



**Azusa Pacific University**  
**Center for Academic Service-learning and Research**  
**“Where the Cornerstones Connect”**

**2014-2015 Evaluation Report: Service-Learning Courses and Employability Indicators**

**Student and service-learning faculty self-reporting**

**End-of-semester service-learning evaluation survey summary**

Debra Fetterly, M.A.

Coordinator for Service-learning Research and Development

## **Executive Summary**

Our office is proud to serve as a nexus among the university’s Four Cornerstones—Christ, Scholarship, Community, and Service. Our numbers and evaluation data demonstrate significant contributions to our students, faculty, and community.

In the 2014-2015 academic year 3,758 students representing 22 departments and 182 service-learning classes/sections resulted in strengthened learning, faith, intercultural competence, and commitment to civic engagement.

It is clear that service-learning plays an important role in the employability of our graduates, and as a result, the center has been actively involved in the renewed national focus in higher education on employability. The application of classroom learning and theory to practical real-life experience that makes a difference in the community provides students with not only grades, but with a portfolio demonstrating the kinds of skills, experience, and outcomes important to employers, not to mention references and networks that can be critical in the job market.

In addition, the center has actively carried out research within APU and in the broader academic community on the quality of experiential or engaged learning through the Provost Task Force, working with the revisions in the General Education requirements to include and value service-learning, and currently through our Service-Learning Faculty Fellows, who are in the final design and implementation of measurements to ensure quality experiential learning across all levels of the university.

We are also supporting Provost Mark Stanton’s latest initiative, “Education to Vocation,” through various enhancements in our evaluation processes for students, faculty and our community partners. In each of these evaluations, which follow every service-learning program, we are including items addressing the impact of the service-learning experience as it relates to the list of skills and abilities most desired by employers of new graduates.

## Introduction to Student Data

This short report shares data from a recently added portion of the service-learning end-of-semester student evaluation, measuring student responses to fourteen attributes employers frequently cite as qualities valued in the workforce.

Students were asked to check the attributes or qualities they utilized or perceived as professional growth as a by-product of their service-learning community assignment.

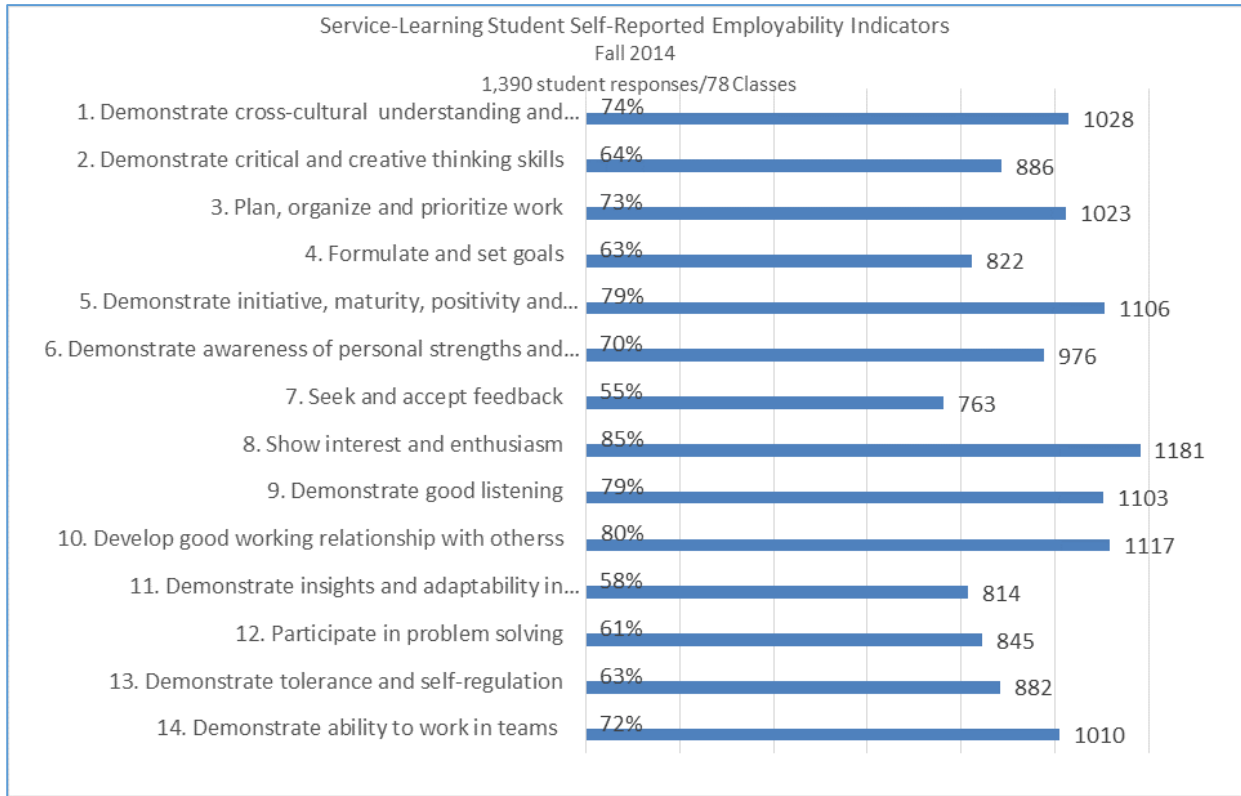
Students responded to the question:

*As you move from education to your intended vocation, which of the following list of attributes that employers are seeking were you able to demonstrate through this experience? Please check all that apply.*

*I was able to:*

- 1. Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills*
- 2. Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills*
- 3. Plan, organize and prioritize work*
- 4. Formulate and set goals*
- 5. Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability*
- 6. Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges*
- 7. Seek and accept feedback*
- 8. Show interest and enthusiasm*
- 9. Demonstrate good listening*
- 10. Develop good working relationship with others*
- 11. Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics*
- 12. Participate in problem solving*
- 13. Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulation*
- 14. Demonstrate ability to work in teams*

**Fall 2014**



Student responses appear to naturally group into two categories: 1) *Communication and Working with Others* and 2) *Setting Goals and Problem-Solving*.

Communication and Working with Others (student response)		
Employability Indicator	Number	Percentage
Show Interest and enthusiasm	1181	85%
Develop a good working relationship with others	1117	80%
Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability	1106	79%
Demonstrate good listening skills	1103	79%
Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills	1028	74%
Plan, organize and prioritize work	1023	73%

Demonstrate ability to work in teams	1010	72%
Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges	976	70%
<b>Setting Goals and Problem-Solving (student response)</b>		
Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills	886	64%
Formulate and set goals	822	63%
Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulation	882	63%
Participate in problem-solving	845	61%
Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics	814	58%
Seek and accept feedback	763	55%

### **Communication and Working with Others**

At the time of the service-learning orientation students were not coached or prepared to specifically consider how their participation in the service-learning project provided potential professional growth or contributed résumé-building measures. Student self-awareness and self-reporting is interesting in the breakdown of responses.

The four highest employability indicators were in areas where students emphasized their personal work ethic and overall enthusiasm for the service-learning participation portion of their course. The majority of students (85%) indicated *enthusiasm and interest* for the project, while 80 percent reported confidence in demonstrating a *good working relationship with others*.

Following close behind with 79 percent, students reported a positive correlation between their contributions to the service project “*demonstrating initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability*” along with “*good listening skills.*”

Students were asked to respond if they connected their service experience to “cross-cultural understanding and communication skills.” Some service-learning courses and projects directly support this objective. EDLS 405 (Diversity in the Classroom/CHAMP), UNRS 410 (Community Health Nursing), and GLBL 355 (Principles & Practice of Community Engagement/South Africa) are but three examples of courses designed to increase intercultural competency. The numbers (74%) would suggest that most of the students felt their experiences in the community gave them an opportunity to increase their capacity to effectively communicate cross-culturally.

### **Setting Goals and Problem-Solving**

Student response percentages were lower in six of the indicators. Students (64%) acknowledged using “*critical and creative thinking skills*,” followed closely by opportunities to “*formulate and set goals*” (63%). “*Tolerance and self-regulation*” (63%) also factored in as part of the goal setting process. Student response to “*Problem-solving*” (61%) perhaps reflects that not all students recognized their individual contribution to the service site. “*Insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics*” (58%) also supports the suggestion that fitting into a defined role did not relate “problem-solving”

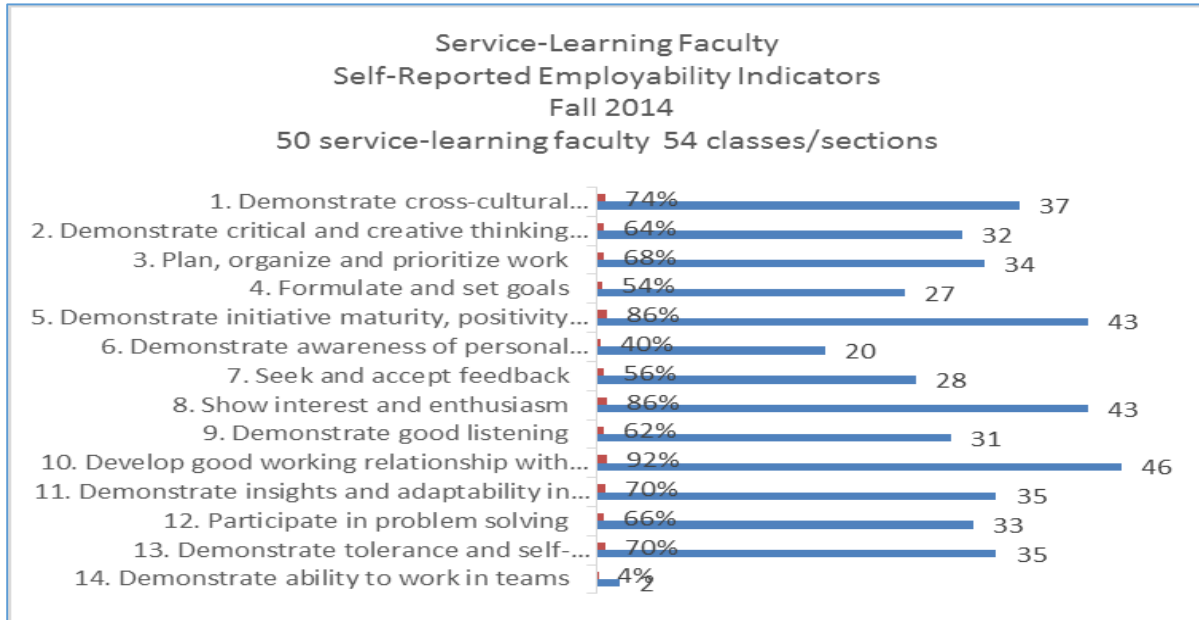
It is likely that some students did not identify *problem-solving* and *goal-setting* as skills because they were more focused on the overall objectives of the class. To accomplish the academic goals of the course the student would naturally be required to “*set goals*” and access critical and *creative thinking skills*. To participate with others, “*tolerance and self-regulation*” would be key, but it is possible that students who more naturally utilize these personal strengths do not recognize the potential for service-learning service opportunities to expand on these strengths and abilities.

In some of the courses students were assigned to groups with tasks clearly outlined and with no requirement that students contribute changes or make creative adaptations.

The employability indicator statements grouped under the heading “*Setting Goals and Problem-Solving*” may be less prominent in the students’ self-analysis due to the nature of a classroom-group activity where their autonomy is less pronounced.

The indicator receiving the least number of student responses was “*seek and accept feedback*” (55%) No information is gathered to determine how many of the students had an opportunity to directly connect with a site supervisor or if all “feedback” was tied back to the professor and the expectation of the course grade.

**Service-Learning Professor Evaluation Data**



Faculty were asked: Which of the following list of attributes that employers seek were your students able to demonstrate through this experience? Please check all that apply.

Communication and Working with Others (faculty response)		
Employability Indicator	Number	Percentage
Develop good working relationships with others	46	92%
Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability	43	86%
Show interest and enthusiasm	43	86%
Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills	37	74%
Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics	35	70%
Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulations	35	70%
Setting Goals and Problem-Solving (faculty response)		
Plan, organize and prioritize work	34	68%
Participate in problem-solving	33	66%
Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills	32	64%
Demonstrate good listening skills	31	62%
Seek and accept feedback	28	56%
Formulate and set goals	27	54%
Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges	20	40%
Demonstrate ability to work in teams	2	4%

## Communication and Working with Others

Faculty placed a high emphasis on statements supporting communication or working with others. It was interesting to note that with a change in numerical order, the top three faculty statements are the same top three indicators selected by students.

It is possible that areas of communication and cooperation were among the more easily assessed measures. Student comments and project reflection feedback provided professors with student feedback. Both the student evaluation and the professor evaluation measure perception of how well the service-learning experience supports student learning and course content.

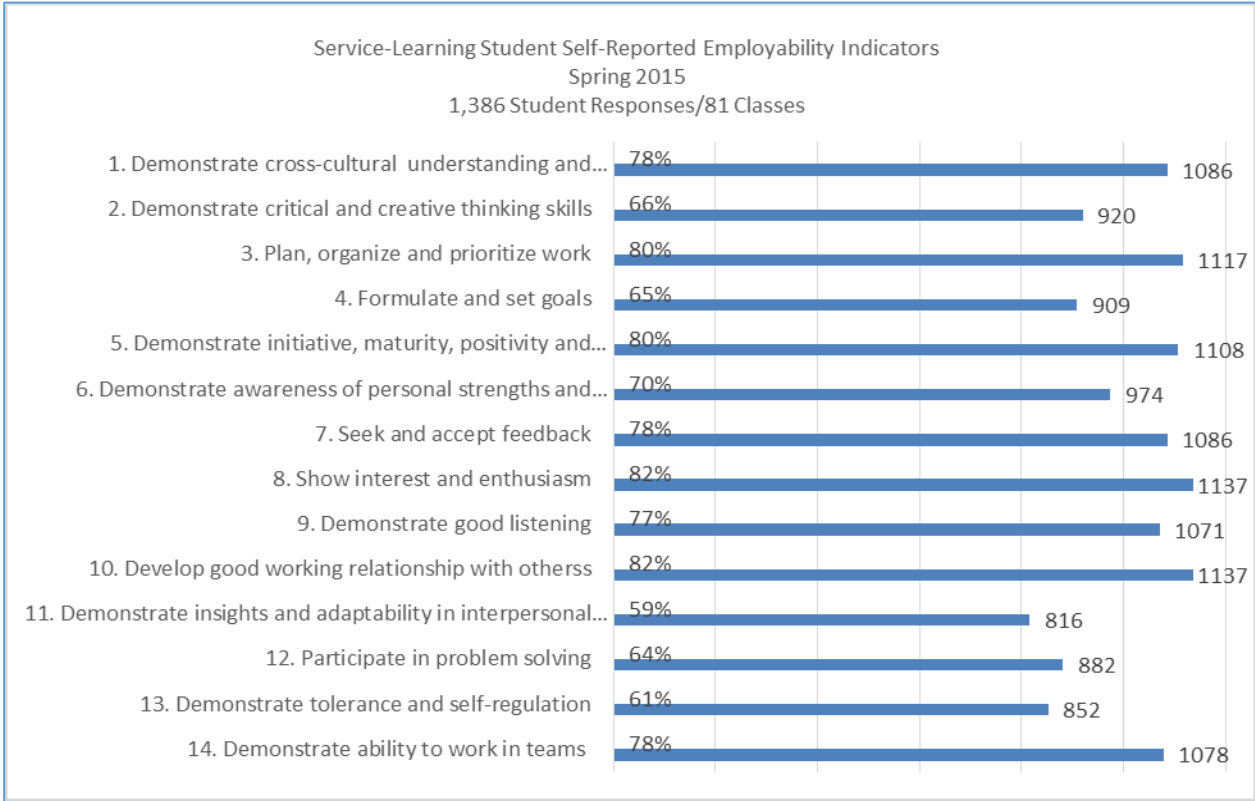
*Goal-setting* and *problem-solving* indicators were valued slightly lower; however, that may be similar to the statements previously made regarding the student assessment responses. The projects are generally well planned and not all are designed for students to make substantial changes or exhibit creativity in the execution of the service goals.

For a closer look at how students and service-learning faculty compared in their responses, the following chart may be useful.

<b>Comparison of Student and Faculty Indicator Hierarchy</b>	
<b>Student</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1) Show Interest and enthusiasm	1) Develop good working relationships with others
2) Develop a good working relationship with others	2) Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability
3) Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability	3) Show interest and enthusiasm
4) Demonstrate good listening skills	4) Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills
5) Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills	5) Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics
6) Plan, organize and prioritize work	6) Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulations
7) Demonstrate ability to work in teams	7) Plan, organize and prioritize work
8) Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges	8) Participate in problem-solving
9) Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills	9) Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills
10) Formulate and set goals	10) Demonstrate good listening skills
11) Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulation	11) Seek and Accept feedback
12) Participate in problem-solving	12) Formulate and set goals

13) Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics	13) Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges
14) Seek and accept feedback	14) Demonstrate ability to work in teams

**Spring 2015**



The following chart breaks down the student response numbers for further analysis. Student responses again, similar to the fall semester appear to naturally group into two categories: 1) *Communication and Working with Others* and 2) *Setting Goals and Problem-Solving*.

Communication and Working with Others (student response)		
Employability Indicator	Number	Percentage
Show Interest and enthusiasm	1137	82%
Develop a good working relationship with others	1137	82%



Plan, organize and prioritize work	1117	80%
Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability	1108	80%
Demonstrate ability to work in teams	1079	78%
Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills	1086	78%
Seek and accept feedback	1086	78%
Demonstrate good listening	1071	77%
Setting Goals and Problem-Solving (student response)		
Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges	974	70%
Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills	920	66%
Formulate and set goals	909	65%
Participate in problem-solving	882	64%
Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulation	852	61%
Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics	816	59%

### Communication and Working with Others

The data continue to suggest that students are first inclined to respond to the indicators that align most closely with project satisfaction, enthusiasm, and a solid working relationship with others.

The first two indicators remained at the top for the second semester. Students placed *“interest and enthusiasm”* and *“good working relationship with others”* as the top two employability indicators (78%), although *“seek and accept feedback”* and *“demonstrate cross-cultural understanding”* and *“communication”* were also tied at 78%. Seven of the most frequently chosen fall semester attributes remained in the highest percentages in the spring 2014 evaluation reporting.

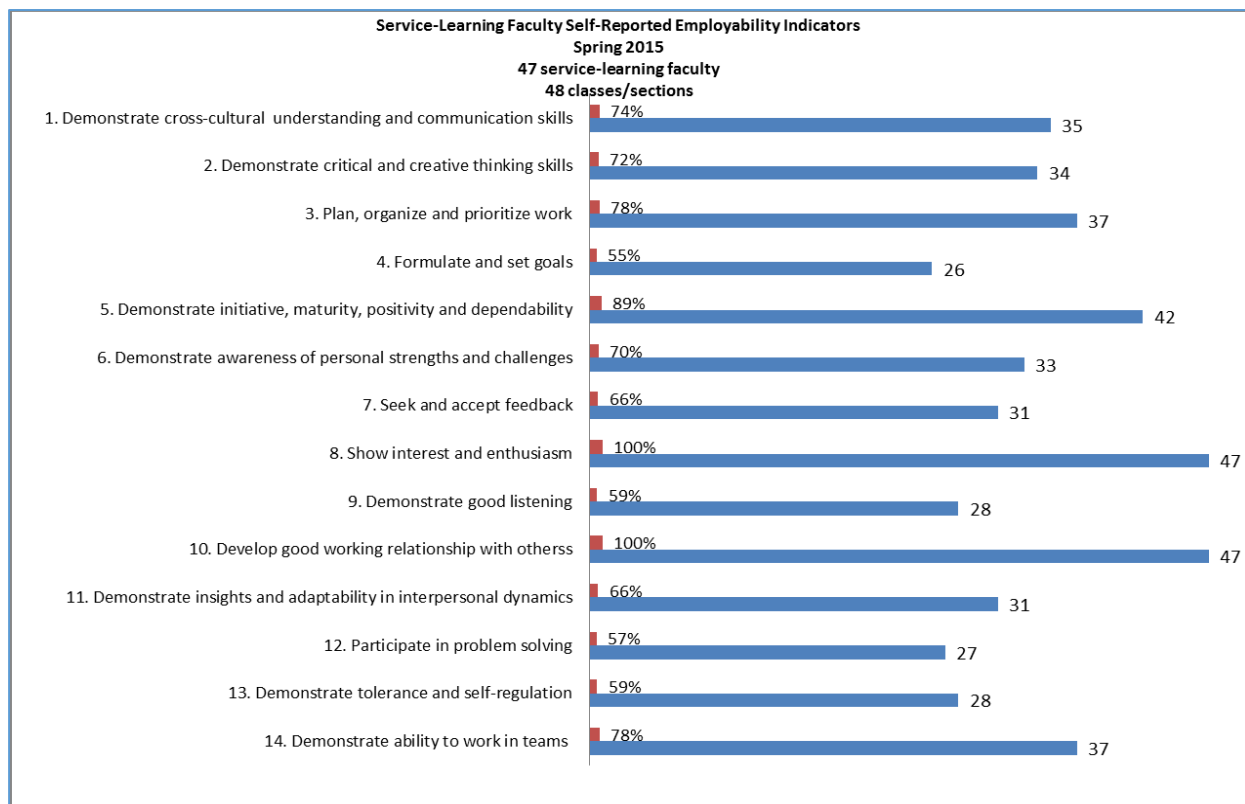
## Setting Goals and Problem-Solving

Student responses indicate they were not aware of the opportunities to “*formulate and set goals*” or “*demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills.*” As in the first semester’s responses, “*problem-solving*” was placed near the bottom position.

Since anecdotal research suggests that students are prepared to work in teams and organize as a group, it is possible the students are less aware of their individual contribution and more focused on group satisfaction. They are not sent to sties as skilled professionals, so they may not see the relationship between their team functioning and providing “*problem-solving*” assistance to the community agency site.

It would be interesting to ask more questions and to cross-reference analysis with the individual courses and service site opportunities to better understand the distribution of responses.

## Service-Learning Professor Evaluation Data



The following chart breaks down the faculty responses into the same two categories recognized as dominant in the fall 2014 student and faculty evaluations: 1) Communication and Working with Others, and 2) Setting Goals and Problem-Solving

Communication and Working with Others (faculty response)		
Employability Indicator	Number	Percentage
Develop good working relationship with others	47	100%
Show interest and enthusiasm	47	100%
Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability	42	89%
Plan, organize and prioritize work	37	78%
Demonstrate ability to work in teams	37	78%
Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills	35	74%
Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills	34	72%
Setting Goals and Problem-Solving (faculty response)		
Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges	33	70%
Seek and accept feedback	31	66%
Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics	31	66%
Demonstrate good listening skills	28	59%
Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulation	28	59%
Participate in problem-solving	27	57%
Formulate and set goals	26	55%

## Communication and Working with Others

Once again, faculty placed a higher emphasis on statements supporting communication or working with others. The top two indicators related to “*good working relationships*” and “*initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability*” were also the top two indicators in the fall semester data.

With a change in numerical order, the top six faculty statements also appeared as the six highest student rankings.

<b>Comparison of Student and Faculty Indicator Hierarchy</b>	
<b>Spring 2015</b>	
<b>Student</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
1) Show Interest and enthusiasm	1) Develop good working relationship with others
2) Develop a good working relationship with others	2) Show interest and enthusiasm
3) Plan, organize and prioritize work	3) Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability
4) Demonstrate initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability	4) Plan, organize and prioritize work
5) Demonstrate ability to work in teams	5) Demonstrate ability to work in teams
6) Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills	6) Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and communication skills
7) Seek and accept feedback	7) Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills
8) Demonstrate good listening	8) Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges
9) Demonstrate awareness of personal strengths and challenges	9) Seek and accept feedback
10) Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills	10) Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics
11) Formulate and set goals	11) Demonstrate good listening skills
12) Participate in problem-solving	12) Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulation

13) Demonstrate tolerance and self-regulation	13) Participate in problem-solving
14) Demonstrate insights and adaptability in interpersonal dynamics	14) Formulate and set goals

### Comparison in Student and Faculty Response

Once again, faculty placed a higher emphasis on statements supporting communication or working with others. The top two indicators related to “*good working relationships*” and “*initiative, maturity, positivity and dependability*” were the top two indicators in the fall semester data.

The top six of fourteen (43%) employability indicators appear in both faculty and student data. Both students and faculty recognize the development of *organizational skills*, the importance gained in *creating good working relationships with others*, and the opportunity to *strengthen cross-cultural understanding and communication skills*. *Attitude, enthusiasm and dependability*, all important workplace strengths, were high impact skills valued by students and faculty.

Students and faculty rated the remaining indicators with very different emphasis. Students placed higher priority on goal-setting and problem solving, but did not recognize “insights and adaptability” as a key strength, placing that statement at the bottom.

Faculty placed the *goal-setting* and *problem-solving*-related indicators as the very last of the fourteen.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

2014-2015 was the pilot year for the Center for Academic Service-learning and Research to gather employability indicator data.

It is early in our ability to analyze data, but by adding these items to the evaluations both faculty and students are beginning to recognize the potential in service-learning opportunities to enhance their course learning and to translate additional workplace skills to their future careers.

Each service-learning professor was provided a complete summary report of the student service-learning evaluation from their course and we will continue to provide faculty support aimed to bring the faculty and student goals and expectations closer together.

We recognize the momentum in academia to link education to vocation and believe that service-learning is a strong support in providing APU students with opportunities to hone specific skills employers will be looking for when these students graduate.

One of our undergraduate Service-Learning Advocates reported that when she administered the evaluation in one of the nursing courses a student took her camera and snapped a picture of the employability indicator list, stating, “This list is great! I have wanted a list like this to help me with my résumé.”

More information about this early data is available upon request. Contact: [dfetterly@apu.edu](mailto:dfetterly@apu.edu)