

# The Hub

your resource for academic service-learning at UMKC

**Focus on reflection.** Students in the City conceptualizes four general parts of an academic service-learning (AS-L) class: planning and preparation, implementation, reflection or synthesis, and celebration. Reflection, also known as synthesis, helps students bring together their service and academic work to create meaning. Without some sort of guided reflection, students risk losing the opportunity for the unique learning experience provided by AS-L.

Reflection can happen in the classroom as well as in the community context. If you are a community partner, guided narrative reflection can be as informal as talking to students about what they are learning in their class. That helps you learn more about what students are studying and what students can contribute to your organization through AS-L projects. It also gives students the opportunity to make connections between their academic work and their service-learning projects.

In the classroom, reflection is a vital element to successful service-learning. Logistically, it provides an opportunity to get students started on their projects. By discussing the service projects in class, any difficulties can be determined while plenty of time remains for mid-course corrections. Perhaps more importantly, guided narrative reflection helps students understand the significance of the project both personally and in terms of the academic discipline.

Because reflection is essential to AS-L, the service-learning field has developed outstanding resources, many of which are available on the Internet. If you would like to learn more about how to structure reflection, Students in the City has a section on reflection in the “Starter Kit” and Campus Compact has an outstanding website developed by two faculty scholars about reflection, <http://www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/>.

**In this issue.** For the focus on reflection issue Chad Keller and Chandra Blackwell have both written articles which share student writing about their service-learning projects. Each article presents a look in to the student’s thoughts about their experiences mid-way through the semester. Also, don’t miss the announcements for the second year of the Students in the City Faculty Fellows program and an invitation to UMKC’s Civic Leadership Day.

## MARCH 2004

### FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Community Profile:  
*Kansas City Harmony*



Course Profiles:  
*Talent Scholar Leadership Program*  
*Intercultural Communications*



Announcements



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# Kansas City Harmony

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**Mission:** Harmony is a resource and catalyst in and for the metropolitan Kansas City community to improve race relations, increase appreciation for cultural diversity, and eliminate intolerance.

By virtue of Harmony's work, the Kansas City metropolitan area will be a model community that values and respects the cultural diversity of its people, a community that strives for a high quality of life for all, and one that celebrates the uniqueness of each individual.

**Description:** This semester, UMKC Students are working on two key projects at Harmony:

- Communication Studies students are preparing a Public Relations Strategy for Harmony along with a compilation of community calendars and public service announcement contacts for Harmony's ongoing use. The students will release Harmony Week 2004 event information to the community calendars and public service outlets they have identified.
- Students in the Kansas City Economy class team are each compiling and analyzing five quantitative data sets which are important indicators to understanding racial and economic inequities across the Kansas City region. The data sets will be used in Harmony's compilation of a community tool to measure indicators of race-related inequities.

**Need:** Harmony welcomes assistance with projects in all areas of its operation.

- **HARMONY** n. | a combination of parts into a pleasing or orderly whole; congruity  
2 agreement in feeling, action, ideas, interests, ect.; peaceable or friendly relations
- **DIFFERENCE** n. | divers; give variety to; vary
- **POWER** n. | great ability to do, act or affect strongly; vigor; force; strength
- **WORK** n. | accomplishments; contributions resulting from the power of differences

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# Scholars Today, Leaders Tomorrow: The Talent Scholar Leadership Program

by Chad Keller

*Students in the City is proud to feature two academic service-learning reflection essays by UMKC Talent Scholars! Chad Keller administers the Talent Scholars Leadership Program and facilitates various leadership and educational sessions for program participants. Because of Chad's foresight and leadership, the Talent Scholars program has successfully incorporated an academic service-learning component into its curriculum.*

The Talent Scholar Leadership Program began in 1999 as an opportunity for select freshmen and sophomore students to receive a UMKC Housing Scholarship while furthering their development as student leaders by completing 340 hours of community service and professional development

activities. Since coming under the direction of the Student Life Office in 2002, the components and activities of the Talent Scholars program were revised to reflect the values and mission of the University. As part of that revision process, a service-learning component was implemented during the current academic year. One of the underlining objectives of the Talent Scholars program is to develop program participants as students and leaders, by actively engaging them in the Kansas City community. Service-learning fit quite naturally as a way to achieve this objective.

Currently, there are 23 students in the Talent Scholar program. Each student was assigned into one of six service learning teams, which are completing their service learning projects at a number of community agencies, including City Union Mission, the Ronald Mc Donald House and Youth Friends, a nationally-recognized school-based mentoring effort that connects adult volunteers with kids. As part of their projects, students engage in 20 hours of service and complete a number of guided reflection papers. These papers allow students to reflect upon their service and also provide a way for students to explore personal values, understanding of issues of diversity, and what it means to be a civically engaged college student. Two of these papers follow, and both illustrate the mutuality of the learning that often takes place in an academic service-learning partnership.

## From Youth Friends to Friendship

When I went to training for Youth Friends, I got the impression that I would be working with someone that I would have to have lots of personal talks with. It sounded like I would be working with someone who had serious problems or issues. However, soon after I met Seanisse I found out that wasn't the case. Seanisse is awesome! We both love music and we're both a little bit silly and we love to laugh. I think the most fun we have is when we're working with modeling clay or playing a game on nick.com. She's really a fast learner, too. *cont.*

## Common Types of Reflection

**Discussions:** *students integrate other perspectives, think critically about AS-L project.*

**Case studies:** *help students plan and prepare for their AS-L experiences through pre-project situation analysis.*

**Journals:** *students write about their thoughts and feelings throughout the AS-L project.*

**Structured journals:** *students write responses to a question or focus on a specific issue.*

**Presentations:** *students present in-class about service experience and have a chance to integrate field experience with the concepts and theories of the course.*

**Portfolio:** *students present evidence of learning outcomes and showcase accomplishments through writing, analysis, plans and an annotated bibliography.*

Adapted from the work of Dasaratha V. Rama, Campus Compact Engaged Scholar, available online: <http://www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/>.

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## Scholars Today, Leaders Tomorrow, *continued*

I had the challenge of teaching Seanisse fractions. I had to make up a way to help her understand, and she caught on right away! She really is very bright. Her family life seems to be good as well. Her parents are still together and she has a brother in King Middle School and a sister in college (like me). I think she's very proud of her brother because when I was walking her over to the Middle School auditorium she kept looking for him in every room so I could meet him. The other day when I was helping her with her Harriet Tubman research paper, I had to explain what slavery was. I was shocked that I had to do it, because it seems like someone would have told her before. It was a very sad, difficult thing to talk about. We decided that we were very glad things weren't that way anymore. In her paper she wrote that she wants all black and white people to be friends, just like we are. It really made the "race issue" more personal to me. I'd never given it too much thought before.

Seanisse and I have found ways to involve each other in our different interests. I've let her listen to my recent compositions, and then after that she let me listen to her favorite rap artists. Also, I let her know when I have important auditions coming up and how things at my work are going and she lets me know how her weekend went. Last weekend she got Lord of the Rings Monopoly and she beat her mother and her brother! In a few weeks I'll be going as a chaperone on her class's skiing field trip. Seanisse is so excited! Also, tomorrow is her class program performance and I'm going to see that, too. As soon as a concert gets closer, I'm going to send her family tickets to my Wind Ensemble Concerts.

Last Wednesday I sat down by Seanisse's teacher at their practice and she told me that she's seen a difference in Seanisse since I've been coming to Weeks Elementary. I think that's great, but I'm not sure what kind of a difference I'm making. It's encouraging to know I'm making a difference.

— Anna Armstrong, *Sophomore, Conservatory of Music*

### **When Difference Makes a Difference**

My group service learning project has gotten us involved in the Weeks Elementary School. I have met a little girl named Myrelia. First coming to the school was a surprise to me because I was not aware that it was a black school before going there. This did not bother me, but coming from a very small town and small high school, I was surprised with the school environment being so different than how mine was. The kids were very active; many did not pay attention, and were up and out of their seats even while the teacher was instructing.

Myrelia is a very sweet girl, and I have found that she really likes to compliment me: she likes my hair, it smells good, it is soft, and blonde; she likes to talk. She tells me a lot about her family and things that really surprise me. I have never been one that really thinks about race differences, although I might if I were a minority. Through schooling I have absorbed that all races are equal and there is no need to emphasize differences. I found that this little girl, who is the same age as my brother, thinks differently. The first day I met her she talked about me being 'white' and she 'colored'.

These experiences make a difference on how I perceive others. Maybe there really is still inequality present in this salad bowl of a country. I personally do not feel it, but I can understand now how some people could. I hope to find out more about Myrelia through the semester: her family, how she lives. I do not know if I am in any sort of position to give her help if she needs it. Hopefully I may help her just by showing that I do want to be her friend.

— Cessaries Galusha, *Freshman, Conservatory of Music*

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about the Talent  
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# Communicating Across Culture

by Chandra Blackwell

Joan Aitken, Professor of Communication Studies, already has a tough job: teaching a course that will develop in her students the skills to communicate with people immersed in cultures different from their own. What makes it even tougher is the fact that she's teaching the course online, which means that aside from an orientation session at the beginning of the semester, her students won't even get much of a chance to be in the same room with each other.

What mattered to Joan in planning her senior-level Intercultural Communications course, however, was getting her students into the same room with people outside of their cultural "comfort zone". This involved somewhat of a paradigm shift in terms of the way many people think of the term culture as it applies to social differences. For a lot of people, language (as a subset of nationality) becomes the primary signifier of a "different" culture; if you're a French-speaking Canadian looking for an experience outside your culture, then, you might seek to get to know someone born and raised in Kenya. Similarly, ideas about race often emerge in discussions about different cultures; in America, cultural diversity is often discussed in terms of skin color, even among people who speak the same language.

While all of these ideas certainly have a significant measure of truth, Joan expands the idea of cultural difference beyond these paradigms to include social, economic, gender and age factors, among others. Under this framework, two Latino people could be considered culturally "different", depending on the aforementioned factors; if one of them is a 73-year-old man who grew up in rural Kansas, and the other is a 19-year-old girl from Hyde Park, it's fair to say that they might have some challenges in communication and mutual understanding.

This is where Joan comes in (assuming that either the 73-year-old man or the 19-year-old girl is enrolled in her class, that is). Her objective is to get her students to recognize and develop the interpersonal skills that will allow them to communicate effectively with people outside of their respective cultural experiences, and what better way is there to achieve such an objective than through an academic service-learning project? Through partnerships with Genesis School, Inc. and J.S. Chick Elementary School, Joan's students are expanding their abilities to communicate and develop relationships with groups of people outside of their normal realm of social interaction.

Genesis School, Inc., an alternative middle school, focuses on dropout prevention, community service, and the arts. It boasts the Jali Kunda African drummers and dancers, a group of Genesis student performers who awe crowds with their talent. The Genesis School Project utilizes Joan's Intercultural Communications students in a health-related endeavor. The students are revamping the presentation materials currently used for health education at Genesis to make them more palatable for Genesis students (the current materials lack cultural relevance for this particular audience), presenting the revamped materials to groups of students, and engaging the students in discussion of health issues.

J.S. Chick Elementary, an Afro-centric public school, immerses students in an African-centered curriculum, which focuses on the "social, historical, cultural, and spiritual development of people of African descent" and emphasizes "expansion of those roots to meet the needs and demands of today's reality." In cooperation with the Youth Friends organization, the Intercultural Communications students undertaking academic service-learning projects at the Chick school are involved in tutoring Chick students, and in assisting Chick instructors with class activities.

# Communicating Across Cultures, *continued*

By connecting on an interpersonal level with the students of these two schools, Joan's students have the opportunity to come out of this experience having developed both relationships and communications skills with people of diverse backgrounds. What is often most interesting about any service learning experience, however, is not just the end of the road, but the road itself, and the ways in which the perspectives of UMKC students can change throughout the semester as academic service-learning projects progress.

To this end, let's examine some of the initial comments made (via Blackboard) by Joan's Intercultural Communications students about their first impressions of their experiences at Genesis and Chick:

## **In the Beginning . . .**

*"Steve and I walked into the gymnasium at Genesis yesterday to complete chaos. I was a bit intimidated, but the next class arrived in a much calmer state. A lot of the students were really nice."*

— Alicia, Genesis School Project

*"At first it was extremely intimidating. I can't wait until next Monday-we have some games planned for the kids- and I hope I get to interact one on one with a few more kids during free time."*

— Stephen, Genesis School Project

*"After meeting with Karen Grover and Ann Cunningham last week for the Service Learning Project, I am very excited to work with the students. I believe this is going to be an excellent experience. The school atmosphere is wonderful within itself"*

— Kelli, Chick School Project

*"I got in touch with Ms. Cunningham last week. She told me that the tutoring sessions are from 2:00-3:00. I am meeting with her next Wednesday. She is placing me with a 3rd grade class. I am really excited to meet with the teacher and the students. I think this is going to be a great experience for us and these children. I can't wait."*

— Cara, Chick School Project

## **The Projects Progress . . .**

*"Stephen and I had an interesting experience at the Genesis school today. The front doors are locked at all times, and the students are not allowed to open their classroom doors due to safety reasons. It will definitely be a cultural experience!"* — Alicia

*"Genesis has a very high tech security apparatus in place-we were locked down! Also, I asked, "are all the students African American?" and they said "no, we have one white girl!" I can't wait to talk to her and find out her experience as the only white child. My guess is that she has a unique perspective on being an outsider and can TRULY empathize with the struggles of her classmates."* — Stephen

*"I finally started my tutoring Tuesday the 16th. I am working in Mrs. Hooks 3rd grade class. The students were excited to see me there and the teacher said she could really use my help. I can't wait to see how my relationship develops with the students, and what we can learn from each other. This is definitely going to be an experience like no other."* — Cara

*"I too am in Ms. Hooks class and I can't even explain the feeling I have when I am there. These children have lives that are probably not the best outside of their school doors but they don't show it. The love they get from the school is so obvious through their actions and faces. Everyday the students are being taught the importance of education and most of all respecting themselves and others. It is just a great thing to experience throughout my week."* — Kelli

*continued*

# Communicating Across Cultures, *continued*

## Relationships Are Forming ...

*"I had a blast! The class is in the gymnasium and they get free time at the end of the Health lesson. We covered the five benefits of exercise. One of them is healthy joints. Every class when asked if they knew what a joint was (by the teacher-not me or Alicia) they all responded-"Yea, you smoke it!" Also, in free time-4 African American boys in the 7th grade tumbled instead of playing basketball. I was a gymnast for 8 years and got to show them a few tricks. One kid asked me to do "two no's" I said I didn't know what that was and he explained-2 no handed back flips in a row. Different language-I would have called it 2 whip-backs!"*

— Stephen

*"When I had to leave, all the kids came up to me and wanted hugs. Karen Grover told me that side hugs were appropriate or a hand shake. But I felt that these kids looked up to me. I wanted to hug them like they wanted me to. Mrs. Hooks even hugged me when I came in. This school really does appreciate our help. Everybody there is so nice and caring. I can't wait to get to know my students better . . . . Every time I arrive and leave I get a hug from every single student in the class. Maybe they just show that they are happy to see you that way and I hope that is all it is. I have also had many of my students ask me if I can be their "school momma." I'm not really sure what this really means. I think all of the kids are great. I am beginning to form bonds with many of them."*

— Cara

## How Will It End?

Stay tuned to the next issue of The HUB to see how the relationships that are forming between Joan Aitken's Intercultural Communications students and the students at the Genesis School and the Chick School continue to foster communication and education on both ends of the academic service-learning spectrum.

**umkc**  
**civic leadership day**

Wednesday, April 14, 2004  
12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**A Leadership Forum for Students, Faculty and Community Organizations**

Get a chance to engage in the lively panel discussion, attend workshops and meet various speakers and civic organization representatives.

Visit [www.centerforthecity.umkc.edu](http://www.centerforthecity.umkc.edu) for more information and complete workshop descriptions.

Hosted by The University Associates and The Center for the City/Students in the City at UMKC.

To enroll, please call  
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# UMKC Faculty: Apply Now to be a Students in the City Faculty Fellow

The Faculty Fellows program provides support to faculty (full-time, part-time, instructor or adjunct) to redesign their syllabi and courses to incorporate an academic service-learning (AS-L) model. SITC Faculty Fellows commit to teach at least one course with an AS-L component. Faculty Fellows receive a \$1500 award as well as technical assistance and peer mentoring. Faculty Fellows will contribute to the implementation of Students in the City through their engagement in compelling and stimulating AS-L experiences, and by disseminating that knowledge to their colleagues.

**Applications due April 5, 2004.** For an application, contact Alexis Petri.

## Commitments include:

- Design or redesign at least one course to incorporate AS-L experiences for students that are compelling and stimulating and that meet both community priorities and course learning objectives
- Partner with a community-based organization that serves residents of urban-core Jackson or Wyandotte counties
- Implement an academic service-learning in at least one course
- Participate in academic service-learning evaluation through grant period (evaluation likely to involve a post-survey for students in AS-L course and for students in a course without an AS-L component)
- Mentor second group of Faculty Fellows and/or hold a round-table discussion about AS-L for faculty, students, or community members
- Provide summary report that could include a sample of students' written reflection

## CITY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

**Learn, serve and earn credit toward your degree!**

Volunteer internships are available to upper-class and graduate students in all majors who want to spend 10 to 20 hours per week during the semester gaining valuable experience in a professional city government environment as they fulfill essential duties to maintain Kansas City, Missouri's level of services to citizens.

### HOW TO APPLY:

Contact Alexis Petri at The Center for the City at (816)235-6360 or [petria@umkc.edu](mailto:petria@umkc.edu) or contact your department's intern coordinator or sponsoring faculty member to learn more about how to earn credit for your internship.

**KCMO Needs U! UMKC**



### APPLICATION DEADLINES

#### SUMMER INTERNSHIPS:

April 1, 2004

#### FALL INTERNSHIPS:

July 1, 2004

Visit The Center for the City's website for an application:  
[www.umkc.edu/centerforthecity](http://www.umkc.edu/centerforthecity)

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