

# Serving and Learning: Five Community Engagement Best Practices

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# Liberal Arts Context & Criticism

- Traditionally, liberal arts educated the whole person
- Critics characterize liberal arts as elitist, archaic, failures



# Contemporary Liberal Arts Responses

- Adopted more applied curricula
- Developed experiential learning through community-engagement coursework



**Concrete  
Experience**  
(doing / having an  
experience)



**Reflective  
Observation**  
(reviewing / reflecting  
on the experience)



**Abstract  
Conceptualisation**  
(concluding / learning  
from the experience)



**Active  
Experimentation**  
(planning / trying out  
what you have learned)



# Service Learning: Research and Best Practices

- 15 CE courses
  - 14 community partners
  - 281 students
- Best practice principles for mutually beneficial, transformative service learning experiences



# Best Practice Principles: Five Outcomes

1. Community partner needs
2. Community partner benefits
3. Students' service perspective
4. Students' civic engagement
5. Students' professionalization



# #1: Align Service Learning with Partner Needs

- Not every course appropriate
- Locate partner whose mission and needs correspond to course content



# #1: Align Service Learning with Partner Needs

- 15-25 hours of service
- Strategic tool
- Intentional purpose and design
  - Course & Partner Dependent
  - Scope and Details
  - Mutual Understanding





# #2: Directly Benefit the Community Partner

- Experiential learning literature gap
- Service learning requires service
- More than applied learning



## #2: Directly Benefit the Community Partner

- Mutually beneficial & measurable
- Define and agree on goals, not just design of service learning
- Clear expectations with ongoing progress reports, evaluations, & adjustments



# #3: Develop Students' Service Perspective

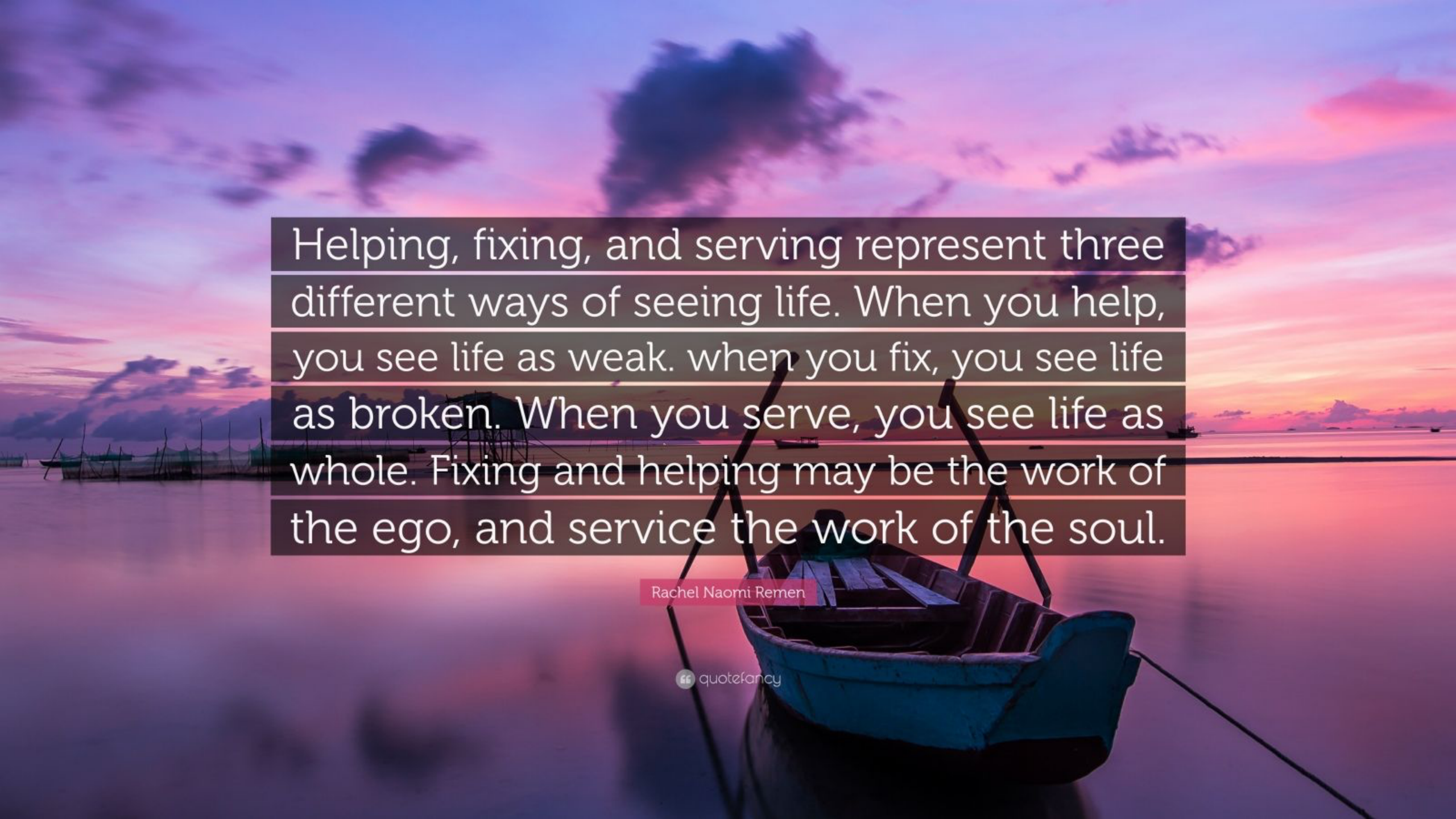
- Service learning projects serve, not fix or help, community partner
- Fixing = Broken
- Helping = Inequality



# #3: Develop Students' Service Perspective

"Fixing and helping create a distance between people, but we cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected"  
(Remen, 2007)



A serene sunset over a body of water. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, purples, and blues, with scattered clouds. In the foreground, a small wooden boat with two oars is visible, floating on the calm water. The background shows a distant shoreline with some structures and other boats.

Helping, fixing, and serving represent three different ways of seeing life. When you help, you see life as weak. when you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. Fixing and helping may be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul.

Rachel Naomi Remen

# #3: Develop Students' Service Perspective

- Fixing and helping create a sense of debt or obligation in the recipient
- Fixing and helping are draining, depleting activities



# #3: Develop Students' Service Perspective

Serving is based on a relationship among equals; each party engages in a mutually beneficial experience of mystery and surrender; instills gratitude and energy



# #3: Develop Students' Service Perspective

- Power or privilege perspective may leave partner even more damaged
- Learn to serve a cause greater than ourselves





# #3: Develop Students' Service Perspective

- Examine privileges, put aside egos and preconceived notions
- Learn and grow, understand we are all connected, appreciate that all life is sacred with inherent dignity



# #4: Develop Students' Civic Engagement

- Civic identity, commitment; appreciation for diversity
- Evaluate students' perceptions of their roles in their communities throughout course and at end



# #4: Develop Students' Civic Engagement

Require students to articulate what they learned about themselves and their commitment to continued civic engagement



# #4: Develop Students' Civic Engagement

- Student assume project ownership
- Reflect on attitudes and beliefs, expectations and experiences, and appreciation for diversity of communities & cultures



# #4: Develop Students' Civic Engagement

Develop appreciation for unearned advantages and explore what we learned from people who are different or undergoing unfamiliar experiences



# #5: Students' Professionalization

Help students understand their strengths and weaknesses, make decisions about their college studies, potential careers, and other professional goals



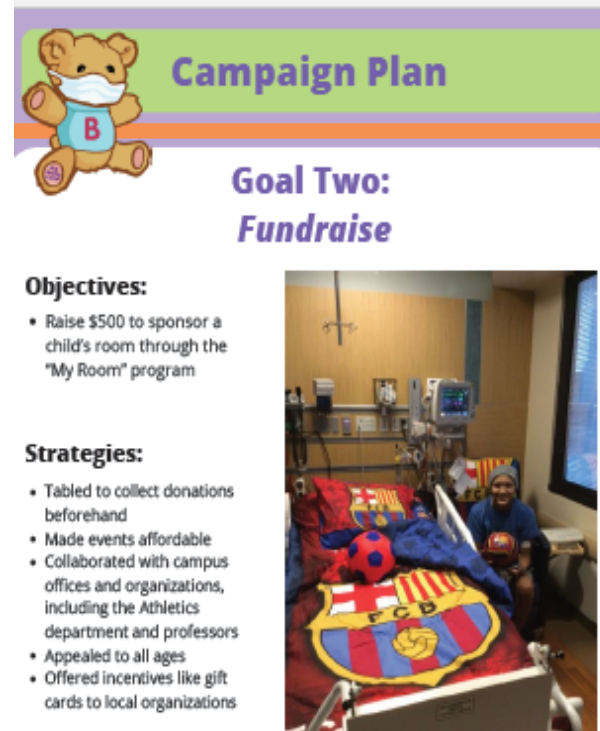
# #5: Students' Professionalization

Students rehearse and develop narratives explaining how their service learning experiences developed their professional skills



# #5: Students' Professionalization

1. Analyze and solve problems creatively
2. Work collaboratively
3. Communicate effectively
4. Adapt to new situations with ease



**Campaign Plan**

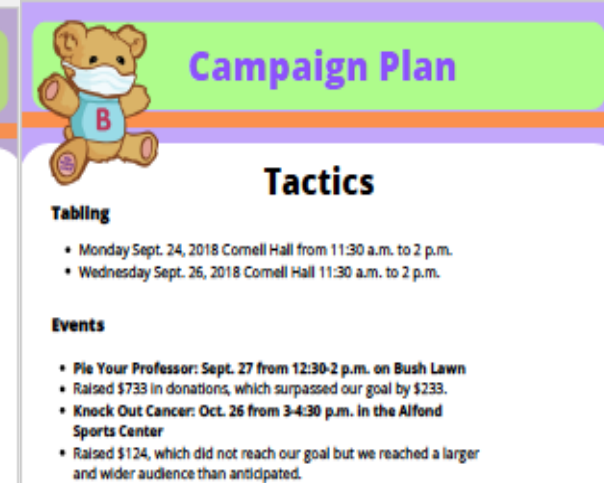

**Goal Two:  
Fundraise**

**Objectives:**

- Raise \$500 to sponsor a child's room through the "My Room" program

**Strategies:**

- Tabled to collect donations beforehand
- Made events affordable
- Collaborated with campus offices and organizations, including the Athletics department and professors
- Appealed to all ages
- Offered incentives like gift cards to local organizations



**Campaign Plan**

**Tactics**

**Tabling**

- Monday Sept. 24, 2018 Cornell Hall from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Wednesday Sept. 26, 2018 Cornell Hall 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Events**

- Pie Your Professor: Sept. 27 from 12:30-2 p.m. on Bush Lawn
- Raised \$733 in donations, which surpassed our goal by \$233.
- Knock Out Cancer: Oct. 26 from 3-4:30 p.m. in the Alfond Sports Center
- Raised \$124, which did not reach our goal but we reached a larger and wider audience than anticipated.





# #5: Students' Professionalization

Students may use service learning projects as portfolio pieces and/or discussion topics for cover letters and job interviews



# Best Practice Principles: Five Outcomes

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# References

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