

# Panel on service-learning practitioners navigating partnerships, research, and funding

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**Abstract**— Service-learning (SL) requires practitioners and researchers to build long-term relationships with institutions of higher education, community organizations, and funding agencies. This often requires managing complex needs and developing the skill set to address issues as they arise. This session intends to bring dialog to the integration of service learning in courses, developing partnerships, conducting research and securing funding. The panel will draw upon personal experiences as service-learning practitioners and researchers, and provide an opportunity for reflection and dialog amongst participants.

**Keywords**—service-learning, community partnerships, dialog

## I. INTRODUCTION: GOALS OF THE PANEL

Service-learning (SL) is recognized by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU) as a high-impact practice, a teaching practice that is been extensively researched and shown to be beneficial to a diverse ray of students, where students apply their curricula knowledge to support learning and the community [1].

SL thrives in an educational environment where the process requires that engineering educators interact with many constituents while building relationships within the university and communities. Each interaction must navigate varied stakeholder expectations and may have unclear resolutions. As a result, SL educators are often faced with personal and professional growth as they navigate community, student learning, funding agencies, donors, and their own academic institutions. These challenges may seem onerous for some, but the payout for the practitioners, students, universities, and the community can be significant and meaningful. Additionally, SL can provide a path to recruit and retain women and minority students in engineering [2], integrate ABET outcomes [3], enrich technical knowledge [4], while enhancing student commitment as citizens [5].

Our aim for this panel is to create a dialog of how SL practitioners, researchers, and those interested in SL navigate and increase their capacity in terms of:

- (1) teaching in SL
- (2) developing partnerships,
- (3) conducting research, and
- (4) establishing funding.

## II. PANEL SESSION OVERVIEW

Anchored in these four objectives, the panel session will begin by exploring the narratives of the panelists' own journeys into integrating teaching, partnerships, research, and funding into their service-learning efforts. Each panelist will focus on the assets of the unique institutional contexts that are represented while also reflecting on moments of tension in his or her respective setting. Following this, audience members of the session will have opportunity to individually reflect on their own experiences with promoting service-learning efforts at their respective institutions. The session will conclude by the panelists co-constructing practical lessons learned with the audience members.

A timeline for the 90-minute panel session is described below:

- 0:00 - 0:05 – Introduction of panelists.
- 0:05 - 0:20 – Reflective account on integrating research and community partnerships (Julia Thompson)
- 0:20 - 0:35 – Reflective account on connecting the practice of service-learning to core forms of personal identity (James Huff)
- 0:35 - 0:50 – Reflective account of developing a robust infrastructure for sustainable community partnerships (Andrew Pierce)
- 0:50 – 1:00 – Prompted for individual reflection within the audience. What are the opportunities you have experienced with service-learning at your institution? What are the challenges?
- 1:00 – 1:15 – Audience members report out on their lessons learned.
- 1:15 – 1:25 – Group discussion on practical guidance in integration career and personal goals with the institutional contexts (Julia Thompson)
- 1:25 – 1:30 – Final remarks from panelists.

## III. PANALISTS

The three panelists are from diverse geographic locations, universities, types of service-learning programs, and are involved in various roles. Their similarities include their interest and commitment to SL and familiarity with the EPICS

program in particular. This allows participants to see how service learning can be adapted for a variety of institutions and to reflect on ways that it would be appropriate for their own context. Below is a description of each of the panelists.

#### A. Julia Thompson

Dr. Julia Thompson directs the EPICS (Engineering Projects In Community Service) affiliate program at San Jose State University (EPICS@sjsu). San Jose State University is a public, Hispanic-Serving Institution with a strong history of social justice and community engagement. Dr. Thompson's dissertation research was a case study analysis of service learning programs and partnerships at three well developed programs- EPICS at Purdue, Community Playground Project at Louisiana State, and the Global Project Program at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. She investigated factors and characteristics of successful relationships between engineering service-learning programs and the communities they serve [6]. She is currently developing a motivational instrument that identifies factors of participation among administrators, faculty, and community partners [7], and investigating factors that influence student success.

#### B. James Huff

Dr. James Huff is an Assistant Professor of Engineering Education at Harding University, a Christian, teaching university. He serves as the lead investigator of the Beyond Professional Identity (BPI) Research Group, which focuses on investigations of identity and emotion in engineering and other professional contexts [8,9,10]. He also directs the EPICS affiliated program at Harding through design activity in the Introduction to Engineering course and in an upper-level service-learning elective. Dr. Huff has served as the ASEE Community Engagement Division's program chair for the 2018 conference and is serving as the Division's Vice-Chair for academic year 2018-19. Additionally, he has conducted research related to service-learning and social responsibility in engineering education [11,12]

#### C. Andrew Peirce

Mr. Andrew Pierce is an Advisor and Academic Administrator for Purdue's EPICS program [11,13]. Purdue University is a public research university located in West Lafayette, Indiana. The EPICS program enrolls more than 500 students per semester. Mr. Pierce is responsible for the academic components of the EPICS program. This includes overseeing the laboratory space, creating and teaching the professional development lecture series, and developing and executing the assessment components.

incorporating SL into their classes, integrating research into their SL work, and learning about approaches to funding.

This will provide an opportunity for participants to learn about existing approaches and reflect on personal experience and opportunities for service-learning at their own institutions. We will have flyers and present it at the EPICS booth in the exhibit hall.

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## IV. ANTICIPATED AUDIENCE

We plan that the session will be of interest for new and existing SL practitioners, especially those who are interested in