondents reported having a "good understanding of the needs and problems facing the Rochester-area community," only a quarter of the general student population indicated so.

❖ Eighty-two percent of post-test respondents believe they can have a positive impact on the community in which they live, compared to about two-thirds of the general student population.

❖ Eighty-five percent of students who were involved in the service learning courses indicated a desire for more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community, compared to about 60% of the general student population.

❖ Three-quarters of students indicated that their community-based learning experience met their expectations.

❖ Two-thirds of post-test respondents rated the community-based learning course more interesting than other courses taken at RIT. A similar proportion indicated that they experienced a higher level of learning compared to other courses.

Upon comparing survey responses of the general student population to those of the students enrolled in community-based learning courses, it appears that there may be some degree of self-selection whereby students with particular interests or learning styles are more likely to be drawn to community-based learning opportunities. *While pre-test respondents as a whole expressed a higher degree of awareness and interest in community issues and community-based learning opportunities compared to the general student population, we also frequently saw improvement when comparing the community-based learning cohort's responses over time as measured by the post-test.*

One of the difficulties of tracking the impact that service learning has on students is that much of the impact may be difficult to

measure immediately following their community-based experience. One student's experience in a ten week course may lead to an eventual shift in a career path while another student may immediately engage in additional hands-on work in the community. While the outcomes and benefits of service learning are likely innumerable, the challenge is finding the means of measuring impact, both direct and indirect, in both the short and long term. While the results described above provide an initial glimpse into students' attitudes and behaviors, ideally, we would wish to conduct longer-term follow-up with these students.

SECTION IV: STUDENT REFLECTION

Additional Student Perspectives

While the pre- and post-test captured a vast amount of data related to student perspectives, the surveys were designed largely as quantitative tools. CGR and the project staff were also interested in exploring some of the issues raised in the surveys in greater depth, as well as obtaining feedback from those students involved in the partnership through independent study projects. CGR conducted several interviews during the second and third years of the project with students who were actively engaged in the partnership.

Overall, these students reported that their educational experiences were enhanced through their community-based learning activities, and each articulated that in their estimation, the service learning project opened doors for them that would otherwise not have been opened. The students interviewed valued the opportunity to become active participants rather than passive learners, and frequently described their experiences in the community as "eye-opening".

When asked about the challenges and rewards of their involvement, the interviewees identified the following:

❖ One student, working with NENA as part of an independent study project, noted that at times he felt the pull between what his professor expected of the project and what NENA expected from the project. What might have best met NENA's needs might not have met the professor's expectations. This student reflected, and stated that if he were to do this again, he would start by sitting down with both parties—NENA and the professor-and clearly defining each side's expectations.

❖ Another student described her experience as a positive one that resulted in a shift in her professional aspirations to a community focus.

❖ One of the interviewees noted that his involvement in the service learning project enabled him to develop contacts and relationships with people in other colleges at RIT. He felt that he was able to gain a broader perspective of RIT as a whole rather than maintain his focus on "my little corner of the school."

❖ A graduate student involved in the project noted how eye-opening her experiences with the project had been. The experience made her realize how valuable and rewarding it was to be involved in a community, and that the partnership provided students with opportunities to learn to be open-minded, to see how others live, and as a result to become less selfish and hopefully be more satisfied with their own lives. This student did express a concern that not many students likely knew about the partnership, or the opportunities it could provide.

Each of the students indicated that their involvement with the partnership required a sizable time commitment on their part. Most of the students also noted some logistical issues, including access to NENA staff providing project oversight, though one student noted "That's the way it is in the real world—meetings get cancelled and moved and you have to remain flexible while trying to meet your deadlines."

The following are some additional thoughts from students about what their involvement in the partnership has meant in the broader context of their overall RIT experience:

❖ These experiences will really help me in the future to decide where I want to be and what I want to be doing. [My involvement with NENA] is something where I feel like I can help make a difference.

❖ You start to care when you turn on the news in the morning and hear about something that happened in or around Sector 10.

❖ It's great that there is something like [the partnership] for students who often get isolated in their own world.

- ❖ A lot of times [faculty] try to bring people to us—this is the opposite—taking students into the community to see and learn great things.

- ❖ I produced something tangible; wow, I can actually show this to someone.

- ❖ Here, in a sterile environment, we lose touch with what is real. It's good to get out into the community and talk to others.

- ❖ We have both started to care about the work down there [at NENA]; it's not just a summer job.

SECTION V: FACULTY REFLECTION

Faculty Feedback and Reflection

Throughout project years two and three, CGR conducted interviews with faculty teaching each of the community-based learning courses offered in conjunction with the Students Working with Neighbors Building Neighborhoods Project. During these one-on-one interviews conducted at the end of each quarter, faculty were asked to reflect on their own performance, student performance, their relationship with NENA, their students' relationships with NENA, overall student satisfaction with the experience and any concerns expressed by students, as well as their own concerns, issues, and observations.

All faculty interviewed reported prior experience incorporating project-based learning into their curriculum. They also generally reported positive experiences with their courses, but were asked to also reflect on important lessons learned. A summary of faculty comments is provided below.

Substantial Time Commitment Required of Faculty

The time commitment required by faculty frequently exceeded their initial expectations. In particular, faculty generally underestimated the time needed for coordination with NENA.

❖ It is difficult to fit a service-learning course in to RIT's ten-week quarter system; students, faculty and NENA spend time just "getting up to speed."

❖ Faculty may have underestimated or not clearly communicated their expectations about the time students would need to invest in the project *outside* the classroom. It is also difficult to schedule student time outside of regular class time, particularly when many of the students have full course loads and are holding down jobs.

Expectations and Lessons Learned

Faculty discussed a wide range of topics related to student performance and outcomes. The comments below offer a summary of the various issues and concerns raised:

❖ It is important that *all* parties understand and agree to the desired outcomes of the project from the start. The students and NENA might benefit from drawing up a contract at the beginning of the quarter.

❖ It is important to clarify expectations between NENA and the faculty *before* the project begins.

❖ There is a need for more clearly defined expectations/ agreed-upon deliverables. The beginning of a project may be particularly troublesome for students (particularly in lower-level courses), who are used to coming into a class, being handed a syllabus, and told exactly what to do. Community-based learning is most likely a different learning environment than what students are used to. Because we may not tell them exactly what to do or how to do it, it is all the more important that expectations be clearly communicated.

❖ Perhaps projects need to be scaled back, more clearly defined, and goals explicitly stated. To ensure that the project is the "right fit" for both NENA and the students, there needs to be a clear understanding of not only what the deliverable will be, but also how the product will be used (or in some cases, if it will be used). What goal or objective of NENA's will it further? How does the project relate to NENA's strategic plan and how does the project relate to other projects? Consideration ought to be given to striking a balance between better-defined objectives and outcomes and maintaining a certain degree of flexibility.

❖ Some students were frustrated by the lack of community interaction, i.e., that they didn't get to work more with residents. Faculty recognized that in some cases this may be due to the nature of the course and the project.

❖ Faculty expressed a desire for service learning to be more than a one-time experience for students. Is there a way to create a "service learning experience" that spans the entire time that a student is at RIT?

- Consider planning at a College or Departmental level.

- Consider faculty advocates/coordinators within Colleges.

- Consider a service-learning certificate program.

❖ Service-learning as a new style of learning may be troublesome for some students, e.g., students may be used to more structure. However, faculty felt that the projects students engaged in with NENA offered them a "real world experience" that may not be typical of other projects or courses students experience at RIT.

❖ All faculty interviewed during year two noted that one of the "lessons learned" was the need to enhance the student reflection component—to build it in from the start—as it is a critical piece for both students and faculty. Several faculty were unsure about the best way to carry out the reflection component so that it was meaningful. During year three of the project, one faculty member noted that the value of journal assignments, designed to provide students with an opportunity to reflect, was diminished when students began asking "how long does the entry have to be."

Institutionalization of Service Learning at RIT

Faculty also discussed their perceptions of the level to which service learning has been institutionalized at RIT.

❖ Some faculty questioned the value RIT places on service-learning, e.g., Faculty feel pressure to focus on those things that are important for tenure, and some perceive that involvement in service learning is not valued in this arena. One faculty member mused that service learning is still not part of the academic mainstream, and not many people fully understand what it means, and therefore it hasn't been widely embraced on campus. Faculty are forced to think about self-preservation, and part of that is thinking about what is a "safe amount" to take on when it comes to service learning.

❖ One faculty member expressed concern that he's involved in the project, yet he doesn't have a good sense of what other groups on campus are doing with respect to service-

learning. He cited a need for more contact between faculty involved in the project and a desire to know what products others are producing.

❖ There is a need for better understanding/communication about the various projects going on among those involved in the project. One class product might prove to be a resource for another class project, or one project may be able to pick up where another left off.

Faculty believed the community-based learning opportunities the project afforded students were important and often eye-opening experiences. In particular, students were exposed to working with citizen groups, something that is not typical at RIT.

Faculty who were interviewed in both years two and three typically noted that their second experience teaching the course went more smoothly than the first. In one case, the faculty member noted that the second time around his students had a much better grasp of the concepts before going into the field, and while they performed the same exercises as the students had the previous year, they did a much better job. Another faculty member attributed a better second experience to narrowing and more clearly defining the student project.

Faculty Focus Group

In addition to the faculty feedback gained through the interviews summarized above, CGR also conducted a focus group, inviting all faculty engaged in the project to attend. The insights of the four faculty members who participated in this focus group are summarized below. The themes and issues emerging during the session were largely consistent with those that emerged during the individual interview sessions, and often there was consensus among the group members around issues and concerns raised.

Strengths

❖ One faculty member noted that the students involved in the service learning projects have benefited tremendously in terms of gaining an appreciation of not just the things that technology can do, but also through the project, having the opportunity to learn about "non-scientific" applications, i.e., the social and public policy realm.

❖ The co-teaching of courses by community members was invaluable and provided students with a perspective they wouldn't otherwise have had.

❖ Faculty also noted that the NENA Council honors its relationship with RIT and holds the relationship in high regard. As the project has evolved and the relationship has developed, trust between the two organizations has grown as well, and continues to grow.

❖ Myriad opportunities exist for RIT to partner with NENA

❖ NENA was headed by an individual described as "visionary," "a leader," "activist," and "driven," which were cited as critical characteristics to get the project off the ground.

❖ Faculty who allowed their students to choose from several projects noted that students were choosing to work on projects in Sector 10 .

❖ The projects that students were exposed to in Sector 10 gave them a "real world experience," exposing them to the limitations of a real project and namely, teaching them that they would have to be flexible when carrying out the project.

Concerns

❖ While high level vision and leadership are necessary to this type of a project, the same individual taking on the role of the visionary and leader *and* the day-to-day management of the projects may become overburdened and overwhelmed.

❖ The level of interaction between the NENA point of contact and the students was frequently problematic. Faculty and students felt they did not have sufficient access to other community leadership. As one faculty member described it, "the gate was locked."

❖ When faculty are working with NENA to develop a student project, being directed to "do anything" is not helpful. The project needs to be well-enough defined and expectations must be clearly conveyed to students at the beginning of the project. This did not always happen.

❖ There is still concern over balancing community control over the outcomes of the partnership and the objectives of RIT at the student level.

❖ Tight timeframes created by the quarter system don't allow for much flexibility in completing a project.

❖ Early on it is important for students to gain an understanding of the complexity of NENA's internal organizational structure.

❖ Need to create another layer—project director—under NENA's top leader who is appointed to manage the initiative.

❖ To date, expertise transfer has largely been to NENA leadership. The question is what type of initiative is needed to develop expertise in the community?

Suggestions

❖ Reports and projects need to be housed in one place to allow for greater sharing and availability. Greater need to know what others are doing and to integrate the various projects and work conducted by multiple classes.

❖ If more than one service learning class is being taught in a quarter, could there be better coordination between the faculty and/or projects? E.g., a single group tour, sharing of information related to projects; what one class is doing or has done may be useful to other class projects.

❖ Need for a student and faculty introduction to Sector 10 before the tour to provide a broader overview of the community and NENA as an organization. Include overview of citizen-led change and citizen-led planning—a civics lesson on community involvement and what it means. Students today don't have a good sense of the urban environment; most are coming from suburban areas.

❖ Write contracts between NENA and students that define student deliverables. Students will gain a sense that this matters.

❖ Need for clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities when implementing subject-based learning with community-based learning; a consulting model looks to be effective.

SECTION VI: PERSPECTIVES OF NENA LEADERSHIP

NENA Reflection on the Meaning of the Partnership

CGR sought regular feedback from NENA leadership throughout the project period. While the conversations often focused on the students and their community-based learning projects, the interviews also provided NENA staff the opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the partnership, its strengths, its weaknesses, and lessons learned. In addition, CGR sat down with NENA leadership at the conclusion of project year three to reflect on the entire three-year grant period and what the partnership has come to mean to NENA and Sector 10. The combined perspectives of NENA's leadership concerning the partnership are summarized below:

The Evolution of the RIT/ NENA Partnership

❖ Year one of the partnership was spent getting to know people and deciphering who at the table you could trust and who would trust you. What it came down to for NENA was "who would accept us for who we are and what we are trying to accomplish."

❖ Three years ago the idea of service learning and the partnership were both entirely new ideas. No one at the table early on had any idea about what service learning was, what it would be *here*, and how it would be carried out. At the same time that both sides (NENA and RIT) were trying to figure this out, they were *developing trust and respect for each other. These processes take time and do not happen quickly, nor can they be rushed.* This is the natural evolution of a project of this magnitude.

❖ At the beginning, the expectations of each side (NENA and RIT) were not clearly articulated and agreed upon. NENA staff indicated that it took a while to internalize what was being asked of NENA—the project demanded a high level of participation and feedback from the organization, perhaps more so than anyone had initially expected.

❖ By year two, the trust between RIT and NENA had begun to build, and the pieces of the puzzle began to fit together. At this point the community began understanding the concept and the vision and began buying into it.

Accomplishments Derived from the Partnership

❖ Youth leadership development, which existed before the partnership, has been enhanced through the project.

❖ RIT students were able to come into the neighborhood where they were exposed to topics they otherwise would not have been exposed to (e.g., lead poisoning, the farm operation, consideration of social vs. economic factors). NENA believes that many of the students they welcomed into the neighborhood were able to see that the reality wasn't as bad as they expected it to be.

❖ Young people have developed relationships with other young people. RIT students have benefited from the relationships they have made with youth in the community and vice versa. The opportunities for these relationships to develop likely would not exist but for the partnership.

❖ There is more learning taking place at the farm. Before the partnership, youth were getting valuable experience as farm laborers. Now they are better able to build on these experiences as there are opportunities around resume writing and learning how to apply for jobs and interview.

❖ RIT is now regularly participating in Sector 10 meetings. "You can't put a price on the advice they have given."

❖ The leadership notes that while NENA has worked with RIT on various projects that NENA would likely have pursued absent the partnership, the ability to work with RIT has lended NENA "academic credibility."

While much of the partnership's impact at the community level described above is not easily quantifiable in terms of dollar value, RIT faculty were able to provide dollar value estimates associated with each of the student/class projects completed as a result of partnership activities. The estimated value (cost) of these deliverables if NENA had had to pay for the services exceeds $84,000, but as these products continue to be used by NENA to advance its goal of building local self-reliance for individuals, families, and neighborhoods in Sector 10, the longer-term economic impact is likely to be far greater. A detailed project listing, prepared by RIT faculty, is included in Appendix B.

Lessons Learned

❖ There was a lack of recognition of the time commitment required by a project of this magnitude. It is difficult for NENA staff to

cover all of the project-related meetings. Ideally, they would like to have a staff position dedicated to the partnership activities.

❖ During the interview, NENA leadership expressed a concern that, absent support from RIT institutional leadership, the efforts, relationships, and accomplishments achieved thus far may crumble. They noted that they have "seen this before" when "people get a grant, come into the neighborhood, then do their research and leave without coming up with any solutions to what their research has uncovered."

❖ Some student projects require money to implement. There is value to the students' work, but to implement that and see it taken to the next level may require NENA to seek additional funds.

❖ NENA leadership stated that they've just begun to understand the significance of the learn and serve component and how to foster it in the community to expand its reach beyond just the students.

❖ It takes a lot of people to want to make change.

NENA leadership identified two issues they would like to see addressed as the project moves forward.

❖ The first calls for the development of a leadership class *in* the community *for* community residents. The focus of the class would be to teach the necessary skills to those community members who are interested and willing to become involved in leading community change, but who may not know how to go about doing so.

❖ The second issue noted by NENA was a desire for more African American students at RIT to become involved in the partnership. Leadership expressed concern that "you don't see many African American students giving back to the community."

SECTION VII: PERSPECTIVES OF THE RIT INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Separate interviews were conducted by CGR staff with RIT President Albert Simone and with Stanley McKenzie, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The topics covered in each interview were similar and, in general, the perceptions of the two were consistent and supportive of the concept and value of service learning. It was considered especially important to obtain the perspectives of Dr. Simone and Dr. McKenzie because, as President and Provost, they are the two institutional leaders whose views and visions will be most influential in determining the future of service learning on the RIT campus and in RIT's relationship with its surrounding community.

The combined perspectives of the RIT administration's leadership concerning service learning are summarized below:

Initial Expectations of Learn and Serve Program

❖ Both spoke of their hopes and expectations that the service learning opportunities offered to students would enhance their educational experiences by linking practical, real-world experiences to the classroom, and by "making the classroom come alive" and helping students understand that "what they learn in the classroom has practical value and can have real impact in the community."

❖ The opportunity to "heighten a sense of civic responsibility" among an expanded number of students "as part of the holistic education of students" was particularly emphasized by one of the RIT leaders, who emphasized the importance of service learning as a means of linking opportunities to increase skills in practical "hands-on" situations to values and "an ethical commitment to social responsibility" as part of a well-rounded academic education.

❖ The expressed hope was that more faculty members would understand the value of linking their classroom teaching to direct opportunities to have students apply their learning in community settings.

❖ They also indicated that they had hoped that the community would directly benefit in tangible ways from the alliance between the university and community leaders and residents.

❖ Both also spoke of the expected value of the initiative in helping make RIT a more visible presence in the community, in indicating "that RIT cares about our neighbors," and in helping the university strengthen its relationships with its alumni.

❖ Although both spoke of the value of the service learning initiative as helping to "sow seeds of pedagogical change in terms of how we meet different learning styles of students," one specifically indicated that this had not been one of his core expectations: "This was not designed as a fundamental change agent concerning learning and teaching throughout the university, and should not be evaluated on that basis."

Assessment of Benefits and Impact to Date

❖ Both were very positive in their assessments of the impact of the program on students, one indicating that "it has exceeded my expectations for students." They spoke of the sense of "student ownership" of what they were doing in the community, and of their enthusiasm for what they were learning, of how it could be applied in community settings, and of how "what they were learning and doing was making a difference in various ways in the community."

❖ One spoke of the value of the program in helping to build up student self-confidence and self-esteem as students recognize that they can "apply their skills in community settings that they may not have been familiar with before." Both also spoke of the value of having students coming back to campus and talking about their experiences to other students and "helping get other students interested in the community and getting others thinking about new ways of learning and applying their skills."

❖ The ability to demonstrate value to the community, both broadly and in terms of the specific NENA neighborhood in which students and faculty have concentrated their efforts, "has significantly exceeded my expectations." Both spoke of ways in which the neighborhood has benefited, and of indications of good, ongoing linkages and relationships having been built between the university and the neighborhood leaders. The linkage was described by one person as "having real impact that will continue to endure. It's very gratifying; I didn't expect it to go so smoothly,

at least initially." At the broader level, the endorsement and visible support of the Mayor of Rochester was cited as an indication that the partnership is valued beyond just the NENA neighborhood.

❖ Measurable impacts of the program, "in terms of improving key outcome measures within a neighborhood," may realistically take more time; "there are short-term indicators that what we're doing makes a difference and enables some things to happen that wouldn't be happening otherwise, but it will take longer to assess whether our joint efforts can result in fundamental measurable change in the quality of life and core outcomes within the neighborhood."

❖ Faculty who have been involved in the initiative were described as being enthusiastic about the opportunity to try new teaching approaches and to apply them in a practical environment. The process of faculty talking to other faculty and "developing an expanded core of committed believers" in this initiative was described as "gradually happening, but it's a slow process, and will take strong leadership at the Dean level to really take hold across faculty and especially across departments and colleges."

❖ Some Deans are viewed as having been supportive of the initiative, but they are not yet viewed as having "exhibited proactive leadership endorsing and pushing for the concept within or across colleges."

❖ Although faculty in four different colleges have been involved in the program to date, service learning is perceived by the two institutional leaders as having had its primary impact with faculty and students within the College of Liberal Arts, "with some inroads in other colleges."

❖ Although both leaders clearly understand and support the concept and implications of service learning, there were times in the interviews where discussions of service learning program impact would occasionally veer off into discussions of the value of the broader, and different, concept of community service. Advocates of service learning may need to continue to make the distinction between these different concepts, particularly with those within the university who are far less knowledgeable about service learning than are the President and Provost.

❖ One of those leaders spoke of the perception that service learning can help attract student applicants to RIT, and of the need to try to track that impact over time. He emphasized the increased visibility RIT has in the community, in part due to service learning initiatives, but acknowledged that it may be difficult to separate out the unique impact of service learning from other community initiatives through which RIT has also become more visible among prospective students and within their communities.

Future Expectations

❖ Both leaders expect service learning to grow in its impact on campus and in the community, "though the growth potential has its limits" and "the process of change will occur incrementally and won't happen as a revolution."

❖ The fact that RIT is one of the largest universities in the country in terms of the numbers of students engaged in co-op partnerships is viewed as "limiting the potential growth of service learning. Many students are already gaining practical, real-world experience in other settings, so the notion of service learning is not as 'avant-garde' or special as it might be viewed as being in some other institutions." Also, with students being paid for their co-op work, but not for service learning involvement, the "upside potential is somewhat limited, although I expect it to continue to grow nonetheless."

❖ The expressed perception is that for service learning to fully succeed and continue to grow at RIT, students will need to view service learning as being practical, "as having a clear applied bent," and as helping them to grow in their professional/career field. "Because RIT is primarily viewed as a place where students prepare for a successful career and not to find out who they are and not as a place where they learn to serve the world," service learning has to find a way to be successful in that context, i.e., it has to be viewed as being useful in the context of being career enhancing.

❖ The perception of both leaders is that service learning will continue to create converts among faculty members, but that the progress will be relatively slow and incremental without strong active leadership from Deans in more than one college. And it will need leadership from individual faculty members reaching out to other faculty in other departments and developing new teaching and learning partnerships across disciplines. Nonetheless, "despite

initial skeptics, the concept gradually has picked up converts, and will continue to do so."

❖ There is some agreement that "the old ways of teaching, with mostly upfront lectures, will continue to decline," and that "project-based learning, with team approaches and practical hands-on learning opportunities such as service learning offers, will continue to grow as part of pedagogical changes to meet changing learning styles and changing expectations of students." The perception of both institutional leaders is that such changes will not be radical or rapid at RIT, but that they are likely to occur nonetheless, "in a slow, incremental, steady growth pattern."

❖ The summary observations of the two, concerning the future of service learning and its lasting impact, included the expectations that RIT would continue to seek grant funds in support of service learning, and that it would continue to provide institutional support for the concept; that it would continue to build its relationship with the NENA community; that service learning would be a part of the gradual change of culture at RIT; that service learning will "gradually be incorporated into curricula and course syllabi;" that RIT will continue to be visible in working in partnership with the community; and that service learning efforts "will be well received by our alumni."

SECTION VIII: LESSONS LEARNED AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Has anything changed as a result of the project? According to the data collected—from survey findings to stakeholder feedback—and presented in earlier sections of this report, the RIT/NENA partnership has produced innumerable results and benefits for RIT's students, NENA and the residents of Sector 10, and the institution of RIT. The following offers a summary of lessons learned, accomplishments to date, and considerations and suggestions as the project continues to evolve.

Summary/ Lessons Learned

❖ Change happens slowly and incrementally.

❖ Building relationships is resource-intensive. Recognizing this, the project focused on providing the support needed to sustain the involvement of the eight faculty members who committed to the project and its principles of power-sharing which are the foundation of the partnership.

❖ The benefits of service learning have been spread among students, faculty, the institution, and the community.

❖ Students and faculty report having gained a better understanding of the community in which they live through their involvement in the Learn and Serve project.

❖ RIT and Sector 10 are connected in new and positive ways. Not only have students and faculty spent time in the community, but residents—youth in particular—have had several opportunities to spend time on the RIT campus.

❖ Students and faculty at RIT have been able to provide NENA with professional-quality products that have enhanced NENA's community-driven economic development efforts.

❖ A number of people CGR talked with—both on campus and off—expressed hope that RIT's leadership will provide ongoing support for the partnership as the initial funding cycle draws to a close.

❖ While the project has had an impact since its inception three years ago, many of the efforts begun during this period are likely to have

longer-lasting and farther-reaching effects than have been measured to date.

Considerations for the Future

❖ Measures designed to track the partnership's impact on the community over time must be developed.

❖ Consider ways to broaden RIT's point of contact at NENA and improve coordination between RIT faculty and NENA.

  - Seek funding support for a NENA staff person dedicated to the partnership activities, or consider designating NENA staff or community residents to act as "project managers" for each community-based learning project.

❖ Students and faculty cited a desire for an enhanced orientation to Sector 10, NENA's organizational structure, the co-equal power sharing nature of the partnership, and the concepts of service learning before "jumping in" to a ten-week community-based learning course.

❖ RIT and NENA ought to engage in longer-range project planning:

  - At RIT, consideration ought to be given to planning at a departmental level, cross-departmental planning, and the involvement and buy-in of Deans to support planning initiatives. One faculty member cited the need to "weave a tapestry" of service learning experiences rather than offering students a "one-course, one-time experience in the community." Survey data show that a majority of students who participated in the community-based learning projects offered in conjunction with the partnership desired more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community.

  - Enhance communication among project participants about past, present, and future projects. Expand the "life" of a project by looking for/planning for opportunities for one class to build on the work completed by another.

❖ Identify faculty to act as service-learning advocates within Colleges or Departments. Their role would be to promote service learning among faculty and students, and to work with other faculty, community partners, and institutional leadership to identify and

develop projects (and potentially funding to support the projects and their implementation).

❖ Create processes whereby students, faculty, and NENA formalize the objectives and anticipated outcomes associated with their community-based learning experience and projects. Consider developing contracts between students and NENA.

- Develop mechanisms to allow for regular feedback from NENA to faculty regarding student performance.

- Develop mechanisms to allow for regular feedback from students and faculty regarding NENA's roles and cooperation.

❖ Continue to administer the Student Awareness Survey annually.

❖ Continue to administer pre- and post-tests in courses offering a community-based learning experience. Consider student completion of these tests a course requirement.

❖ Faculty and NENA staff ought to determine and track the dollar value for each project completed, i.e., what would it have cost had NENA had to pay a consultant to complete the project?

❖ Resources that could benefit the project exist at RIT (e.g., technologies on campus), but the Learn and Serve project often doesn't have access to the equipment, labs, resources, etc. Institutional leadership could foster greater sharing of resources on campus (printers, labs, production facilities, etc.) that would further the work of the partnership.

❖ The goals and values of the Learn and Serve initiative are very consistent with the priority and multiple initiatives on the RIT campus addressing campus diversity. One of the stated goals of the RIT/NENA partnership is to bring together individuals with diverse backgrounds, and the project has been successful in making that possible, including providing opportunities for NENA neighborhood young people—mostly people of color—to spend time on campus. Such efforts should be continued for their own intrinsic value, as well as for their potential longer-range value in helping to encourage and stimulate more students of diverse backgrounds to consider college in general, and perhaps RIT in particular.

❖ Stakeholders cited a strong need for clear RIT institutional commitment to the concept of service learning.

- If RIT values service learning, faculty participation in service learning activities ought to be valued when making promotion and tenure decisions.

- Institutional financial support will be critical to the continued development of the partnership in the event that the project is unable to secure additional grant support.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS

The data tables presented below provide detailed breakdowns of student responses to Student Awareness and pre- and post-test questions. (See Appendix B for copies of the survey instruments.) For those questions that spanned the three survey instruments, we have included the responses by survey year for the Student Awareness Survey (2001 and 2002), as well as separate pre- and post-test findings (students in 12 service learning courses completed pre- and post tests, and the data presented below represent the aggregate of the 12 courses).

Respondent Characteristics	Student Awareness Survey		Pre-/Post-Test (N=122/111)
	Fall 2001 (N=395)	**Fall 2002 (N=528)**	
College:			
Business	7.6%	12.7%	16.1%
Engineering	13.2%	10.8%	1.7%
Liberal Arts	20.6%	15.4%	35.6%
NTID	1.0%	1.5%	0.8%
Science	10.4%	11.6%	5.1%
Imaging Arts & Sciences	22.6%	19.4%	27.1%
Applied Science & Technology	9.9%	7.4%	10.2%
B. Thomas Golisano College of Computing & Information Sciences	15.0%	21.1%	3.4%
Year:			
First	29.2%	25.8%	2.5%
Second	19.7%	27.9%	9.3%
Third	20.3%	21.3%	26.3%
Fourth	23.1%	19.2%	37.3%
Fifth or beyond	7.7%	5.9%	24.6%
Sex:			
Male	57.7%	65.2%	37.5%
Female	42.3%	34.8%	62.5%
Racial or Ethnic Background:			
Black/African-American	5.9%	3.7%	4.2%
White/European-American	80.9%	82.0%	77.3%
Hispanic	2.1%	4.4%	1.7%
Asian	7.5%	6.4%	8.4%
Native American	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	3.6%	3.5%	7.6%

Are you currently a member of a club or Greek organization?

	Yes	No
Pre-Test	38.1%	61.9%
2001 Survey	23.6%	76.4%
2002 Survey	19.9%	80.1%

Have you done any volunteering/community service in the past 12 months?

	Yes	No
Pre-Test	57.9%	42.1%
2001 Survey	55.0%	45.0%
2002 Survey	50.1%	49.8%

Are you currently involved in community service activities?

	Yes	No: Don't intend to become involved	No: Would like to become involved
Pre-Test	22.2%	21.4%	56.4%
2001 Survey	16.4%	39.4%	44.2%
2002 Survey	16.3%	43.4%	40.3%

Do you plan to remain in the Rochester-area following graduation?

	Yes	No	Unsure
Pre-Test	21.8%	38.7%	39.5%
2001 Survey	9.3%	40.9%	49.7%
2002 Survey	10.9%	39.8%	49.3%

Please indicate the primary reason you are taking this course.

	Pre-Test
Required Course	55.6%
Interest in Topic	40.2%
Service Component	0.9%
Instructor	2.6%
Other	0.9%

Part I: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: *Note: While students were asked to respond to this series of questions using a five-point scale, for analysis purposes and in the tables below, we have collapsed the "strongly disagree" and "disagree" categories into "disagree", and the "strongly agree" and "agree" categories into a single "agree" category.*

I have a good understanding of the needs and problems facing the Rochester-area community.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	30.4%	27.0%	42.6%
Post-Test	111	8.1%	27.9%	64.0%
2001 Survey	394	41.6%	32.7%	25.7%
2002 Survey	528	42.6%	32.4%	25.0%

I feel comfortable around people from different racial and ethnic groups.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	1.6%	10.7%	87.7%
Post-Test	111	0.9%	7.2%	91.8%
2001 Survey	394	2.3%	9.6%	88.1%
2002 Survey	528	1.5%	10.0%	88.4%

I am motivated by courses that contain hands-on applications of theories to real life situations.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	0.8%	10.7%	88.6%
Post-Test	111	0.9%	11.7%	87.3%
2001 Survey	395	2.8%	11.6%	85.6%
2002 Survey	524	3.9%	14.3%	81.9%

I would choose a course that contains hands-on application of theories to real life situations over one that did not.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	2.5%	16.4%	81.1%
Post-Test	111	0.9%	18.0%	81.0%
2001 Survey	395	3.8%	16.2%	80.0%
2002 Survey	524	4.2%	23.3%	72.6%

I feel that I can have a positive impact on the community in which I live.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	1.6%	22.1%	76.2%
Post-Test	111	1.8%	16.2%	82.0%
2001 Survey	395	5.0%	28.1%	66.8%
2002 Survey	522	5.8%	32.2%	62.0%

Working on group projects is more rewarding than working on individual projects.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	121	10.7%	38.8%	50.4%
Post-Test	111	13.5%	35.1%	51.3%
2001 Survey	392	27.0%	38.0%	34.9%
2002 Survey	518	28.7%	38.6%	32.6%

I have a realistic understanding of the daily responsibilities involved in the job/career in which I am interested.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	121	4.1%	24.0%	71.9%
Post-Test	111	5.4%	16.2%	78.4%
2001 Survey	394	8.6%	18.5%	72.9%
2002 Survey	522	7.1%	22.6%	70.3%

I learn course content best when connections to real life situations are made.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	0.8%	8.2%	90.0%
Post-Test	111	0.9%	12.6%	86.4%
2001 Survey	395	1.8%	16.2%	82.0%
2002 Survey	520	2.3%	18.7%	79.1%

Youth are valued resources for solving community problems.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	121	11.6%	22.3%	66.1%
Post-Test	110	5.5%	22.7%	71.8%
2001 Survey	393	19.6%	37.7%	42.8%
2002 Survey	518	17.9%	43.1%	39.0%

The knowledge and skills of community members are valued by this institution.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	120	12.5%	40.0%	47.5%
Post-Test	111	9.9%	26.1%	63.9%
2001 Survey	391	12.8%	50.1%	37.1%
2002 Survey	521	11.7%	49.1%	39.1%

The opportunity to engage in hands-on learning through my courses would most likely help me in selecting a career path.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	121	2.5%	16.5%	81.0%
Post-Test	111	3.6%	12.6%	83.8%
2001 Survey	393	4.9%	16.0%	79.1%
2002 Survey	519	3.5%	18.9%	77.6%

I would like more opportunities to "learn by doing" in the community.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	2.5%	12.3%	85.3%
Post-Test	110	1.8%	12.7%	85.4%
2001 Survey	392	7.1%	31.6%	61.3%
2002 Survey	520	11.1%	31.2%	57.7%

Working with others helps/would help me learn more about myself.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	4.1%	13.1%	82.8%
Post-Test	111	1.8%	9.9%	88.3%
2001 Survey	390	8.8%	30.8%	60.5%
2002 Survey	520	13.7%	32.1%	54.3%

Community service will help me develop leadership skills.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	121	3.4%	19.0%	77.6%
Post-Test	110	5.4%	14.5%	80.0%
2001 Survey	389	11.6%	31.9%	56.5%
2002 Survey	518	15.8%	32.4%	51.8%

I know about opportunities/know how to become involved in community service while I'm at RIT.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	19.7%	35.2%	45.1%
Post-Test	111	13.5%	32.4%	54.0%
2001 Survey	391	26.6%	31.7%	41.7%
2002 Survey	520	27.1%	31.0%	41.9%

I feel that social problems are not my concern.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	121	72.7%	16.5%	10.7%
Post-Test	111	71.1%	18.9%	9.9%

Having an impact on community problems is within the reach of most individuals.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	5.7%	29.5%	64.8%
Post-Test	109	9.2%	22.9%	67.9%

I feel that I can play an important part in improving the well-being of my community.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	3.3%	19.7%	77.1%
Post-Test	110	3.6%	24.5%	71.8%

It is important to me personally to have a career that involves helping people.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	5.8%	14.8%	79.5%
Post-Test	111	5.4%	18.0%	76.5%

Skills and experiences that I gain from community service will be valuable in my career.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	121	4.1%	15.7%	80.2%
Post-Test	110	3.6%	7.3%	89.1%

While working on a group project I can easily accept others' criticism of my work.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	7.3%	21.3%	71.3%
Post-Test	111	9.9%	19.8%	70.2%

I feel uncomfortable working with people who are different from me in such things as race, wealth, and life experiences.

	Number of Respondents	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Pre-Test	122	67.2%	13.9%	18.8%
Post-Test	111	72.9%	10.8%	16.2%

Part II: In your opinion, how important are the following: *Note: While students were asked to respond to this series of questions using a five-point scale where "1" represented "Not important at all" and "5" represented "Extremely important", for analysis purposes and in the tables below, we have collapsed the "1" and "2" responses into "Not important" and the "4" and "5" responses into "Important".*

Becoming involved in a program to improve the community and/or help others.

	Number of Respondents	Not Important	Neutral	Important
Pre-Test	122	4.1%	22.1%	73.8%
Post-Test	110	1.8%	20.9%	77.3%
2001 Survey	393	10.2%	37.2%	52.7%
2002 Survey	519	15.8%	36.0%	48.1%

Choosing a career that provides an opportunity to be helpful to others or useful in society.

	Number of Respondents	Not Important		Important
Pre-Test	120	4.2%	14.2%	81.7%
Post-Test	110	1.8%	20.9%	77.2%
2001 Survey	392	5.1%	23.7%	71.1%
2002 Survey	519	10.2%	24.1%	65.7%

The opportunity to combine classroom learning with assignments that take me into the community.

	Number of Respondents	Not Important		Important
Pre-Test	122	4.1%	16.4%	79.5%
Post-Test	109	2.7%	21.1%	76.2%
2001 Survey	393	12.5%	33.8%	53.7%
2002 Survey	520	15.2%	37.7%	47.2%

Part III: Skills and Activities. Below is a list of skills and activities that people do in various situations. Please read each of the following and rate yourself with respect to how well you do each of these compared to most other people: *Note: While students were asked to respond to this series of questions using a five-point scale where "1" represented "Much worse than most", "2" represented "Not as good as most", "3" represented "About the same", "4" represented Better than most", and "5" represented "Much better than most", for analysis purposes and in the tables below, we have collapsed the "1" and "2" responses into a single category "Worse than most", and "4" and "5" responses have been collapsed into a "Better than most" category.*

Respecting the views of others.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	3.3%	26.2%	70.5%
Post-Test	111	0.9%	23.4%	75.6%

Participating in community affairs.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	24.6%	42.6%	32.8%
Post-Test	111	17.1%	48.6%	34.2%

Critical thinking skills.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	121	8.3%	34.7%	57.0%
Post-Test	111	2.7%	34.2%	63.0%

Communicating my ideas to others.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	13.1%	34.4%	52.5%
Post-Test	111	5.4%	34.2%	60.3%

Engaging in discussion with others.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	11.5%	38.5%	50.0%
Post-Test	111	5.4%	36.0%	58.5%

Ability to compromise.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	2.4%	41.8%	55.8%
Post-Test	111	4.5%	29.7%	65.7%

Listening skills.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	2.4%	22.1%	75.4%
Post-Test	111	0.9%	27.9%	71.1%

Moral or ethical judgment.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	121	1.6%	29.8%	68.6%
Post-Test	111	1.8%	23.4%	74.7%

Identification of social issues and concerns.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	6.5%	40.2%	53.3%
Post-Test	111	5.4%	31.5%	63.0%

Thinking about the future.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	2.5%	26.2%	71.3%
Post-Test	110	1.8%	26.4%	71.9%

Ability to take action.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	120	5.8%	44.2%	50.0%
Post-Test	107	3.8%	42.1%	54.2%

Tolerant of people who are different from me.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	3.3%	22.1%	74.5%
Post-Test	110	3.6%	26.4%	70.0%

Effective in accomplishing goals.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	121	1.7%	28.9%	69.4%
Post-Test	110	1.8%	24.5%	73.6%

Ability to see consequences of actions.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	4.1%	33.6%	62.3%
Post-Test	109	4.6%	24.8%	70.7%

Empathetic to all points of view.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	8.2%	35.2%	56.6%
Post-Test	110	4.5%	21.8%	73.6%

Ability to work with others.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	4.9%	26.2%	68.9%
Post-Test	109	1.8%	27.5%	70.7%

Thinking about others before myself.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	121	6.7%	33.1%	60.3%
Post-Test	110	3.6%	32.7%	63.6%

Ability to speak in public.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	121	36.3%	25.6%	38.0%
Post-Test	109	28.4%	30.3%	41.2%

Feeling responsible for others.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	121	7.4%	39.7%	52.9%
Post-Test	109	8.3%	39.4%	52.3%

Knowing where to find information.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	121	5.0%	36.4%	58.7%
Post-Test	110	3.6%	38.2%	58.2%

Knowing whom to contact in order to get things done.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	10.6%	41.8%	47.5%
Post-Test	110	6.4%	42.7%	50.9%

Ability to lead a group.

	Number of Respondents	Worse than most	About the same as most	Better than most
Pre-Test	122	12.3%	38.5%	49.2%
Post-Test	110	9.1%	35.5%	55.4%