MAYERSON STUDENT PHILANTHROPY PROJECT

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

2012-2013

“It opened my eyes to the problems in my community. I was only slightly aware of people in need… this brought the reality to my attention.”

— 2013 MSPP student
Dear friends of student philanthropy,

Back in the 2000-2001 academic year when the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project got started, the model was straightforward: A class received a sum of money. The class examined community needs and learned about nonprofits meeting those needs. As the semester drew to a close, the class selected one or more nonprofits to receive funding and then awarded grants accordingly.

It has proven to be a durable model, and most of our classes still use it. But Northern Kentucky University’s faculty is nothing if not creative – and just as they guided the concepts that launched student philanthropy as a classroom component 13 years ago, NKU’s professors have continued to guide this powerful pedagogy’s transformation.

Today, there are a variety of models: online, strings attached, targeted, 1:1 match, dual credit, international and, in the coming year, the talent/treasure model. We’ll tell you more about these models in this year’s report. Read on!

We’ll also let our students tell you how student philanthropy has impacted their learning and their commitment to community, two of our targeted outcomes for these classes. We believe, and the data shows, that student philanthropy classes:

• Engage students more deeply in the course, and as a result enhance the learning outcomes.
• Connect students more directly to community needs, and as result enhance stewardship both immediately and after graduation.

Those results are what have driven NKU and our community partners to sustain these classes for 13 years and, as we enter our 14th year, to keep alive the original creative spirit that got us started.

Sincerely,

Mark Neikirk, executive director
Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement

The Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project is housed within Northern Kentucky University’s Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement. The center is committed to connecting the NKU campus to the community in order to combine civic and academic benefits. Here is the team assigned to the student philanthropy classes:

Mark Neikirk
Executive director
Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement
neikirkm1@nku.edu

Dr. Whitney McIntyre Miller
Faculty coordinator, 2013-14
Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project
mcintyremw1@nku.edu

Taylor Vick
Student intern, 2013-14
Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement
vickt1@mymail.nku.edu

Dr. Danielle McDonald
Faculty coordinator, 2012-13
Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project
mcolindalld1@nku.edu

Heather Schaffner
Administrative assistant
Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement
schaffnerh1@nku.edu

CONTACT US
Northern Kentucky University, FH 536 Highland Heights, KY 41099
engage@nku | 859-572-1448

Our team would like to extend a special thank you and best wishes to 2013 NKU graduate Stacey Barnes, who was the 2012-13 student intern for MSSP. Great job, Stacey! Good luck in your career!
“The philanthropy project has resulted in some of the best writing I have received from students, who respond with solidly logical, passionately emotional, and ethically sensitive appeals to their audience. The student writers are aware that what they write about and how effectively they write about will have a tangible effect beyond their grades. As my students determine which agencies to invest in, they become invested in their own learning.”

— English Professor Jonathan Cullick, who has incorporated the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project into his freshman English course six times, beginning in 2003.
Mayerson classes exemplify NKU's commitment to engaged learning

A university is, by its nature, a place where ideas arise. When you gather smart, creative people together as colleagues, they generate good ideas. In this environment, there is never a shortage of possibilities. The key to success, however, is to focus and to execute – and then to persist.

That’s a particular strength of our Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project. With the vital help of our community partners, NKU has sustained this project for 25 semesters. We have conducted 151 classes since the Fall of 2000 in 35 different disciplines. More than 290 nonprofits have been the beneficiary of grants from our classes.

“Adding student philanthropy to a course improves the odds that what is being taught will be learned and retained. It also teaches stewardship – the idea that our community's needs are our responsibility.”

– NKU President Geoffrey Mearns

Thousands of people have been helped. Babies have been given bottles and formula. Primary school classrooms have received books and teaching materials. Food pantries have seen their shelves stocked. Youth orchestras have received sheet music they otherwise could not afford. Community theaters have been able to keep their doors open. Community museums have been able to insulate their doors and windows to save money on their heating and cooling bills. The list goes on.

We support and sustain student philanthropy for two very good reasons. First, it engages our students in the classroom subject matter. Whether in sociology or English, biology or theater, adding student philanthropy to a course improves the odds that what is being taught will be learned and retained. Second, it teaches stewardship – the idea that our community's needs are our responsibility.

That second reason is not secondary. We believe, as the late Manuel D. Mayerson believed, that it is important to develop the habit of giving. The Mayerson family has been with us from the beginning, lending its name and providing its funding to these classes as well as to an idea. It’s our privilege to partner with the Mayerson family in the furtherance of that idea – and to teach a new generation of philanthropists the habit of giving.
$757,000 and Counting…

The most obvious and immediate impact of Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project classes is distribution of grants to nonprofits. This year, students had a hand in the distribution of $106,003.

Of that, $31,003 was money given directly by NKU classes. Another $75,000 was awarded with Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America, our partner for the “indirect” model of student philanthropy.

Thirty-seven nonprofits benefited this past year, bringing the total since our first semester back in Fall 2000 to 293. Total giving since MSPP’s inception 13 years ago is $757,000.

Classroom Learning Amplified…

Student philanthropy classes draw highly motivated students. More than 96 percent say they plan to stay in college and get their degree, according to this year’s survey results.

What’s more, the incorporation of student philanthropy into a college course tends to make the course more engaging and powerful. Jonathan Cullick, a MSPP veteran professor, added the student philanthropy component to ENG 151: Honors English during the Spring 2013 semester.

“It enables me to teach writing skills in context…to teach students how to evaluate source material, and transform students who really cared about the relevance of what they were learning,” said Dr. Cullick, who was chair of NKU’s English Department during the 2012-2013 academic year.

A Gift that Keeps on Giving…

In 2011, three members of NKU’s leadership team published a book, Becoming an Engaged Campus. Written by then-President James Votruba with Provost Gail Wells and former Associate Provost Carole Beere, the book outlines how to institutionalize public engagement at a university.

The three authors pledged the book’s profits to public engagement programming at NKU, and the money is being added to the student philanthropy donor pool. One MSPP class in the coming year will be funded from this source.

New in 2012-2013…

NKU is committed to innovation with MSSP, and this past year was no different. We tested new models and approaches as we experimented purposefully and carefully.

Perhaps the most significant new component this year was the connection of MSSP to NKU’s Project Hope: The 505 Initiative. “505” is the federal designator for a census tract in Newport’s Westside neighborhood. By key measures, the neighborhood is among the neediest few blocks in our region.

Beginning this year, NKU is attempting to focus a variety of public engagement activities in 505, including service learning, student research and independent studies. Four MSSP classes were linked to this project, and together they distributed $6,000 to nonprofits working in 505.

 Ahead for 2013-2014…

We won’t be standing pat for the coming year. We’ll be back in 505, sustaining our commitment to investing in the Westside’s well-being. We’ll also be adding at least one new discipline to the classes offered. Our plans include at least one class that will focus one of our state’s neediest regions – Appalachia. Students will be learning about the mountains and mountain people, and investing in nonprofits focused on their needs.

And we are hard at work on a new curricular model that involves investing time rather than (or in addition to) treasure. Students would provide a pool of volunteer hours to award to one or two nonprofits. The idea we are trying to spotlight is that giving is not only about taking out your wallet but also about investing your talents.
WHERE THE MONEY WAS INVESTED

2012-2013 CLASSES and AWARDS

FALL 2012

CMST 340: Strategies of Persuasion
Taught by Jeffrey Fox
Family Promise of Northern Kentucky $1,000
Hosea House $1,643
Northern Kentucky Children’s Advocacy Center $1,643

HNR 306: Arts for Social Change
Taught by Daryl Harris
Sunset Players $2,000

JUS 402: Alternatives to Incarceration
Taught by Danielle McDonald
City Link Center $1,000
Joseph House $1,000

UNV 101: Orientation to College and Beyond
Taught by Mei Mei Burr and Tye Mortensen
YWCA of Greater Cincinnati
  - Battered Women’s Shelter $1,000
  - Lighthouse Youth Ministries $1,000

ENV 220: Protecting Water Resources
Taught by Kristine Hopfensperger
Mill Creek Watershed Council $1,000
Waterstep $1,000

PAD 620: Managing Nonprofit Organizations
Taught by Julie Olberding
This class was structured under the “indirect model” in which funds are given by our partner, Toyota, with the advice of the NKU class. $75,000 was distributed to 15 nonprofits:
  - Arts and Humanities Resource Center ($4,500)
  - Artworks Cincinnati ($2,500)
  - BDPA Education and Technology Foundation ($5,000)
  - Bi-Okoto Drum & Dance Theater ($2,500)
  - CASA of Kenton County ($17,000)
  - Cincinnati Art Museum ($2,500)
  - Cincinnati Black Theater Company ($5,000)
  - Cincinnati Community ToolBank ($5,000)
  - Cincinnati Opera Association ($2,500)
  - Cincinnati State Technical & Community College ($5,000)
  - Cincinnati Youth Collaborative ($3,000)
  - Community Foundation of Westchester/Liberty Township ($5,000)
  - Comprehensive Community Child Care (4C) ($5,000)
  - Girl Scouts/ Wilderness Road ($7,500)
  - Hearing, Speech & Deaf Center of Greater Cincinnati ($3,000)

SPRING 2013

CMST 340: Strategies of Persuasion
Taught by Jeffrey Fox
Dragon Fly $1,275
Children’s Law Center $1,275

ENG 546: Grant Writing
Taught by Janel Bloch
Reset Ministries $1,000
Hosea House $1,000

ENG 151: Honors Writing
Taught by Jonathan Cullick
Teen Challenge Cincinnati $1,000
DCCH Center for Children and Families $1,000

LDR 160: Leadership Around the World
Taught by Whitney McIntyre Miller
Buseesa Community Development Centre of Uganda/Sisters of Notre Dame $2,000

SWK 105: Social Work & the Community
Taught by Willie Elliott
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Cincinnati $2,000

SPI 330: Studies in Spanish Language Cinema
Taught by Kajsa Larson
Santa Maria Community Services’ International Welcome Center $1,000
Stop AIDS $1,000

SWK 611: Practice II Communities & Organizations
Taught by Jessica Averitt Taylor
Section 001:
  - Brighton Recovery Center for Women $1,000
  - Hosea House $1,000
Section 002:
  - Hosea House $2,000

HIS 607: Exhibits and Historic Sites
Taught by Brian Hackett
Historic New Richmond Inc. $2,000
THE BASIC MODEL...
NKU began offering student philanthropy classes 13 years ago, and the basic model remains in place today. A class begins with a sum of money (typically, $2,000) that will, by semester’s end, be given to one or two nonprofits. The class determines a need it will address in the community, learns what nonprofits are addressing the need, and then invites those nonprofits to apply for a grant.

Finally, the class evaluates the applicants. Site visits are typical, as are visits to the class by representatives of the nonprofits. After those, the class jointly decides where to invest the funds.

NKU is committed to flexibility and creativity within this framework and, in that spirit, has adapted the original model to several innovative approaches.

INDIRECT MODEL...
Now in its fifth year of use, the indirect model works like this: The class receives no money directly, but instead acts as a sort of advisory board for a local foundation or corporate giving board. That board receives applications, which the NKU students in turn review and analyze. As with the basic model, site visits are common.

At the semester’s conclusion, students visit the board room and make a presentation on their findings and recommendations. The board gets deep scrutiny of its grant applications; NKU students get a chance to make a formal presentation off-site to an influential community board in a boardroom setting.

For the past three years, our community partner for the indirect model has been Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America, which has its headquarters in Erlanger. This past year, Toyota invested $75,000 in 15 agencies, guided by our students’ input.

FUNDRAISING MODEL...
Most student philanthropy classes rely on funding from grants and gifts that pre-fund each class. But one adaptive approach involves direct fundraising by the students in the class.

Jeff Fox, who teaches communication courses, has been instrumental in developing this model. A class starts with $0. Its goal is $2,000. Each dollar raised is matched by an outside donor. The Scripps Howard Foundation and the Manuel D. & Rhoda Mayerson Foundation provided the 2012-13 matching funds. In the fall semester and again in the spring, Mr. Fox’s classes exceeded their $2,000 goal.

A modification of the fundraising model was launched for the Spring 2013 semester. As a component of HIS 607: Exhibits in Museums and Historic Sites, students raised money to fund an exhibit they designed for a community museum in New Richmond, Ohio. The class raised $1,167 along with about $800 in-kind contributions. The class was taught by Professor Brian Hackett, the director of NKU’s Public History Program, who will be teaching the course again in the coming academic year and, once again, incorporating a student philanthropy component.

STRINGS ATTACHED MODEL ...
Rarely does money in the real world come without strings attached; that is, the donor has a mission to accomplish with the money donated. It may be to improve public health or boost literacy. Or maybe the goal is food, clothing and shelter. Causes are as diverse as donors.

Recognizing this, NKU has developed a student philanthropy model in which students must learn about the donor’s goals, and then invest in a nonprofit addressing those goals. Our partners this past year were:

- Vision 2015, the regional agency providing a blueprint for Northern Kentucky’s growth and development.
- The Friedell Committee for Health System Transformation, which is working toward community solutions to public health needs in Kentucky.

DUAL CREDIT MODEL...
NKU professors teach some classes at area high schools, offering both high school and college credit to students who take these “dual credit” courses. For the second straight year, one of those classes incorporated student philanthropy. The first year (Spring 2012) the student philanthropy dual credit course was at Dixie Heights High School in Kenton County and taught by Willie Elliott, a social work professor. This year, he taught the class, SWK 105: Social Work and the Community, in Newport. The high school juniors and seniors in the class awarded $2,000 to the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Cincinnati.

INTERNATIONAL MODEL...
Our faculty have used a variety of techniques to give student philanthropy an international flavor. In the past, an online class evaluated a pre-selected list of small, high-impact NGO’s operating around the world. Another class took an alternative spring break to The Hague and learned about international human rights, then returned home and looked for local nonprofits whose mission involved helping the oppressed. This year, a class in Leadership Around the World (LDR 160), taught by Whitney McIntyre Miller, looked for local nonprofits with an international mission, and awarded $2,000 to the Sisters of Notre Dame, an order based in Park Hills, Ky., but with a school and mission in Uganda.
Student Philanthropy in the Classroom: A Pedagogical Power Tool

Student philanthropy utilizes experiential learning to assist the instructor in providing a deeper, more meaningful learning experience the students aren’t likely to forget. Experiential learning has been shown to help students better understand the material and retain it for longer periods of time than students who do not participate in hands on learning experiences (Ti, et al., 2009). The key to creating this learning environment is to incorporate student philanthropy into the course in a meaningful way by connecting it directly to the learning outcomes for the class.

Incorporating student philanthropy into a course is not difficult, but it does take some preparation prior to the start of the course. It is advisable to start with a class, where the instructor has already thought through the learning outcomes for the class and what one would like the students to walk away with at the end of the term. The next step is to plan how the instructor will connect the information the students will be learning in the classroom or their learning outcomes with their experiences in the community as they participate in the student philanthropy project.

I have had the opportunity to incorporate the student philanthropy project into my Jus 402: Alternatives to Incarceration course. The first learning outcome for this course is “conceptualize alternatives to incarceration”. Prior to incorporating the student philanthropy project, I relied on video clips, radio broadcasts and guest speakers to enhance my lectures and help the students visualize and theorize about the variety of alternatives to incarceration available in our community. I still utilize these tools, but in addition I have incorporated service learning and student philanthropy to assist in this conceptualization process. I have the students volunteer, for example, in the community with a community corrections program as well as working with a group of classmates to advocate for a local nonprofit who works with this population for the student philanthropy award. The involvement within the community helps to enrich the learning experience for the individual student and allows him/her to step into a world he/she might not have otherwise been aware existed.

Students also are required to journal about their volunteer experiences and relate them back to what they had been learning in the class. The students then bring their experiences and reflections with them to class, which allows the instructor to engage the class in critical thinking exercises where students reflect on their experiences at a particular agency and how they are similar or different to what they read about in the text or learned in class.

The best part about the student philanthropy model is the requirements are simple enough that it can be incorporated into any discipline. This basic format allows ample room for creativity on the instructor’s part for implementing the project and tying it into the existing learning outcomes for the course. There are only three guidelines that need to be followed:

1. The teacher or students need to decide what area or need they would like the class or groups to focus on.
2. The students decide who to give the money to with the award for the nonprofit being a minimum of $1,000 and the money awarded to a 501c(3), government agency or other nonprofit.
3. The students need to reflect on their experiences and accomplishments throughout the semester.

As educators we are always working to make our classes better and to find those different exercises, projects, lectures, etc. that help us to drive the point home and make learning memorable. Incorporating student philanthropy could be the missing link for many of us. It is certainly not a panacea, but for many classes (in a variety of disciplines), this could be the tool that helps us to create more of those “aha” moments we all strive for as teachers.

In the Fall 2012 semester, freshman Ellen Albrecht entered ENV 220: Protecting Water Resources with her major undeclared and her career path foggy. She left with a major and clear idea of what she wants to do in her career – environmental science. She credits her biology professor, Kristine Hopfensperger, and the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project.

“I never really knew what I wanted to do,” Albrecht said. “Taking the class was really eye-opening to me. She made it seem like it was all really important. That’s what made me realize that environmental science was what I really wanted to do. I could see myself doing a job like that.”

ENV 220 is an overview of water resources and threats. Students learn about waterways in the United States and their condition. They learn about the federal Clean Water Act. They learn about storm water, how it pollutes and how its damage can be reduced.

All of that can be learned from a textbook and lectures, but Dr. Hopfensperger required her students to learn from the real world. Because of the MSPP component, the students had $2,000 to give — and to do so they first had learn about nonprofits working to protect water resources.

“We went out to a bunch of different streams and sites and met with several people and got to ask them a lot of questions,” Albrecht said referring to the process of deciding where the Mayerson funds would best be invested.
“The civic engagement aspect of the course helped to get people talking, by making everyone do research and work together on the project.”

Eventually the class decided to split the money and fund two separate organizations. WaterStep, a Louisville-based nonprofit, was given $1,000 dollars to invest in its clean-water equipment, which is used in remote villages around the world to purify water for drinking. The Mill Creek Watershed Council in Cincinnati received the other $1,000 to continue its cleanup of a creek that runs through an old industrial corridor. The council used the funds to rebuild its website into an interactive, informative, inviting site where the public can learn the Mill Creek’s history, its progress and how to get involved in the cleanup. NKU gets a shout out on the site for helping out.

MATTHEW GARRETT

An international flavor

Matthew Garrett enrolled in LDR 160: Leadership Around the World expecting the expected. “Just another class with another typical, big group project,” he recalled.

What Garrett, a junior majoring in psychology and organizational leadership, experienced instead was something more engaging, more transformative and more impactful.

“I found out that this class and this project was something much more real, something that I really wanted to put my whole heart into,” Garrett said. “This wasn’t just another group project in another ordinary class. It was something that could really help a lot of people.”

The learning outcomes of the class were standard for the course: to “explore the basic theories, trends, and practices for leadership from varying global perspectives” while “also introducing students to how leadership is viewed and practiced around the world.”

Typically, such a class might involve lectures and perhaps team projects exploring worldwide leadership models. But because the course had a student philanthropy component, the professor, Whitney McIntyre Miller, divided the class into teams, each assigned to learn about a nonprofit working internationally. Garrett’s team explored a partnership between nuns in Park Hills, Ky., and a community development center in Uganda. He found himself exchanging emails with the community center’s director, who invited him to come to Uganda and volunteer.

For Garrett, the defining moment of the course came when he found himself sitting across from one of the Sisters of Notre Dame and talking for two to three hours.

“Just the fact that I was able to get out in the community and that they actually took the time to meet with me made me realize so much,” he said.

Garrett’s class awarded $2,000 to the Buseesa Community Development Centre in Uganda, a mission started in 1995 by the Sisters of Notre Dame and sustained ever since with a convent, two schools, dormitories and a farm.

“I always did community service kind of work before, but this work was much more intimate,” Garrett said.

“Getting to know all of these people and their needs, even people in Uganda, made me feel like I could really have an impact on people,” Garrett said. “I would love to see Mayerson in more courses. Seeing how it helped others was awesome.”

One of Albrecht’s favorite parts of being in ENV 220 was being able to attend the banquet at the end of the semester, when all the fall semester’s Mayerson classes announced the nonprofits they had selected. She got to hand a check to WaterStep.

“It was cool to present WaterStep with the money because I thought they really deserved it,” Albrecht said. “I would definitely recommend anyone to take this kind of course and I would do it again if another class presented the opportunity.”

Her other takeaways? A declared major (environmental science) and a summer job in Dr. Hopfensperger’s research lab.
Kayla Justice graduated in May with her degree in criminal justice. For most graduates, flipping their tassel marks the exciting transition from theory to practice – from learning to doing.

For Justice, the transition happened before graduation. She credits the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project. Justice took several MSPP courses during her time at NKU. From learning about race, gender and the law through local nonprofits in her JUS 231 course, to exploring alternative means to incarceration in the community in her JUS 402 course, Justice was able to learn by doing and seeing the content firsthand.

“Learning is not just restricted to the classroom,” Justice said. “Your community is an open canvas for learning. When you fuse the classroom and community together as a learning opportunity, the door of possibilities is thrown wide open. Getting an education becomes a whole lot easier when you know you are not only helping yourself, but others, too.”

As well as enhancing her learning and helping her understand how the content of the course could be applied in the real world, the Mayerson courses also allowed Justice to have a deeper and more meaningful connection with her professor, Danielle McDonald.

“Taking these classes was the beginning of a really great relationship I developed with Dr. McDonald,” said Justice. “She became my advisor as I began to take upper level classes. Without Dr. McDonald, I would not have had the same experience at NKU. She helped to fuel my love for criminal justice and community service.”

Each Mayerson class had $2,000 to award to nonprofits selected by the students. In JUS 402, which Justice took in the Spring 2011 semester, the class awarded $1,000 to the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Cincinnati to use towards starting new programs and renovating the recreation room.

“It was great to be giving back to an organization that does so much for our local youth,” Justice said. “Getting feedback and thanks from the organizations we were able to give money was the best part of the experience. Knowing our efforts made a difference really capped off the experience. It left me with a sense of fulfillment, and I really loved every minute of these Mayerson classes.”

Justice said she would recommend all students to try out a Mayerson course. “It brings life to learning. I looked forward to going to each of these classes week after week. It is a great blend of community service and learning. If every one of my classes could have been a Mayerson course, I would have loved it.”

These stories were written by Kevin Schultz, who had a summer public relations internship with NKU’s Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement, funded by the Scripps Howard Foundation of Cincinnati. Schultz is the 2013-2014 editor of NKU’s student newspaper, The Northerner.
**Amplified Stewardship…**

One reason for adding student philanthropy to courses is that it awakens students’ to community needs, how those needs are met by nonprofits and how students, now and in the future, can play a role in addressing those needs. We monitor community benefits with a survey at the end of each semester. Here are the Fall 2012 semester and Spring 2013 semester results for the key questions on the survey related to student philanthropy’s power to boost community stewardship.
Amplified Learning...

Another reason for building student philanthropy into courses at NKU is that it proven way to engage students in what’s being taught in the classroom, no matter the subject or discipline. Learning outcomes are improved. Here are the Fall 2012 semester and Spring 2013 semester results (combined) for key questions on the survey related to student philanthropy’s academic benefits.

- **I want to stay in college or complete my degree**: 96% agreed, 3% neutral, 1% disagreed.
- **I plan to seek a career in a nonprofit organization**: 41% agreed, 31% neutral, 28% disagreed.
- **Your interest in this course**: 82% agreed, 15% neutral, 3% disagreed.
- **Your application of course information**: 82% agreed, 16% neutral, 0% disagreed.
- **Your academic skills or knowledge**: 85% agreed, 13% neutral, 0% disagreed.
- **The development of your functional skills, like communications, assertiveness and decision-making**: 81% agreed, 17% neutral, 0% disagreed.
- **The fit between the Mayerson project and the goals and outcomes of your class**: 87% agreed, 9% neutral, 4% disagreed.
Newport’s Westside: A Learning Lab for NKU students

Traditionally, Northern Kentucky University’s service learning classes have been somewhat random. Partners from anywhere in the region might benefit, as community partners and courses paired up.

But last summer, NKU and neighboring universities – collaborating as part of the Greater Cincinnati Service Learning Network – asked some questions: What if we focused service learning in the neediest neighborhoods? Might our collective impact be greater? Could we make an immediate and measurable difference?

NKU agreed to pilot this idea, which the network titled “Project Hope.” Census data drew us to Newport’s Westside, or, as it is known in the federal census, “Tract 505.”

505 is a place where many people live below the poverty line in an old urban neighborhood with all of the challenges that brings. But it also is a place of tremendous pride of place. The neighborhood association is active and engaged. Small businesses, arts groups, nonprofit agencies and churches abound. To help us to identify opportunities, we partnered with the Brighton Center, an established nonprofit that provides an array of services in the Westside.

About 20 classes engaged in 505 for the Spring 2013 semester. A public history class began collecting neighborhood histories. A public relations class wrote stories on the people and places in the neighborhood. A photojournalism class shot photo essays. A social work class worked with a teen mentoring program.

Four of the 15 classes were Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project classes. What follows is an account from Jessica Averitt Taylor, who incorporated MSPP into two of her social work classes. The result was high-impact learning for her students.

The Bruenger Boys & Girls Club is in Newport’s Westside neighborhood and hosted a “505” service learning class during the Spring 2013 semester. PHOTO CREDIT KEVIN SCHULTZ

By Jessica Averitt Taylor, Ph.D.

“REAL MONEY” SEeded REAL LEARNING

“But this is so hard. I want to help all of the agencies, and I thought that this process would be less agonizing.”

One student voiced her frustration in the midst of spirited classroom discussion. In our third month of working with the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project (MSPP), my students had visited local community agencies and invited agency representatives to speak to the class. The students were enthusiastic, resourceful, and wonderfully excited to be able to actually award “real money” (as they called it) to community agencies. But as the time to make a final decision neared, the students found themselves minutely analyzing each agency proposal, and carefully weighing the benefits of each possible award allocation.

We had set aside one three-hour class period to reach our final decisions. It was going extremely well, with each student eagerly highlighting the merits of favored agencies. The excitement in the room was palpable; my role was clearly that of moderator in this animated discussion.
After the first two hours, my students were really no closer to feeling comfortable with what was clearly the majority decision, and I was able to guide the class to a conclusion. They got it, really understood the minutiae and tedious business of grants and community projects. And they hated that they were not able to award the money to every participating agency, but they also understood what had made the differences with each proposal. They had spent time in the community, working to understand the community strengths and challenges, and they were prepared to award money to community agencies.

I taught two sections of a master’s level social work course this spring, SWK 611: Communities and Organizations. Both of my sections were able to participate in the MSPP, and both sections went through the same process of exploring the idea of communities, and focusing on the Census Tract 505/Westside community of Newport, Ky. This course was designed to give students hands-on experience with community work, a central tenet of the social work profession.

Here is the official course description:

*Understanding and intervening at the organizational and community levels are essential for effective social work. This course builds on a liberal arts base, including skill in written communication and knowledge of human psychology, sociology, and political science. It applies generalist social work process*
to communities and organizations, examining community demographics and concerns, and evidence-based practice; along with the values of social justice, diversity, and leadership. Specific attention is given to assessing community and agency capacities and needs. Learning about organizations and communities will be the dominant theme and will be a “hands on” approach to macro practice.

My goal with this class was to connect students to the community in an active and invested manner. I wanted each student to see herself/himself as a vital member of several communities, and as a change agent within those communities. I wanted the students to be able to assess communities: the important demographic components, challenges and strengths, community goals and local resources. And I wanted each student to leave this class with the knowledge that they could, as individual social workers, impact their communities in so many substantial ways. This class was all about potential, and the MSPP really helped to connect that potential with a tangible outcome. My students felt empowered, as social workers and as students, and as community members.

Fifteen of my students took the afternoon off from their full-time jobs to personally attend the final MSPP awards ceremony. I believe that we are all capable of effecting change, but I also believe that money talks in some ways. And these students took an afternoon off from work, willingly forgoing wages for that time, to attend a non- required event at the tail end of the semester. I was humbled by their commitment, and their investment in this process.

My students remain involved with this community even though the semester has concluded and our MSPP has wrapped up. Over the summer, they have scheduled a weekend of volunteer work to brighten up a local community mental health agency. They have also scheduled two weekends to prepare and serve food at a community food bank. Their commitment to philanthropy, and to their communities, has been an honor to witness and encourage.

Jessica Averitt Taylor, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of social work in the Department of Counseling, Social Work and Leadership at Northern Kentucky University. Previously she was assistant to the editor at the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship. She holds a doctorate in social work from the University of Alabama. Her teaching areas include social welfare policy, social work and the community, communities and organizations and research.

Students in Dr. Taylor’s social work class toured Newport’s Westside to learn about the neighborhood firsthand before awarding grants.
Each year, NKU’s incoming freshmen read a common book as part of their University 101 classes, which are meant to assist with the transition from high school to college. By design, the classes engage students in lively discussion and critical thinking. There is an intentional connection of the academic world to the real world.

The 2012-13 book was *The Other Wes Moore*, a powerful story of two African American men with the same name and similar inner-city backstories. Helped along by mentors and an education, one Wes Moore found his way out of the dead-end world of poverty and crime. The “other” Wes Moore went to prison for a homicide.

At the end of his book, Moore lists nonprofits from across the country providing services similar to the ones Moore indexed. The class awarded $1,000 each to the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati’s Battered Women’s Shelter and to Lighthouse Youth Ministry, a Cincinnati-based agency working with troubled young people and their families.

One student in the class described the impact of incorporating student philanthropy like this: “Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati have a lot of people in need – more than I imagined. But there are so many organizations that open up their arms to them all.” She went on to say that she will be volunteering in two community nonprofits in her home neighborhood in Newport, the Hosea House and the Brighton Center.

Another student said this: “As a result of this course, I plan to make changes related to my community involvement. I’ve been volunteering a few times now and plan to volunteer a lot more.”
At Academic Conferences...

This year as in the past, our faculty and administrators have spread the word about NKU’s Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project to peers at academic conferences around the country:

- Jeff Fox, who teaches strategy and persuasion classes in the College of Communication, presented “Service Learning: Connecting Students’ Minds to Course Content” at the Southern States Communication Association Annual Convention, April 2013, Louisville, Ky.
- Mark Neikirk, who directs the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement, presented “Flexing a Flexible Pedagogy” at the American Democracy Project annual conference, June 2013, Denver, Colo.
- Neikirk and Danielle McDonald, Ph.D., a criminal justice professor who coordinated NKU’s student philanthropy program for the past three years, conducted a webinar for the Kentucky Campus Compact on Jan. 25, 2013.
- Dr. McDonald and two NKU colleagues, Julie Olberding, Ph.D. (Political Science) and Chris Wilkey, Ph.D. (English) led a panel discussion at the Greater Cincinnati Service Learning Network’s first annual service learning symposium on April 12 in Cincinnati. The three professors are all veterans of student philanthropy classes. They discussed research and scholarly writing about service learning and student philanthropy.
- Whitney McIntyre Miller, the 2013-2014 faculty coordinator for the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project, is presenting later this year at the Kentucky Summit on Philanthropy in Lexington, Ky.

WITH PEERS AND THE PUBLIC

SHARING THE STUDENT PHILANTHROPY STORY

Handbook Still in Demand...

Three years ago, NKU published a guide for faculty on how to incorporate student philanthropy into a college classroom. About 700 copies of the handbooks have been distributed to faculty members and program administrators in 24 states, the District of Columbia and two foreign countries.

The handbook is used internally at NKU for training but its primary purpose is to fulfill a charge from our lead funder, the Mayerson Foundation, to export this method of teaching to other campuses.

Requests continue to come in monthly for copies of the handbook, as more and more universities consider implementing student philanthropy classes.

IN THE MEDIA...

Student philanthropy classes at NKU were featured in news reports on the NKU home page, in the Northerner, in the Cincinnati Enquirer, on Kyforward.com, on WNKU and on the news blog, Good Things Going Around.
“Throughout her tenure at NKU, Julie has engaged in a variety of high-impact outreach activities, the outcomes of which have resulted in developing strategic policy decisions in the Northern Kentucky region, in building new partnerships with nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and in strengthening existing partnerships with a variety of agencies and associations.”

– Dr. Shamima Ahmed, chair, political science, criminal justice and organizational leadership, on Dr. Julie Olberding
Ronald McDonald House received a $2,000 grant from NKU students this past year. Here, a guest family smiles while together at the house, which provides a place to live temporarily for families with critically ill children being treated at Cincinnati’s Children’s Hospital Medical Center. (Photo courtesy of Ronald McDonald House)

13 YEARS OF GIVING AND MORE TO COME
WHERE NKU STUDENTS HAVE INVESTED

293 Nonprofit Agencies Have Received Grants Since Our Classes Began

A
Action Ministries
A. D. Owens Elementary School
Afghan Institute of Learning
AIDS Volunteers of Cincinnati (AVOC)
Ambassador Program
American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
Animal Rights Community
Anthony Munoz Foundation
Artery
Arthritis Foundation
Ohio River Valley Chapter
Arts and Humanities Resource Center for Older Adults
Artworks Cincinnati
Athletes-On-Line.com

B
Baker-Hunt Foundation
Balliet Theater Midwest
BETPA Education & Technology
Be Concerned
Beech Acres Foster Care Art Project
Behringer Crawford Museum
Bethany House Services
Betts House Research Center
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Cincinnati
Biggs Early Childhood Center
Big Stuf, Inc.
Bi-Kotoa Drum & Dance Company
Birthright of Cincinnati
Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Cincinnati
Boys Hope Girls Hope of Greater Cincinnati
BRAC
Bridges for a Just Community
Brighton Center for Employment Training
Brighton Center Homeward Bound Program
Brighton Center Youth Leadership Development Program
Brighton Center Youth Transitional Living Center
Brighton Recovery Center for Women
C
Campbell County 4H
Campbell County Senior Center
Campbell Lodge Boy’s Home
Cancer Family Care
Caracole, Inc.
Care Net Pregnancy Services of Northern Kentucky
Carnegie Visual & Performing Arts Center
CASA of Kenton County
Catholic Social Services
Center for Great Neighborhoods
Center for Peace Education
Centro De Amistad
Children, Inc.
Children’s Home of Cincinnati
Children’s Home of Northern Kentucky
Children’s Law Center
Children’s Performing Arts of Lakota, Inc
Children’s Theater of Mason
Christian Waldschmidt Homestead & Civil War Museum
Cincinnati Association for the Blind
Cincinnati Art Museum
Cincinnati Black Theater Company
Cincinnati Chamber Music Society
Cincinnati Community Toolbank
Cincinnati Museum Center
Cincinnati Nature Center
Cincinnati Opera Association
Cincinnati State Community & Technical College
Cincinnati Works
Cincinnati Youth Collaborative
Cincinnati Zoo
Cinderella’s Closet
Citizens’ Foundation, USA
Citizens Policy Center
CityCURE
City Link Center
“Through the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project, one of our teenage volunteers shared her joy for our mission with her classmates. As a result, the class worked together to help fund a loving and supportive home for a critically ill child and his family at Cincinnati’s Ronald McDonald House. This partnership was a win-win; the students realized the importance of giving back and making a difference, and our House was able to help a family when they needed it most.”

– Jennifer Goodin, Executive Director, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Cincinnati
December 10, 2012
Northern Kentucky University
Mr. Mark Neikirk, Executive Director
Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement
Nunn Drive
Highland Heights, KY 41099

Dear Mark,

On behalf of our Board of Directors, guest families, and our staff, thank you for your most generous donation via the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project! Your donation of $1000.00 will assist the homeless families in our programs by enabling us to reconstruct our outdoor children’s play area at our shelter in Newport, KY.

Our Emergency Shelter and Rapid Re-housing programs remain full. At present we have 80 families consisting of 134 children on our waiting list. Your generous donation helps us to make the stay in our shelter more palatable for the children. This gift affords the children a safe and friendly place to play, essentially the opportunity to be like other children their age.

Thank you again for your wonderful gift and your dedication to helping us!

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Lisa Desmarais
Executive Director
Family Promise of Northern Kentucky
Formerly Interfaith Hospitality Network of NKY

No goods or services were provided with this donation.

We are a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our Federal Tax ID is 81-1260083.

Thank You!
The success of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project begins with the generous support of our donors. No one has invested more in MSPP – with dollars and encouragement – than the Mayerson family of Cincinnati.

The Manuel D. and Rhoda Mayerson Foundation helped conceive of our student philanthropy classes and sustain them for 13 years. The foundation is dedicated to creating communities that are just, caring and respectful – communities in which marginalized populations are empowered and all people have opportunities to seek their highest aspirations.

We would like to thank the foundation and all of our funding partners (listed below) for their support in the 2012-2013 academic year. We cannot do this without them.

Interested in giving? Contact:

DANIEL EMSICKE, MAJOR GIFT OFFICER
University Development
AC 221
Northern Kentucky University
Highland Heights, KY 41099
859-572-5628 | emsicked1@nku.edu

You can also contribute to MSPP by purchasing a Norse car magnet. Send $5.50 to:

SCRIPPS HOWARD CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
Attention: MSPP
FH 536 Nunn Drive
Northern Kentucky University
Highland Heights, KY 41099

You can give online as well at: supportnku.nku.edu

A Special "Thank You" to our Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 Funders

FOUNDATION PRESIDENT DR. NEAL H. MAYERSON ON NKU’S STUDENT PHILANTHROPY CLASSES...

“Our Foundation is interested in helping individuals express their best-selves and appreciate the profound implications of their inter-connectedness to one another. The student philanthropy courses offer students opportunities to become inspired by helping others, a lesson they can carry into the rest of their lives. Along the way they learn a lot about their own values, their own value to others, and their senses of relevance and compassion grow.”
SCRIPPS HOWARD CENTER
for CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

STUDENT PHILANTHROPY
PLANT IT 🌿 NURTURE IT 🌿 HARVEST IT