
Editor's Comments

I am excited to present to you the Winter 2011 issue of the Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences, which focuses on service-learning. Honestly, before this issue, I had never heard of the term service-learning. It is a hands-on, integrated approach to learning that connects students with their community and fosters a cooperative partnership for reciprocal learning; both the community and the student benefits.

This issue focuses on the service-learning program that is on-going at George Washington University. The first article introduces the theory and history behind service-learning, to get the reader familiar with the subject at hand. The second article illustrates a specific example of the use of service-learning in an undergraduate classroom at GWU. Finally, the third article introduces the reader to the use of service-learning internationally, emphasizing both the benefits and the challenges in implementing such a program abroad.

My hope is that this issue will familiarize you with service-learning, and perhaps inspire you to consider service-learning in your own lives as academics, scientists, and community members. While reading these articles, I was reminded of my first job after graduating from my undergraduate institution. It wasn't until I applied my training to hands-on activities (*i.e.* my first job out of college) that I really solidified my understanding of these principles. Service-learning is a means of introducing this hands-on application earlier, to enhance the student's learning experience, as well as foster a lasting relationship with community interests. Although we focus here on undergraduate and graduate applications, this is a learning technique that can be applied at any age.

Further information can be found at: George Washington University's Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service <http://www.gwu.edu/explore/campuslife/studentinvolvement/serviceengagement/servicelearning> and The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse <http://www.servicelearning.org/>

Enjoy!

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