Dear friends of community engagement,

As our Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project completes its 15th year, our students at Northern Kentucky University have distributed nearly $1 million to nonprofits. Go ahead, say it out loud: Wow!

As impressive as the number is, what is equally impressive is the story of the classes, the students, and the faculty behind the number. For the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters, the story includes innovation and creativity. Consider these examples:

• In a public history class, students raised matching funds by selling antiques at a silent auction. The big ticket item was a 19th Century clock that brought $575. The money helped fund a student-designed exhibit at the Behringer-Crawford Museum in Covington, celebrating the city’s 200th anniversary.

• A public administration class participated in a fast-pitch event where agencies had three minutes to make their case. A local nonprofit that connects disconnected youth to work experience was awarded $1,000. The class also organized a dodgeball tournament and a crowdsourcing campaign to raise another $1,700 for a nonprofit helping at-risk children.

• A Spanish professor and a German professor teamed up to teach a class that drew students from both disciplines. The class, “Repression, Resistance, and Reflection,” examined themes from the Holocaust. Students awarded $1,000 to each of two nonprofits working at the local level on human rights today.

So, as we wish the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project a happy 15th birthday, we celebrate the creative ways our faculty and students have applied this powerful pedagogy. They’ve taken our “learn by giving” classes to new heights in the past academic year – and set the bar high for the next 15 years.

Sincerely,
Geoffrey S. Mearns
President,
Northern Kentucky University

FACTS
05 OUR MODEL
06 CLASSES AND AWARDS
16 ASSESSMENTS

“When I tell them on the first day of class that you have $2,000 to award, they’re not quite sure what to make of this. But then what happens is that they very quickly really straighten up and get serious, and they take the responsibility seriously.”

- DR. JONATHAN S. CULLICK,
NKU PROFESSOR, WHO INCORPORATED STUDENT PHILANTHROPY INTO HIS ENGLISH CLASSES IN BOTH THE FALL 2014 AND SPRING 2015 SEMESTERS

This annual report compiles information about the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project at Northern Kentucky University during the 2014-2015 academic year. The program is housed in NKU’s Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement and managed by the center’s staff in conjunction with a faculty coordinator, Dr. Jessica Averitt Taylor, who is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, Social Work, and Leadership.

This report was produced by the Center for Civic Engagement’s executive director, Mark Neikirk, with assistance from Katie Crawford-Lackey, an NKU graduate student and a VISTA assigned to the center. The report was designed by Michael Frazier, brand manager in NKU’s Office of Marketing and Communications. University Printing published the report.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to Heather Schaffer, who served as administrative secretary to the Center for Civic Engagement until the end of the Spring 2014 semester, when she completed her college degree. Ms. Schaffer’s support of student philanthropy classes was greatly appreciated by her co-workers, the NKU faculty, and the many NKU students who have benefited from this program.

You can request an additional copy of this report at engage@nku.edu. Visit NKU’s website at nk.edu.
A WORD FROM OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

OUR CLASSES ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT

MANUEL D. & RHODA MAYERSON FOUNDATION

Neal Mayerson, Ph.D.

My family has a multi-generational tradition, or habit, of community involvement and reaching out to help others. My father, Manuel D. Mayerson, used to say that he had been blessed with being in a family that instilled the habit of giving, and he wanted to help others have opportunities to learn this habit as well. This was the intention around which Dr. Jim Vetruva, former NKU president, and I found a shared interest which, due to his initiative, ultimately resulted in the creation of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project.

This program just completed its 15th year of operation, nearly $1,000,000 of community grants, and having developed thousands of student philanthropists! Hundreds of nonprofit organizations have made connections with the students of NKU and thousands of community members have been beneficaries of this philanthropic learning program. Our investment in this program has been rewarding as we have seen the program evaluation results over time and as many personal stories of personal growth and university-community connectedness have been shared with us.

The story of this program is one of vision, extraordinary leadership, and the power of authentic human connections. Hearts and souls have been awakened and the community has been strengthened as a result of NKU’s commitment to its students, faculty, and community at large. Our family has been pleased to have such a great partner to deliver and support this important work. We look forward to years to come of inspiring students to be strong and involved citizens.

At Citi Florence, we strive to make a positive difference in the communities where we live and work; it is the foundation of our community commitment and a value that is deeply embedded in our culture. Education is one of the most effective tools we have found to help people improve the quality of their lives, and it is an investment where we believe the community sees the longest, lasting impact.

Over the years, the entire Citi Florence, Ky., family has rallied together to support our site’s commitment to education, through both volunteer efforts and financial contributions. As part of this education-focused strategy, longstanding partnerships like that of Citi and NKU are recognized as invaluable collaborations. By funding programs like the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project, Citi is supporting the “learn by giving” approach, which in turn has helped to connect hundreds of nonprofit organizations. Citi views this commitment as a multi-impact opportunity, benefiting not only the various nonprofits but also impacting the students involved. With our funding, selected organizations receive supportive resources. In addition, students are exposed to nonprofits in our community and are also introduced to the importance of philanthropy. By participating in this hands-on-learning experience, we are creating a population of lifelong community stewards and leaders.

The success of this program has led to national recognition. It was profiled in The Chronicle of Philanthropy, the number one news source for nonprofit and online philanthropic enterprise. As the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project continues to remain impactful and successful, Citi is extremely honored and proud to be recognized as a partner and supporter.

TOYOTA

Toyota has enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with Northern Kentucky University’s Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project over the past several years. Each year, the students reviewed grant applications submitted to Toyota’s quarterly Contributions Committee. The students visited the nonprofits and made funding recommendations for each request. When presenting their recommendations to the committee, they brought a different, fresh perspective of the organizations and programs for funding consideration. Toyota has received positive feedback from the nonprofits, as well as the students. We believe the program not only helps students understand the process of grant making, but also educates them on the nonprofits in their community. Ideally, the program encourages them to volunteer or consider a career in the nonprofit sector.

VISON 2015

Vision 2015, Northern Kentucky’s ten-year strategic plan for growth, was established in 2006 and recognizes the importance of regional stewardship in building and sustaining a culture of civic volunteerism and philanthropy.

By investing in the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project, Vision 2015 became a partner in establishing the next generation of community leaders. NKU is providing real-life opportunities for students to financially and emotionally invest in nonprofits, allowing students to create relationships with organizations making meaningful change. By forging these relationships, NKU students are more likely to stay committed to bettering our region, thus achieving the goals established in the Vision 2015 plan.

SCRIPPS HOWARD FOUNDATION

Building a culture of stewardship among its scholars is an important part of any great university. The Scripps Howard Foundation is proud to be among the partners of the NKU’s Center for Civic Engagement in its efforts to teach students how to be good citizens of their communities. The student philanthropy center is a powerful tool in creating a culture of caring, which will pay dividends far into the future.

“HEARTS AND SOULS HAVE BEEN AWAKENED AND THE COMMUNITY HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED AS A RESULT OF NKU’S COMMITMENT TO ITS STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND COMMUNITY AT LARGE.”

– NEAL MAYERSON

STUDENT PHILANTHROPY AT NKU

OUR MODEL

Our typical approach is straightforward. With support from community donors, we earmark $2,000 for a class with specific instructions that the students identify a need in the community, learn what nonprofits are addressing that need, and evaluate the agencies’ programming and impact. The students then work as a class to decide where best to invest, awarding the full $2,000 to one nonprofit or $1,000 each to two.

There are variations of the model, including:

STUDENT FUNDRAISING

Some classes invest in a specific project or more of the funds they invest, with a community donor matching what the students raise. Even in classes that begin with $2,000 for a community donor, students often raise additional money to supplement the awards made by their classes.

MEETING A DONOR’S MATCH (GIVE 1:1)

Some classes invest in needs and causes designated by the community donor. In those classes, the students’ primary goal is to find nonprofit programming addressing the designated needs, whether those are in arts, education, or economic opportunity – which are some of the needs our donors have prioritized.

DIRECT GIVING

Each year, our students work with a community funding partner, that instead of giving money directly, gives a class a stack of applications to review. Our students evaluate those and advise the funding partner on where to invest and how much.

OTHER APPROACHES

NKU has tried to remain open to unique approaches to student philanthropy, so long as the alternative approach aligns with the learning outcomes of our classes. While the “learn by giving” approach that is a signature of NKU’s student philanthropy classes does involve “giving,” it also involves “learning” – so that remains a foremost consideration as our model is modified.
Fall 2014 Classes and Awards

Strategies of Persuasion (CMST 340)
Professor Jeffrey Fox
- The Kassie Project ........................................ $2,710
- Master Provisions ........................................ $1,000
- Music Resource Center ................................ $1,000

Information in Our Society (LIN 300)
Professor Mary Child
- Morgan County Starting Points ....................... $1,000
- Crayons to Computers ................................ $1,000

Alternatives to Incarceration (JUS 402)
Professor Danielle McDonald
- Off the Streets ........................................... $1,000
- Lifeline Ministries ........................................ $1,000

Studies in Spanish Language Cinema (SPI 330)
Professor Kajsa Larson
- Bethany House Services ................................ $1,000
- YWCA Alliance for Immigrant Women ........... $1,000

Honors College Writing (ENG 151)
Professor Jonathan Cullick
- Children’s Theatre of Cincinnati / Star Program $1,000
- My Nose Turns Red Theatre Company ............ $1,000

Volunteer Management (PAD 622)
Professor Lisa Desmarais
- Recommendations to Toyota’s Contributions Committee $88,780*

Social Welfare Policy (SWK 407/Sections 003 & 004)
Professor Jessica Averitt Taylor
- Be Concerned ........................................... $1,000
- Hosea House ............................................. $1,000

Spring 2015 Classes and Awards

Racism & Sexism in Educational Institutions (EDU 316)
Professor Kimberly Clayton-Code
- NKY Hates Heroin ...................................... $1,000

Concepts of Community & Public Health in Nursing (NRS 310)
Professor Adela Dean
- Brighton Center / Newport Community Garden Project $1,000

Grant Writing (ENG 544)
Professor Janel Blech
- Homeward Bound ...................................... $1,000
- Redwood .................................................. $1,000

Exhibits in Museums and Historic Sites (HIST 407)
Professor Brian Markert
- Behringer-Crawford Museum / Covington Bicentennial Exhibit $3,480

Global and Cultural Issues in Marketing (MKT 333)
Professor David Raska
- Mentoring Plus .......................................... $2,000

Leadership Practicum (LDR 396)
Professor Susan Wapens
- Redwood .................................................. $1,000
- NKY Hates Heroin ...................................... $1,000

Helping Skills and Technical Human Services (HSR 105)
Professor Mel Durbin
- Vivian’s Victory .......................................... $1,000

Resource Acquisition and Management (PAD 621)
Professor Julie Glabber
- Fast Pitch ............................................... $1,000
- Kicks for Kids .......................................... $1,700

College Writing (ENG 101)
Professor Jonathan Cullick
- Check Your Genes .................................... $1,000
- Brighton Center / Bright Days Child Development Center $1,000

Repression, Resistance, and Reflection (SPI 481 & GER 481)
Professor Kayla Larson & Professor Andrea Trinidad
- Centro de Amistad .................................... $1,000
- Melodic Connections .................................. $1,000

Community Organization (SWK 405/Sections 002 & 004)
Professor Jessica Averitt Taylor
- Transitions .............................................. $1,000
- Lightsighter Youth Services ......................... $1,000

On Track to Invest $1 Million

The Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project began in the Fall of 2000. Each year since, our students have invested thousands of dollars in nonprofit agencies. Most of the recipients are local, although some classes have invested statewide, nationally, and even internationally.

Some of the money is invested directly, with classes typically giving $1,000 to $2,000 to an agency. Other funds have been invested by our partners, with NKU students serving in an advisory role. Together, those two models, direct and indirect, have amounted to nearly $1 million in community investment.

Duration of the Program .............. 15 years
Total Agencies Funded .............. 331
Agencies Funded This Year .......... 36
Total Classes ......................... 194
Classes This Year .................. 21*
Total Students .................... 3,200
Students This Year ................. 418
Total Invested ...................... $986,320
Invested This Year ................ $124,670**

* Two additional classes participated by helping with assessment. See Page 25.
** $35,890 directly; $88,780 indirectly by PAD 622 in partnership with Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, Inc.
NO TWO MAYERSON CLASSES LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE

A Holocaust survivor. An Irish start-up looking to sell Millennials on the idea of investing in stocks and bonds. A gaming night for neighborhood kids in Newport.

Or how about speed-dating staged at the magnificent Memorial Hall in Over-the-Rhine and designed to match nonprofits with funders? Or a buffalo head to celebrate Covington’s 200th anniversary?

As disconnected as those may seem, together they tell a story about Northern Kentucky University’s approach to incorporating student philanthropy into the college classroom. No two classes looked exactly alike this past year — nor should they. Student philanthropy is a flexible pedagogy, and our 15th year of using it proved to be our most creative yet.

There are guidelines for incorporating the idea of “learning by giving” into the participating classes. Faculty attend a training session before the semester. A handbook includes timelines, sample syllabi, and other resources. Service learning pedagogy is required, as is a student survey at the semester’s beginning and end. Recipient agencies must be qualified nonprofits. But the structure was never meant to suppress creativity. And this semester, the NKU faculty and students were more creative than ever.

Here are some examples:

**SPI 481 and GER 481: Repression, Resistance, and Reflection**

As the first NKU professor to integrate student philanthropy into a foreign language class, Kajsa Larson, who teaches Spanish language and culture, was an innovator when she first taught Mayerson classes in 2012 and 2013. This year, she pushed further, teaming up with Andrea Fieler, a professor of German, to teach “Repression, Resistance, and Reflection,” which was cross-listed as Spanish 481 and German 481. The upper-division class focused on topics in literature and literary history. Dr. Larson and Dr. Fieler structured their class to examine those through the lens of the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust. Spanish students had readings in Spanish, German students in German. Both had common readings in English to examine such themes as identity, commemoration, human rights, displacement, catharsis, and the artistic expression of pain.

The class included a visit from 90-year-old Werner Coppel, a Holocaust survivor, who spent 20 months at Auschwitz as a slave laborer. “We had to appear naked in front of an SS officer who, with one look, would decide if that prisoner was still able to work. And if that prisoner would not be able to work, he would be sent to what we called in prison language ‘going through the chimney,’ being gassed and being burned,” Mr. Coppel told a CBS News interviewer earlier this year.

He escaped from Auschwitz and made his way to Cincinnati. His experiences were featured at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center exhibit “Unlocking the Gates of Auschwitz 70 Years Later,” which the SPI 481 and GER 481 students visited. Students also assembled two models of the Anne Frank house, as they gained a greater understanding of life under Nazi occupation.

What the student philanthropy component added was a challenge to the class to discover how the same themes and issues from history play out today. Which nonprofits in our region are dealing in contemporary times with human rights and dignity, with refugees and the politically marginalized?

“This real world experience, from theory to praxis, would not have been possible without the Mayerson Project,” Dr. Fieler said, reflecting a view expressed by students in the class as well. As one student put it in a survey at the end of the semester: “I appreciated and liked the hands-on experience, taking what we discussed in class and going out into the real world to witness the reality of nonprofits and those in need.”

The students awarded $1,000 each to Centro de Amistad of Erlanger and Melodic Connections of Cincinnati. The first helps Latino immigrants navigate life in the United States, with education and health services, assistance with immigration and tax requirements, and advice on housing. The second works with people sometimes marginalized for another reason — their disabilities. Melodic Connections uses music therapy to boost behavioral, motor, and social skills, opening doors that children and adults with disabilities too often find closed.

As with many of NKU’s Mayerson faculty, Dr. Fieler and Dr. Larson also will be publishing research about their incorporation of student philanthropy into the class they taught together — thereby telling the story of the collaboration nationally to fellow scholars.

**PAD 621: Resource Acquisition and Management**

Dr. Julie Olberding, NKU’s director of the Master of Public Administration & Nonprofit Management Certificate Programs, has been teaching student philanthropy courses for nearly a decade. She is the co-author of a 65-page handbook for college and university faculty about how to

**A FIRSTHAND LESSON**

Werner Coppel shared his experiences in a Nazi death camp with students, who were studying human rights.
In all, $30,000 would be distributed by the time the evening ended, including $1,000 from NKU’s student philanthropy pool. Dr. Olberding’s students played a role in awarding $6,000 of the total to Lawn Life, a Cincinnati agency that hires at-risk youth, many of whom have had brushes with the law, to work on landscaping crews and acquire job skills.

In addition, all students in the class worked on fundraising projects for Kicks for Kids, a small nonprofit that provides arts and sports programming for at-risk kids. One team organized a dodgeball tournament that raised $1,200 and another team added $500 with a crowd-funding campaign. The class also helped Kicks in another way: Two student teams worked on long-term fundraising strategies—specifically, a cause-marketing/corporate-giving guide and grant research and writing.

Meanwhile, the indirect model class (PAD 622: Volunteer Management) was taught once again this year, but not by Dr. Olberding. At least not directly. The class was taught by an adjunct instructor, Lisa Desmarais—a former student of Dr. Olberding’s. Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America, Inc., was the class partner. NKU students reviewed applications to Toyota’s Contributions Committee and made recommendations. The committee invested $88,780 in 12 nonprofits, guided by the students’ evaluation of the applications.

HIS 607: Exhibits in Museums and Historic Sites

Know anyone with a stuffed buffalo head available for loan? That’s the question still pending as HIS 607 was working on longer-term fundraising strategies—specifically, a cause-marketing/corporate-giving guide and grant research and writing.

The city is among Kentucky’s oldest. Founded along the Ohio River when the waterway was a major trade route for riverboats, Covington’s 19th Century roots date to a time when settlers and merchants traded buffalo and bourbon for land. Hence, the exhibit’s name.

The success isn’t just in dollars and cents. It also registers in student understanding of community needs and deeper learning of course material, as one student relayed in a survey at the end of the semester: “I had no idea about many of these organizations, and I really enjoyed learning about them. Jeff Fox also made it extremely interesting learning about persuasion and how it can be found anywhere and everywhere. Before this class, I had no idea that there were so many types of persuasion or that there were so many things that affected how persuasion is perceived.”

MKT 333: Global and Cultural Issues in Marketing

It’s no wonder that Dr. David Raska won the 2014-2015 award for Excellence in Teaching and Instruction from the NKU provost. He’s a creative, high-energy professor whose classes don’t fit a mold. For Spring 2015, his students worked with Rubicon, a startup based in Dublin, Ireland, that is building an app designed to denufify financial investing for Millennials. “Invest like a pro, even if you’ve never bought a

A restaurant in Covington, Ohio, came through for NKU students so that an exhibit about the history of Covington, Ky., would be complete. Photo courtesy of Gary Johnston.
Dr. Raska’s students provided valuable product-development advice to Rubico”n as it prepared to launch its app and enter the marketplace. But one of the principles Dr. Raska teaches in his classes is that marketing isn’t just about money. A successful marketer also is socially aware. Mindful marketing invites consideration of how health and education might affect markets, especially their long-term, sustainable growth and development.

Students thought through Rubico’s marketing strategies with those social considerations in mind. Having taught his students how to apply those concepts in the for-profit world where Rubico operates, Dr. Raska wanted his students next to think about their application in the nonprofit world. Enter the student philanthropy component of the class.

The students chose to work with Mentoring Plus, an agency based in Newport, Ky., and counseling at-risk teenagers. Just as Rubico is out to demystify investing and mentor millennial college students in how to save for a secure and successful future, Mentoring Plus is teaching teenagers how to better control their financial situation to overcome their challenges and achieve success. Mentoring Plus will receive $2,000, plus additional money that Dr. Raska’s students will raise with a Fall 2015 fundraiser using marketing strategies they learned in class.

Dr. Danielle McDonald incorporated student philanthropy into her criminal justice class, JUS 402: Alternatives to Incarceration. In addition to awarding mini-grants, she added an experiential element to her Fall 2014 class.

Her students gave a two-hour presentation to Youth Leadership Development (YLD), an after-school program for at-risk kids operated by the Brighton Center in Newport’s Westside, a neighborhood where NKU has been trying to concentrate community engagement efforts. Afterwards, the children and their families gathered for pizza and board games with the NKU students. Three groups of students did presentations for YLD groups, one at the Brighton Center and two at Newport Middle School.

“ar the experience helped my students to see the statistics that we discuss in class as more than just numbers, but actual children with dreams and hopes not very different from their own,” Dr. McDonald said. One group played a game called “Crossing the Line.” An NKU student would read a statement and if the kids had experienced this, then they jumped over a taped line on the floor. The idea was to help the children see that they had more in common than they may have thought and to encourage mutual support. All of the children jumped the line when the statement, “I have a parent or sibling who is or has been in jail or prison.” In class, Dr. McDonald discussed how the experience of having parents incarcerated increases the likelihood by five to six times of children being in jail or prison later in life – a statistic that underscores the importance after-school programs, mentors, and other early interventions. “My students have taken these lessons to heart and several of the students who presented to the middle school kids are still involved with the YLD program volunteering their time,” Dr. McDonald said. “One group that presented to the kids on internet safety was so moved by the experience that they volunteered to give their two-hour presentation to two more groups of middle-school students.”
Ranna Cox had no idea her honors writing class at Northern Kentucky University would turn her into a patron of the arts.

But that’s exactly what happened with Cox and her classmates, thanks to a partnership between ArtsWave and the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project at NKU. After weeks of research, preparation, and consideration, the class decided to award $1,000 each to two local arts organizations – My Nose Turns Red theater company and Cincinnati Children’s Theatre’s STAR program.

“I was a little overwhelmed at first. As a college student, I can’t carry around more than $20 or $30 of my own money,” said Cox, an 18-year-old sophomore majoring in Spanish. “I felt like this is a really big deal. Not everybody gets to do this, and we need to take this seriously.”

That’s the point of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project – to show students that philanthropy is serious and important. ArtsWave got involved in the spring of 2014 to help students learn the importance of the arts when it comes to civic engagement and building strong communities, said Tara Townsend, ArtsWave’s chief impact strategy officer.

“The arts have always depended upon philanthropy to support itself,” Townsend said. “This gets them understanding the role that the arts play in the broader community.”

The honors writing class, taught by English Professor Jonathan Cullick, is one of eight courses at the university this semester (Fall 2014) that gave students the opportunity to make grants to local nonprofits. Grants worth a total of $14,710 were awarded earlier this month.

Model for the Nation

A Model for the Nation

Started in 2000 with funding and encouragement from the Manuel D. & Rhoda Mayerson Foundation, the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project has been replicated across the country, said Mark Neikirk, executive director of NKU’s Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement. Scripps is the parent company of WCPO.

Mayerson Foundation, the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project has been replicated across the strongest communities, said Tara Townsend, ArtsWave’s chief impact strategy officer.

Children’s Home in Fort Mitchell, Ky., said Steve Stryffeler, a 19-year-old sophomore majoring in English.

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COMMUNITY IMPACT

As a semester begins and ends, we survey students in our student philanthropy classes about their awareness of community needs and their intent to engage in them. As in previous years, students report a strengthened connection to both.

What’s particularly noticeable is a sharp increase in the number of students who “strongly agree” with the propositions. In all 12 community impact questions, percentages increased, several by double figures.

89% Greater Awareness of Community Needs

Many students arrived in our student philanthropy classes with at least a modest grasp of community problems and needs in our region. 69% said so in our survey as their semester began.

On the whole, our student philanthropy classes increased that awareness by 20 percentage points: 89% reported an awareness of community needs at the end of their semester.

While that movement is notable, what’s also impressive is the percentage of students who “moved from ‘agree’ to ‘strongly agree’” when asked about their awareness of community problems and needs. The “strongly agree” percentage moved from 16% to 40% from start of classes to end. Clearly, the depth of students’ understanding was enhanced by the Mayerson experience.

Other Measures

90% I have a responsibility to help others in need.
89% I intend to volunteer in the future.
88% I intend to donate money to a charity in the future.
86% I believe I can make a difference in the world.
74% I plan to work with someone or some group to solve problems in my community.

Note: Percentages represent the combined total of students who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to each question. Other options on the survey were “neutral,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree.” The sample size was 382 students.

ACADEMIC IMPACT

In addition to grades (the traditional measure of learning) we assess student philanthropy classes with survey questions about academic impact. This year, as in past years, the surveys affirmed that adding student philanthropy elevates the learning of course material.

This result is evident across disciplines. In an education class, for example, 75% of the students said the class had a positive or very positive effect on the application of ideas and information taught in the class. In a criminal justice class, the number was 100%.

86% Retention and Graduation

Strategies that keep students enrolled and progressing toward a degree are especially valued at NKU, and adding student philanthropy to classes is one contributor to that outcome. One of our survey questions is: What effect did the student philanthropy experience have on your desire to stay in college and complete a degree? Negligible percentages reported a negative effect, 12.5% said no effect, 20% said a positive effect, and over 66% said a very positive effect.

Other Measures

99% The student philanthropy component of the class had a positive or very positive effect on my application of information and ideas from this class.
89% The student philanthropy component of the class had a positive or very positive effect on my academic skills or knowledge.
87% The student philanthropy component of the class had a positive or very positive effect on my interest in this course.
87% The student philanthropy component of the class had a positive or very positive effect on my learning of the material in this class.
87% The student philanthropy component of the class had a positive or very positive effect on my development of life skills, like communications, assertiveness, and decision making.

From familiarizing myself with the steps clients must go through all the way to getting an inside look at a client’s real need for a grant, this project has expanded my view of the entire grant-seeking process.

The process

Brainstorming potential clients, selecting suitable clients, working with them one-on-one to build their case, presenting on them, helping strategize with them on their final presentations, and eventually voting for and selecting a pair of winners was an incredible experience. Not only did I get to see what all it took for a client to apply for a grant, but I also got to see what draws people into applying for grants. Much more goes into applying than I would have thought. You have to write a proposal, fill out an application, write a cover letter, and work with the judges who are giving the grant. And that’s only to be considered!

I also learned what is important in applying for a grant. The client I worked with had an incredible need for supplies for art therapy, an art project, art programming, and general artistic expression for homeless kids throughout the state. However, the agency’s focus at first was on the items needed, not how those supplies would help the kids. Being able to be a part of this process along the entire way, I got to see the bigger picture: My client, the Brighton Center’s Homeward Bound Program, was requesting money for art supplies to

WHAT I LEARNED

Kevin Schultz graduated in May and is now a national Hearst Journalism Fellow. His student philanthropy class forced him to think not just as a journalist but also as an advocate.
help homeless children, not to simply purchase the items for the sake of purchasing them.

This sounds simple enough, but it proved to be a big learning experience, not only for me, but for my client and others in the class as well.

Working with my client was an informative and heart-warming experience on its own. In order to really see the need of my client, I took a trip to the shelter and was given a tour by the art therapist. I saw where the kids lived, met some of them, and saw their art projects. It was inspiring. I also learned a lot about how to communicate with a client in a personal yet professional manner. I am a journalist, so I am used to communicating with all sorts of people. However, communicating on the topic of a grant proved to be different because you were allowed some bias to help your client make a case. It took some time for me to take off my hat of being as objective as possible and to really dig in deep to help my client.

It took some time, too, to build a rapport. At first, I used a very formal style of writing and only communicated via email. Toward the end, I was calling my client on the phone to talk strategy for how best to win the grant.

Key learnings
I learned how to present a grant proposal in a manner that would really make it tough for judges to turn down. With the Brighton Center, I looked at the service and impact the center provides and really played those up. As we discussed in class several times, it is important to be able to see the bigger picture in this sort of situation. Using the emotional impact of how the grant money could potentially help homeless children was a lot stronger than approaching it with the mindset of it just bringing in art supplies to a shelter. At the end of the day, people care about other people and their well-being, not the dissemination of inanimate objects.

As for communication with a client, I learned how to establish a healthy relationship – from starting formally to easing into a more comfortable level of communication. Sometimes, a casual five-minute call can be more convenient and meaningful than a ten-paragraph email. It’s all about approaching things professionally and courteously, and feeling it out from there.

Conclusions
Judging and selecting were hands down the hardest parts of the project. There were so many great clients who needed the money that it made the decision difficult. However, I think the groups that won (mine included) did so because they were able to best communicate the impact that this grant money could really have for their organization. Having the opportunities to do this sort of learning out in the community really made the project so much more meaningful to me and the other students in the class. We all seemed to take a certain level of pride in our work while learning a heck of lot along the way.

Other Perspectives
Here are excerpts from essays by two other students in Dr. Janel Bloch’s class on grant writing, each reflecting on the student philanthropy experience.

Shannon Winter
Being able to attend the awards ceremony was a humbling experience. I learned that there are many, many great nonprofit organizations in the Northern Kentucky area. By witnessing some of the awards and getting to hear about the methods of the different classes and agencies involved, I learned how to become a better fundraiser.

In all, I feel that the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project was a very fulfilling experience. I not only learned how to examine grant proposals, but looking through all of the applications I was also able to see how I could write better myself.

Kimmy Steffen
One of the greatest aspects of the Mayerson project was that it allowed me to learn a great deal about the grant writing process…. I am a hands-on learner and being able to advocate for an organization and learn from professional grant writers was an incredible learning experience.

I also believe that it is highly beneficial for students to act as advocates or liaisons for the organizations that apply for the grants because it causes students to want to become more involved with philanthropy and possibly the organization they advocated for as well.
Our students speak

On Volunteering

Student philanthropy classes open students’ eyes to community needs and the opportunity to contribute to addressing those needs. Some students are quite frank in saying the demands and stresses of school will limit their time volunteering, at least immediately. Others are finding time already and many expect to find time between semesters or after graduation.

Here is a sample of student comments in response to the question:

As a result of this course, do you plan to make any changes related to your level of involvement in campus life or community life?

“Although I am currently overwhelmed with school, this course has inspired me to volunteer in this community after graduation.”

“I plan to get more involved with charities that are on our campus and taking the initiative to make a change.”

“I would like to become more involved in philanthropy and nonprofit organizations, as it is easier than one would think to get involved in the community.”

“I do plan on giving more time to nonprofits in my community and volunteering when possible.”

“I plan to get more involved in the community both here at school and back home.”

“I would like to volunteer my time to write grant proposals for local organizations.”

“I plan to volunteer more to help the community that I live in. This will help me grow as a person and help others who are in need.”

“I already had a strong sense of social justice. This helped me to see where my energy can be applied on a local level.”

“I have decided to pursue grant writing as a career. Working with nonprofits to help them receive funding for worthwhile projects is inspiring. I hope the Mayerson project remains as part of NKU’s academic curriculum. It’s a blend of theory and practice that connects academia to the real world in a compelling way.”

On Learning

Certain learnings were common across disciplines, as students better understood community needs and the array of nonprofits addressing those needs. Other learning outcomes were more specific to the discipline of the class involved.

Here is a sample of student comments in response to the question:

Please discuss the most significant things you learned this semester about social problems or needs, nonprofit organizations, or the philanthropy process.

“First, the most significant thing I learned this semester was a confirmation personally to become involved in the nonprofit sector. My major is preparing me to enter in this field. Being involved in this just confirmed that it is a worthy cause and that there are many social needs to help with. Also, I learned that the process of having a nonprofit organization and maintaining it is a little more complicated and can be hard.”

“Social problems seem to have the same themes throughout history. Groups of people, specific situations, and influences change, but they go back to the same roots. I learned that our quest for peace and equality still has a long way to go, but we aren’t the only ones who care. There are a lot of nonprofits trying to help people with social problems, and we need to be involved.”

“I learned that there are so many nonprofit organizations and it is more beneficial to put a concentrated effort into one or two instead of putting a little effort into a lot of organizations.”

“This was a really cool project, and it was even more amazing that I got to participate in presenting the check to our organization. I learned how much we can make a difference in these social problems or needs. I did not know much about nonprofit organizations in Northern Kentucky until this class.”

“‘IT’S AMAZING HOW MANY DIFFERENT NEEDS THERE ARE, EVEN THOSE YOU MAY NOT BE AWARE OF.’”

“When I learned that there are a lot of nonprofit organizations out there in our area that don’t have a lot of funding and need as much help as they can get. They are running on only a small amount of money.”

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“Our surveys consistently show an interest by NKU students who have taken a Mayerson class to continue in engaging with nonprofits and community needs after graduation. Do they in fact remain engaged with nonprofits after leaving college?”

The short answer is yes.

Here is the perspective of NKU professor Dr. Julie Olberding, director of NKU’s Master of Public Administration Program, who published research on this topic:

“I learned that there are a lot of nonprofit organizations out there in our area that don’t have a lot of funding and need as much help as they can get. They are running on only a small amount of money.”

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MINI-GRANTS OFFER A HIGH RETURN ON THE INVESTMENT – NOT ALL OF IT MEASURED IN DOLLARS.

Philanthropy, by definition, is giving. But it is also getting. The donor is hoping to get something in return. Bill and Melinda Gates give millions to the effort to combat HIV. What they want in return is to see HIV diminished or eradicated.

So it is with our student philanthropy classes and the donors who support them. They give with the hope of getting results. They invest with the expectation of a return.

We are happy to report that the expectation is being met.

For the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters, Northern Kentucky University students directly distributed $35,890 in mini-grants to 27 nonprofits. Most of those were for $1,000. On its face, $1,000 may not seem like much. It’s not Gates-level giving. But a review of the nonprofits makes of the money is inspiring. Most of our recipients are small, community-based agencies. But they are making a big difference in the lives of the people they serve as they put our investments to real and lasting use.

Here’s a sample:

Be Concerned in Covington, Ky., provides food and home supplies to needy families year round, as well as holiday meals. Be Concerned used its $1,000 mini-grant from a social work class to purchase hams, chickens, and turkeys for 150 families last Christmas.

Bethany House Services in Cincinnati provides a range of support services to disadvantaged women and children. Its $1,000 from a Spanish class bought backpacks and school supplies for children who stay at its shelter. In any given month, that’s about 70 kids.

Bethany House Services

The Music Resource Center in Cincinnati is devoted to music education, cultural diversity, and teenagers. Teens can learn an instrument, record with their band, study sound engineering, or just stop by for help with homework. The $1,000 from a communications class allowed the center to buy musical equipment, expand instruction, and host a music sampler last December.

Kicks for Kids in Covington uses sports and other activities to provide positive experiences to at-risk children. Kicks used its student philanthropy funds to build and launch a more inviting and full-featured website. Check it out at kicksforkids.org.

Check Your Genes in Fort Mitchell, Ky., is a relatively young nonprofit dedicated to public awareness about the value of genetic testing in families with a high risk for ovarian or breast cancer. Its mini-grant from an English class will fund the placement of iPads with a preloaded app in ob-gyn offices.

More important than structure or process, the nonprofits responding to our survey approved of the mission of our student philanthropy classes. As one wrote, “I really like the idea of teaching students how to give to charitable causes. I feel that our newer generations are not as knowledgeable on how to give. The Mayerson Project helps students develop a skillset that encourages them to give to causes.”

Some criticism turns up in the surveys, though it is mild. One agency director responded when asked what she liked least. Another was at a loss to find anything to criticize: “I was really satisfied with the project in every facet.”

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to engage with students. In fact, 15 of 17 agencies that responded to the survey reported at least one other engagement with NKU in the past five years. As for the two that did not, one is new and already finding other ways to connect to NKU. Student philanthropy opened the door.

One nonprofit that has enjoyed multiple connections with NKU classes is Hosea House in Newport, Ky. Hosea House provides meals to needy families, averaging 175 meals a night, seven days a week. Lately, Hosea House has been planting community gardens so that some of the food it serves is freshly grown. Mayerson classes have invested in the garden project frequently, including this year.

“We first asked for funds to help establish a garden so that we could include fresh vegetables and fruits in our meal program. That was three years ago,” Hosea House Executive Director Karen Yates told us. The most recent grant was to help cover the gardens in winter so Hosea House could lengthen the growing season into November and start as early as March.

Funds also paid for educational pamphlets that sit on the tables during mealtime and outline the nutritional value of the food from the garden. Kids take them outside to the garden and use them to identify what’s been planted.

Asked what she likes most about the student philanthropy classes, Ms. Yates responded: “I love working with the students and seeing what types of ideas they come up with. I really like it when they think outside the box.” Her agency enjoyed another benefit that is common with Mayerson classes. Some students volunteered at the garden during the semester and one continued to do so after the class ended. Volunteering with agencies is not a requirement of the student philanthropy project, yet nearly half the agencies receiving funds report student volunteers.

A GOOD TIME FOR HUGS
At the end of each semester, students award checks to the recipient nonprofits during a ceremony on campus. Without fail, there are hugs.

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Two classes that participated in the Mayerson program this past year did not award any mini-grants, instead connecting to student philanthropy in another way.

Professor William Attenweiler’s fall and spring graduate courses in organizational psychology helped evaluate whether the nonprofits receiving funds were satisfied with their interaction with NKU and our students – and whether any process improvements could be made in the student philanthropy program.

Dr. Attenweiler’s fall class wrote the construct for a focus group, suggesting questions and otherwise outlining how a focus group might be conducted. The spring class executed the construct, inviting nine agencies to a focus group on Jan. 26. The participants represented nonprofits funded by one or more classes over the past 18 months and included: Cincinnati Men’s Chorus; Crayons to Computers; Hosea House; K.A.S.S.I.E. Project; Madonna House; Master Provisions; Mentoring Plus; Music Resource Center; and Talbert House.

The focus group produced an overall positive report about student philanthropy at NKU. But the participants did suggest an expansion (more classes) and a stronger connection between funded agencies and NKU so that a nonprofit’s interaction with the university is not a one-time event. The Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement is acting on that recommendation by inviting student philanthropy grant recipients to campus workshops designed to match agency requests with classes and student organizations that might be able to partner with them.

The focus group participants also reported observing clear benefits to the students who participated in student philanthropy classes: “Concerning students, the agencies see them gaining knowledge in the areas of persuasion, grant writing, and philanthropy.”

FEEDBACK FUELS OUR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
Tell the world.
That was part of the mantra about the National Campus Compact with student philanthropy. The National Campus Compact features the handbook on its website, and requests for copies continue to come monthly as other colleges and universities look to replicate NKU’s incorporation of philanthropy into the higher ed classroom. To request a copy of the handbook, send an email to engage@nku.edu.

The handbook is a DIY guide to setting up a student philanthropy class or program. Not the second printing and marketed nationally by the Campus Compact, the handbook is frequently requested by faculty around the country and the world. Not a single month has passed in the five years since publication without at least one request for the handbook, as institutions look to replicate what NKU has created. “This resource is an extremely valuable guide as we work to instill a culture of philanthropy on Carnegie Mellon University’s Campus,” Aly Sokolowski wrote us after we sent a copy of the handbook to her. And Christina Estes of Howard University wrote with exclamation points, “Thank you for sending the handbook! I had no idea this book would be so comprehensive! We will put it to good use!”

Equally important in telling the world is our faculty’s publication in peer-reviewed, academic journals. This past academic year has produced more such published work – including one article by NKU students and another with a student co-author. Our faculty also routinely presents at academic conferences.

PRESENTATIONS
Dr. Danielle McDonald (criminal justice) co-presented in March 2015 with Dr. Lindsey McDougle (public administration) of Northern Illinois University at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences meeting in Orlando, Fla. Their presentation was titled “Community Engagement: Understanding the Impact of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project.”

Dr. Janet Bloch (English) presented on student philanthropy at the Association for Business Communication 80th Annual International Conference held in Philadelphia in October 2014. The title of her presentation was “Turning the Tables: Experiencing Grant Proposals from the Funder’s Perspective.” Dr. Bloch is working on a journal article for submission later this year.

TELLING THE STORY OF STUDENT PHILANTHROPY
NKU’s ‘LEARN BY GIVING’ MODEL IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT

The team of Dr. McDonald, McDougle, and McIntyre Miller has two articles currently under peer review. “The College Classroom as a Philanthropic Learning Laboratory: Exploring Learning and Development Outcomes Associated with Experiential Philanthropy” has been submitted for publication in Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. And “‘Connecting through Giving: Understanding the Impact of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project’ has been submitted to the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship.

An article written by Dr. Julie Olberding (public administration) has been accepted for publication later this year in the Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership. Titled “Does the ‘Service’ in Service Learning Go Beyond the Academy?” the article will present data and analysis related to the long-term impacts of service learning.

A story about Dr. Olberding’s research appeared in the March 15th edition of Greater Cincinnati Service Partners, an online newspaper covering local arts, culture, and education. Dr. Olberding told Soapbox: “In looking at the literature on service learning and even student philanthropy, which is part of that, there didn’t seem to be a lot on how these projects can have longer term impacts. We kind of believe that because in our classes in particular we focus on things like nonprofit strategic planning, program evaluation, fundraising, volunteer management — all things that have that potential!”

What did the research find? Here’s an excerpt from the Dr. Olberding’s article: “Findings indicate service-learning projects in nonprofit classes have positive effects on organizational capacity in various ways, including volunteer management and fundraising.”

There’s another aspect to Dr. Olberding’s article that reflects an NKU core value. The university encourages and supports faculty mentored student research, and Dr. Olberding had a student collaborator. Whitten worked with the research for her capstone project in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program.

OTHER WORK
Dr. Frederick Brockmier and Kristin Lovett (both of organizational leadership) worked with students in their respective classes to produce an updated and as the collaboration of all community of service learning. The finished project is to be posted online by the Greater Cincinnati Service Learning Network, a unique partnership that includes eight colleges and universities in Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati that are working together to support service learning in the region. NKU’s student philanthropy classes are taught with service learning pedagogy, and this new bibliography will be a resource for Mayerson faculty as well as for faculty around the country.

Jane Hammons (instruction librarian at NKU’s Steely Library) has started work on an annotated bibliography of all academic articles published by NKU faculty about student philanthropy, as well as use of philanthropy and civic engagement. She is working on information literacy concepts.