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DOES SERVICE COUNT FOR TENURE?

Finding Meaningful Service in a Graduate School of Education: Three Assistant Professors Reflect on Their Newfound Connection to the Jesuit Mission

By Noah Borrero, Kevin Oh, and Christopher Thomas

Service is something you do after you get tenure.”
“Make sure you help with some committees and that should cover your service requirement.”

“Just get published and no one will care about your service.”

These statements are just a sampling of how service was described to us as we finished our doctoral work at large research universities.

Having never attended a Jesuit school prior to starting our careers as new assistant professors in the Graduate School of Education at the University of San Francisco (USF), we were unclear about what service would really look like. As educators, the idea of serving and conducting research with surrounding communities was what we yearned for as new members of the profession, but we did not know how feasible this would be at the start of our careers.

What we have learned is that service does matter, and the university mission encourages all faculty—new and old—to seize the opportunities to become involved in community service while pursuing a research agenda. This new understanding of “service” has been exciting and challenging for us and is

why we decided to create this piece for *Conversations*. Our learning this year not only captures the power of the Jesuit mission, but also highlights the challenges that it brings to us who have not been a part of a Jesuit school in the past.

Research. Teaching. Service.

Coming into higher education, we knew that the words “research,” “teaching,” and “service” would dominate our lives. No matter the order of importance an institution places on these three pursuits, they are each a part of the job. Clearly, as professors, we are committed to promoting knowledge and excellence through our teaching and research, yet service seemed a bit more elusive.

For new faculty, service can be tricky to negotiate. Not to say that service is more or less difficult or important than research or teaching, but meaningful service can take time to develop. Especially for faculty in the field of education who want to be active in the local schools, and

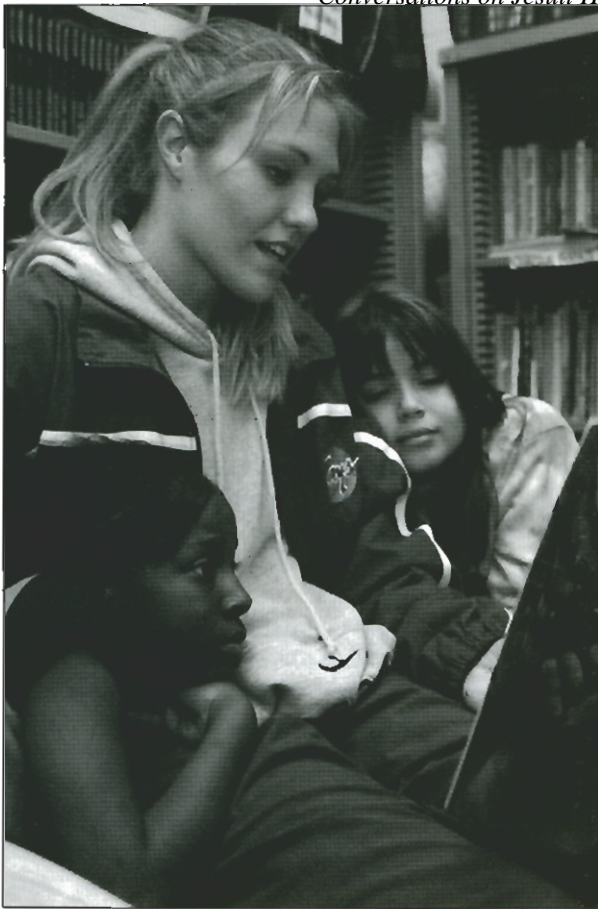
especially for faculty new to an area and a university, finding service that is mutually beneficial—to the community and the faculty member—takes time. New faculty don’t know the community particularly well; they likely have not had much opportunity to build relationships beyond the university; and, quite frankly, they may be more focused on their research and teaching. Thus, new faculty need help to make service a valuable and rewarding aspect of their first few years in the profession.

Finding service in a graduate professional school of education

As new faculty members in a graduate professional School of Education, we have received support that has helped to make service a meaningful part of our young careers. Much of this help has come directly from considerate colleagues who have taken the time to mentor us and include us in their service projects. We have also quickly come to learn that the foundations of

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Students from Creighton University performing community service activities in local schools.

Jesuit education help to create abundant opportunities for meaningful service for new faculty. At USE, the university's vision is to educate "leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world." Likewise, the university mission seeks to promote "the values and sensitivity necessary to be men and women for others." And, "a culture of service that respects and promotes the dignity of every person" is a stated core value at USE.

More important than these words, however, is their implementation. Our graduate students, for example, take classes in the evenings and on weekends, as they are out serving schools and programs in the community during the day. Similarly, faculty are encouraged to generate and implement service-learning courses and projects to promote the goals of the university. This is where service becomes a major asset for new faculty at Jesuit

Universities—not only are we expected to serve on committees and review manuscripts for journals in our field here at USE, but we are encouraged (and supported) to get involved with community projects to help fulfill the university's motto: "educating minds and hearts to change the world."

This has been enlightening and exciting for us but it also presented us with new challenges that we had not foreseen. We have to rethink our own visions and understandings of what our work is. We each had aspirations of connecting our work to the community, but really had come to believe this would be something we do once we become tenured. Our experiences have shown us we can make this connection now. The new challenge has become – how do we do this in a way that is meaningful to us and the communities we serve?

There are so many opportunities to become involved in helping others that we need to be sure not to lose our sense of vision in the work.

This year much of our service work called on our own expertise, but we were challenged to connect service with a larger research agenda. We needed to consciously avoid solely focusing on the service aspect of the opportunity and not on how we could connect the service to our research. The following section provides brief vignettes describing some of our service opportunities that served both local and international communities.

Local connections

Our graduate School of Education has made a commitment to helping improve local schools. Specifically, we are forging a strong relationship with a newly created alliance of Catholic schools serving some of San Francisco's most pover-

ty-stricken neighborhoods. As School of Education faculty, we had the opportunity to meet with the director of the alliance, principals in the schools, and teachers from different school sites. Together, with the Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership, one of the authors generated a plan to deliver monthly professional development to all 100 teachers of the alliance schools and focus on classroom strategies that teachers could readily implement after each session.

These professional development workshops provided a huge resource to the alliance schools. This time proved to be invaluable for them to share best practices and get to know one another. As a new faculty member, this service opportunity was meaningful on many different levels. First, it provided direct contact with local schools and a first-hand look into the challenges teachers are facing in the community. Second, it fostered collaboration with university colleagues and the opportunities to share expertise in the field. And third, it connected us with classroom teachers, whose most important goal each day is student progress. This service was meaningful because it put our jobs as educators into perspective—we need to help students learn.

International connections

As new faculty, we came to USF with a focus on supporting K-12 education in the context of the United States, not realizing the global connections available to faculty. We found out that faculty are encouraged to take their expertise abroad to support and learn from others.

A specific example of a global connection comes from one of the authors on his service-learning experience in Peru. The author was asked if he would be interested in being part of a service-learning project to provide technology and sup-

port to a Jesuit school in Peru. The K-12 school serves students of poor and working class parents. The service-learning project has been highly successful at providing a technology infrastructure that has allowed the schools to be self-sufficient.

This service not only directly benefited the schools in Peru, but the experience also helped the faculty to better understand what it means to prepare leaders with a global perspective. Service-learning is not only for students, but becomes a service-learning experience for faculty as well.

In both of these examples we had an amazing opportunity to be involved directly with our communities. These experiences helped broaden our understanding of service as well as expand our vision for the work we can do at USF. Our work will include publishing books and research articles, but it will also include direct service to our communities. Our challenge is learning how

to manage our time and work so that service and research are connected and not disjointed as we move ahead. For example, we have taken what we have learned this year and embarked on the creation of a service-learning project that will serve not just our pre-service teachers but also schools in rural areas of South Korea.

Into the future...

Our new understanding of what service “can be” has put forth a challenge for us. We all aspire to do work that serves our communities. In the Graduate School of Education at USF, within the Jesuit community, we have found a place where people truly work with the communities of the world. Service, teaching, and research all matter, so we must find the balance to be successful at all three. This will be a challenge, but we feel fortunate to be at a place where service to the community truly matters. ■

The comparison

	Hiring for excellence	Hiring for diversity	Hiring for mission
Does a definition exist?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Do applicants self-identify?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
Do metrics exist to measure attainment of goal?	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ₇	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are managers held accountable?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ₈	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
University department(s) oversee this?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ₉	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- 1 Each department defines this.
- 2 For employees at Boston College, diversity is defined as AHANA and women.
- 3 Initially, yes. The hiring process is basically a verification of these claims to expertise.
- 4 Yes. If they don't, then hiring managers are encouraged to take their best guess after they interview them.
- 5 Applicants could do so in their resumes. But there is nowhere in the application process that specifically asks applicants about this.
- 6 This is job-dependent. While some might have met-
- 7 Yes. These metrics include information about race and sex for applicants, all employees, for types of jobs, and for corresponding potential pools of applicants. Calculations are performed on every job opening for whether the job is “underutilized” for AHANA and/or for women. If it is underutilized, then hiring managers are expected/required to do as much as they can to increase the numbers of AHANA and/or women in the applicant pool.
- 8 Yes. And so are Vice Presidents of each area.
- 9 The Office of Institutional Diversity oversees this.