

## Food Security and Leadership

### Abstract & Description of the Work

The School of Leadership Studies has worked in the hunger space for a decade (to hear a synopsis of the work done this past year tune into this radio clip done by KMAN 1350: <http://1350kman.com/infocus-121313/>). Below is an outline of how faculty, staff, and community partners have worked across the curriculum to leverage leadership content, the issue of food security in our state, and a variety of engaged teaching pedagogies to work toward a more secure community for all.

#### **LEAD 212: Introduction to Leadership Concepts**

For over 10 years, the Staley School has partnered with the Flint Hills Breadbasket to assist in efforts to reduce hunger in the community through canned goods collection paired with curriculum on leadership. Faculty have enhanced curriculum by leveraging a service-learning pedagogy to integrate leadership education and community-engaged work throughout the course structure. Informed by the PARE model of service-learning (UMD, 1999), the DEAL model of critical reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2004; 2009), and the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996), instructors designed “The Hunger Project.” The overarching purpose of this project is for students to explore the question of “Leadership for what?” and to engage deeply with leadership concepts while exercising leadership through work in and with the community.

A democratic framework was the organizing structure through which LEAD 212 worked with the Flint Hills Breadbasket to co-create an experience that mobilized over 900 first-year students, 65 class leaders (peer educators), four faculty, a staff member from the City of Manhattan (who helped us create a GPS mapping system of the Manhattan community), and local stores in Manhattan in a seven-week learning experience. The course was facilitated in two parts: 8 large lecture sections of approximately 100 students each, followed by learning- communities (small groups of 12-14 students). Faculty worked alongside the Flint Hills Breadbasket to design and root leadership education and the community issue of food security through a service-learning framework. Community knowledge was integrated in the classroom through direct engagement of Flint Hills staff with weekly lessons and reflections.

The PARE model of service-learning provided a framework and context to help students understand and apply leadership to the issue of hunger. PARE stands for Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Evaluation (UMD, 1999). For each phase or the process, students received an assignment “guide” with direction and reflection prompts. In preparation, students were invited to start thinking critically about issues of hunger and food insecurity by completing a self-study, conducting individual research on hunger in their home counties, and debriefing their findings with colleagues. The action phase mobilized students for can collection, which involved preparing, distributing, gathering, and sorting bags of food all throughout the Manhattan community in cooperation with the Breadbasket. In reflection, students engaged in a group debrief conversation in class that examined their personal leadership development, and their contributions to citizenship and the larger community. In the last phase of evaluation, students articulated their learning in a professional form that authentically captured their experience and the learning that resulted. Students were pushed in the last phase to explore what they learned, how they learned it, and future steps for addressing hunger issues and continuing their own leadership development.

Recent collections have resulted in over 15,978lbs of food and \$1,519.30 for the Flint Hills Breadbasket. While this represents direct impact, more importantly student reflections speak to a changing appreciation for the complex nature of food security in our communities: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHAhgK4exEk&feature=youtu.be>

#### **LEAD 405: Leadership in Practice**

Using a community-engaged model of civic leadership education, Lori Kniffin and Marcia Hornung leveraged food security partnerships in the Staley School to partner with The Facing Project, a national organization that connects people through stories to strengthen communities. The goal of sharing these stories is to increase community conversation about key issues.

Kniffin and Hornung leveraged local and university efforts alongside the tools of The Facing Project to advance community understanding and dialogue around food security. Students in the Leadership in Practice course – led the initiative “Facing Hunger” through partnership with Harvesters, the Flint Hills Breadbasket and the Manhattan and greater area school districts to connect local citizens to the issue of hunger.

The students engaged in direct action through “Everybody Counts,” a local event coordinated by the First United Methodist Church of Manhattan, through which LEAD 405 students were part of an event to provide food to individuals in the community in need and understand local demographics related to food security and homelessness among other key topics. One student said this of her experience, “I believe the most important lesson I have learned is that there are good and hard-working people within our community who still struggle to feed themselves and their families. I now realize how important it is that the whole community is able to read the stories about these people, so they can also have a better understanding of what hunger looks like in our community.”

Using adaptive leadership concepts as the framework for examining the social issues, students reflected on the issue of hunger, and interviewed dozens of community members experiencing hunger. They then interpreted those interviews into stories published in a book and shared through a public dialogue that took place in October. The book and the public event put faces, stories, and context to the issue of hunger facing our community. Service-learning became the mechanism through which advocacy and public scholarship have advanced community understanding of hunger.

### **LEAD 420: Theories of Nonprofit Leadership**

LEAD 420 utilizes the issue of food security as a lens through which to approach a range of issues affecting nonprofit organizations. Students engage with the issue through a variety of means including course materials (*Begging for Change* by Robert Egger and *All You Can Eat* by Joel Berg), case studies (Harvesters, Urban Harvest), service-learning (Friendship Meals, Flint Hills Breadbasket), and conference attendance and presentations (Universities Fighting World Hunger, Kansas Hunger Dialogues). Through these means, students seek progress in developing nonprofit competencies as defined by the Leadership minor with a nonprofit emphasis.

Students are challenged to work and serve with a community partner for direct service. For approximately five years, students of LEAD 420 have served as delivery drivers for Friendship Meals of Manhattan on at least one day per week for the entire semester. Students have interacted with and learned from the nonprofit professionals at the organizations and the constituents they serve. Students take the initiative to seek additional ways to engage with the organization resulting in a variety of outcomes including volunteer campaigns of additional K-State students, meta-analysis of the effects of the project on the class, website creation, risk management assessment, and more. Utilizing a continually evolving service-learning pedagogy, LEAD 420 seeks to engage students with meaningful leadership experiences that benefit the organization while meeting learning objectives for the course.

Building on student efforts in LEAD 212, LEAD 420 students hosted and facilitated reflection around the documentary film, *A Place at the Table*. In an effort to collaborate across courses, LEAD 420 students served as the facilitators after the film for LEAD 212 students in small groups. Additionally, over 16 students attended and four students presented at a state-wide conference on hunger, the Kansas Hunger Dialogues.

### **The Partnership and Lessons Learned**

The partnership is broad in scope, the list of collaborators includes: Staley School Faculty - Tamara Bauer, Chance Lee, Dr. Leigh Fine, Dr. Kerry Priest, Lynda Bachelor, and Lori Kniffin; students taking LEAD 212, LEAD 405, and LEAD 420; LEAD 212 class leaders; City of Manhattan - Eli Martinson (provide GPS map of Manhattan, breaking down community into 76 polygons); Flint Hills Breadbasket - Maribeth Kieffer, Rick Haworth, & Valon Jones; Friendship Meals of Manhattan - Laci Reamer; Manhattan community members (entire Manhattan community was visited through door-to-door canned food collection); HandsOn Kansas State students and volunteers (partner for activities such as the mobile food distribution with Harvesters); and Harvesters – Jessica Kejr worked with HoKS to organize mobile food distribution and education efforts.

There have been challenges in the process including the turnover of professional staff at community organizations and the transition of new curriculum and new students into academic courses. Teams navigated the challenges that become present when community organizations, working toward progress on the same issues, are at odds because of funding resources or access. This consistent theme in navigating the relationships with community partners has become an opportunity for the faculty to work across teaching teams to invite difficult conversations about the partnership efforts with community members. Consistently, the teaching faculty and HandsOn staff have facilitated these conversations as a way to leverage new opportunities and to teach about the challenges of nonprofit work.

Significant challenges have emerged with engaging the Manhattan community in a way that minimizes stress on the local system. Particularly the LEAD 212 team has considered the challenges in mobilizing 800 students for canned food collection. The community response has been largely positive, and has also included frustration when collection sites are missed or communication has not gone smoothly. The team has worked hard with the Bread Basket, class leaders, and students, to balance the opportunity for teachable moments, with the need to honor community members as partners in this process. The curriculum and technical processes with managing such an enormous event continually develop to best serve all involved.

The partnerships (broadly) continue to benefit from the conversation around sustainability. The faculty and community partners understand the nature of each one of these engagements and the balance of meeting short-term needs with developing work that is sustainable long-term. Their efforts continue to respond to immediate needs and focus on long-term community solutions.

## **Impacts and Knowledge Development**

Current models of service-learning have effectively reached a large group of students and engaged them in connecting their leadership education to civic leadership and community change. Students have enriched their own understanding of communities and the issue of hunger that faces our city and our state. They have also developed a nuanced understanding of how individuals and community organizations are leveraging their own resources in response to this issue.

Knowledge mobilization around the issue has also come through traditional and nontraditional forms of scholarship. A book, *Facing Hunger in Manhattan, KS* was published this fall and distributed throughout the community. It accompanied a community dialogue and public reading of the stories as two forms of public scholarship that have advanced local understanding of the issue of food security. More traditional knowledge mobilization has taken place through academic work (cited below) that has been shared locally and nationally through conferences and through a refereed journal article. This work continues to develop as our teaching teams leverage assessment around community impact and student learning through the service-learning pedagogy. Finally, local impacts continue through placement of several Staley School students as interns and staff at these local organizations. We anticipate that the partnerships will continue to yield academic scholarship, public scholarship, and advance local conversations in the hunger space.

## **Scholarship**

### **Refereed Journal Article**

Priest, K. L., Bauer, T., & Fine, L. (In press). The hunger project: Exercising civic leadership *with* the community *for* the common good in an introductory leadership course. *Journal of Leadership Education*.

### **Refereed Conference Presentations**

Bachelor, L., Lee, C., Day, K., (2013). *Full Circle Hunger*, Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit: Overland Park, KS.

Bauer, T., Fine, L. E., Finnegan, M., & Priest, K. L. (2014, February). *The hunger project: Mobilizing first-year students in service-learning*. Current trends session presented at the Annual Conference on the First Year Experience. San Diego, CA.

Bauer, T., Fine, L. E., Finnegan, M., & Priest, K. L. (2014, February). *Enhancing the Learning in Service Learning: From 'Cats 4 Cans' to 'The Hunger Project.'* Kansas Hunger Dialogues: Wichita, KS.

Kniffin, L., Lee, C., Tripp, L., Keiffer, M., Faflick, H., Bauer, T. (2014). *Learning and Service Beyond Silos: How can you develop a collaborative approach?* Kansas Hunger Dialogues: Wichita, KS.

Priest, K. L., Bauer, T., & Fine, L. E. (2014, July). *The hunger project: Developing civic leadership through service-learning*. Innovative practice session presented at the Association of Leadership Educators Conference, San Antonio, TX. [Awarded second place innovative practice presentation.]