Building Communities and Producing Knowledge: Risks and Results of Community-Based Learning

Jenni Harpring, Program Manager Gephardt Institute for Public Service

Sonia Lee, Assistant Professor of History

Amanda Moore McBride, Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Social Work, Brown School and Director, Gephardt Institute for Public Service.
• CBTL: Building a course

• Examples from the field: WUSTL faculty teaching CBTL
CBTL: Three Key Components

- Learning activities in service to a community or organization
- Course content and assignments connected to the service
- Faculty oversight
CBTL: Faculty Role

- Develop goals and objectives for the course
- Manage community partner relationship
- Support community-based projects
- Connect students to community partners
CBTL: Community Impact

Increased Capacity

New Perspectives

Relationship with WU

New Skills

Community

“The Olin Experience team surpassed our expectations. Students prepared a marketing plan that we have already begun to implement”

Sonia Dobinsky, Executive Director of the Central Agency for Jewish Education
CBTL: Gephardt Supports

- Partnership development
- Workshops
- Technical assistance
- Faculty Grant
- Tracking and listing
- Evaluating impact
Building St. Louis History: The City & Its Renaissance

Sonia Lee
Department of History
Washington University in St. Louis
January 12, 2012
Mrs. Lillie V. Pearson, “Ms. Tillie” in her store
Tillie’s Food Shop 1948
Tillie’s Corner
1345-55 North Garrison Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri  63106
(corner of Garrison and Sheridan Avenues)

19th Ward
Old Neighborhood Reunion, Sept. 2011

Carla & Miguel Alexander, Jeff-VanderLou former residents, WUSTL students
Interviews conducted at Alexander’s, Dunbar Elementary School, coffee shops, interviewee’s homes
Building communities & producing knowledge

- Benefits of producing knowledge in action
- Benefits of building community through partnership with university
WUSTL students work to get St. Louis store on National Register of Historic Places

Service-learning class in Department of History looking for stories of more African-American entrepreneurs

September 13, 2011
By Debbie Parker

For 40 years, Tillie’s Food Shop operated at the corner of Garrison and Sheridan avenues in the north St. Louis neighborhood of JeffVanderLou. More than a grocery store, the site became a hub of informal activism and community empowerment.

Now, students in a service-learning course at Washington University in St. Louis are working on an application to get the grocery store and its adjacent buildings — better known as “Tillie’s Corner” — on the National Register of Historic Places.

The class, “Building St. Louis History: The City and Its Renaissance,” is taught by Sonia Lee, PhD, assistant professor of history in Arts & Sciences.

Lilie Velma Pearson opened Tillie’s Food Shop in 1948 at a time when black St. Louisans were kept out of white institutions and forced to create their own spheres of commerce, entertainment, religious and cultural life.

Black entrepreneurs often were unable to attract capital outside of their communities and white residents in neighboring areas were unlikely to patronize their businesses.

As crime in the area increased in the 1970s, Pearson refused to leave, believing that her community needed access to high-quality food. The shop’s longevity and reliability was especially important as residents and other businesses left the city.
Remembering black businesses

By Debbie Parker | 0 comments

For 40 years, Tillie’s Food Shop operated at the corner of Garrison and Sheridan avenues in the North St. Louis neighborhood of JeffVanderLou. More than a grocery store, the site became a hub of informal activism and community empowerment.

Now, students in a service-learning course at Washington University in St. Louis are working on an application to get the grocery store and its adjacent buildings – better known as “Tillie’s Corner” – on the National Register of Historic
Students seek historic designation for former north side grocery

BY TIM BARKER • tbarker@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8350 | Posted: Sunday, September 25, 2011 12:15 am

ST. LOUIS • A Washington University history class will have a rather unusual assignment this semester, when students join the effort to gain recognition for a street corner in north St. Louis.

The three buildings at Garrison and Sheridan avenues — known as Tillie's Corner — once included a small grocery that served black residents at a time when they were kept out of white businesses.

The store was purchased in 1948 by Lillie Velma Pearson. She changed its name to Tillie's Food Shop and kept it running four decades before closing it down.

Students in the WU class, "Building St. Louis History: The City and Its Renaissance," are hoping to show that the building — based on its significance to the city and to blacks — deserves a spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

For Sonia Lee, an assistant professor of history, the class offers an opportunity to show students how history is made and reported, as they work through interviews with family members and people in the community who remember Tillie's.

"They are going to be the ones creating the story, making decisions about who matters," Lee said.

The work, of course, has deeper meaning for the family of Pearson, who died in 2006 at the age of 91.

Pearson moved to St. Louis from Arkansas in the early 1940s, along with her husband and five children. She became a widow in 1948, after her husband died during an operation, leaving her to search for a way to provide for their children. She turned
Risks & Adjustments:

- Unpredictability
- Heavy workload
- Emotionally messy
- Difficulty in grading
- Rapport with community partner
Results:

• Motivation to learn higher with clear social impact

“I really enjoyed the fact we were working directly with the community and that our papers were actually read and used by people other than just our professor. It was a large motivating factor for me to write the best paper I could and not just to get the grade I wanted.”

“I like the practical application of course material and course papers. I really enjoyed knowing that the work we did would help to complete a national register of historic places application.”

• Practical skill besides writing/researching: interviewing
CBTL: Course Examples

Brown School, Master of Social Work Program

Social Work Practice with Organizations and Communities
Evaluation of Programs and Services

Amanda Moore McBride, PhD
Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Social Work,
Brown School,
Director, Gephardt Institute for Public Service,
Research Director, Center for Social Development
# Two Courses, Two Approaches to CBTL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Social Work Practice with Organizations and Communities</th>
<th>Evaluation of Programs and Services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Graduate-level, first year</td>
<td>Graduate-level, second year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>No, required of all MSW students</td>
<td>Yes, but one of only two options</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner connection</td>
<td>RFP to community; partner as driver</td>
<td>Required as part of hosting student in practicum</td>
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<td>Service activity for the community partner</td>
<td>Answer organizational or community-based question using the evidence-based practice process</td>
<td>Complete a formative or summative evaluation project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Small group projects</td>
<td>Individual projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliverables</td>
<td>Final report and presentation</td>
<td>Final paper</td>
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# Mediators of Impact: Weighing the Risks

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<td><strong>Level</strong></td>
<td>Graduate-level, first year Level of knowledge and skill may not be sufficient</td>
<td>Graduate-level, second year Knowledge and skill are there but students are insecure</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Voluntary</strong></td>
<td>No, required of all MSW students Emphasize the logic, the impact on their development</td>
<td>Yes, but one of only two options Emphasize the logic, the impact on their development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner connection</strong></td>
<td>RFP to community; partner as driver Partner drives the process; investment is high</td>
<td>Required as part of hosting student in practicum Imposed upon the partner, who may or may not have the resources to manage; investment is mixed</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Service activity for the community partner</strong></td>
<td>Answer organizational or community-based question using the evidence-based practice process Very useful and informative for both; activity may not happen otherwise</td>
<td>Complete a formative or summative evaluation project Very useful and informative for both; activity may not happen otherwise</td>
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<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>Small group project Construct the groups based on preference and skill; accountable to each other</td>
<td>Individual projects Provide individual technical assistance to promote success</td>
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<td><strong>Deliverables</strong></td>
<td>Final report and presentation Provide feedback and chance to revise</td>
<td>Final paper Provide feedback and chance to revise</td>
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Effective Practices: Promoting Results

• Focus on expectations
  • Focus on objectives for students and partners; match them
  • Communicate early and often

• Embrace the learning as process
  • Reflection on both sides is necessary
  • Every moment is a chance to learn; the “reframe”
  • Flexibility

• Pedagogy with purpose
  • Meets a community need, first and foremost
  • Fits within larger curriculum
  • Fits within department, school, and university’s community engagement approach
Questions