Integrating Community Service Learning into the Murray State University Archaeology Program

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Abstract

Since 2008, Murray State University (MSU) archaeology faculty in the Geosciences Department have begun to implement community service learning into their archaeology curriculum. Community service learning allows students to take what they learn in the classroom and apply it to real-world problems while simultaneously addressing needs within their local and regional community. At MSU, service learning projects implemented in the archaeology curriculum include conducting phase I cultural resources inventories for the City of Murray, conducting geophysical exploration of unmarked cemetery graves for the City of Cadiz, and bundling human remains for reburial at Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site. This paper describes these initiatives and evaluates their positive effect on student learning, civic engagement, and community awareness; student-faculty interaction with public stakeholders; and public awareness and perception of archaeological resources.

Introduction

Community Service Learning (CSL) is defined as "an educational activity, program, or curriculum that seeks to promote student learning through experiences associated with…community service" (Schine 1997:vii-iv). Among the expected outcomes of CSL are service provided to a community in need, improved student learning and commitment to civic participation, and active reflection of that participation (Howard 2003:3). Most practitioners view CSL as a cooperative effort to address real-world problems via the practice of contextualized knowledge learned in the traditional classroom, with the ultimate goal being the empowerment of both students and their community partners.

Because archaeology has traditionally been an applied field, it would seem that it is ideally suited to integrating service learning into what is already an experientially learned field. And yet, as Nassaney (2010) has recently noted, archaeological pedagogy has changed little since the 1960s. Such stasis is surprising given some of the significant changes that the field has undergone since this time, including influential preservation legislation such as the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), widespread growth in the nonacademic sector of cultural resource management, and the emergence of public archaeology programs.

The need for pedagogical reform within the discipline has received significant attention in the last decade. Fagan (2002:258) has argued that it is no longer acceptable "for an archaeologist to be trained in purely academic and fieldwork skills." In *Teaching Archaeology in the Twenty-first Century*, Bender and Smith (2000) called for professional archaeologists to reevaluate the college curriculum in which we train students to enter the profession. The volume offers numerous avenues for redirecting curricula, but despite archaeology's natural fit, CSL is not among them. Nassaney and Levine's (2010) recent volume *Archaeology and Community Service Learning* seeks to remedy this oversight and provides numerous case studies detailing both the benefits and the challenges to integrating service learning in

archaeological curricula. This paper seeks to add to the emerging literature on this topic by presenting three cases studies undertaken by the archaeology faculty at Murray State University.

The case studies vary widely in their scope and context, but all fit nicely into the Community Service Learning schema.

Background—the origins of Service Learning in American Collegiate Curricula

While the roots of modern service learning can be traced back to the heightened civic consciousness associated with the Civil Rights and Anti-war movements of the 1960s, Community Service Learning as an educational initiative has, for the most part, only been institutionalized since the 1980s (Nassaney 2010; McLaughlin 2010; Shackel 2010). Since then, administrators have encouraged the development of service learning curricula at both small liberal arts colleges and large state universities. Today, the precedent for CSL is well enough established that offices and centers dedicated solely to CSL have been created at many institutions. These offices offer assistance to faculty in developing community service options, identifying community partners, and establishing a project. At Murray State University (MSU), the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement (SLCE), operated by the MSU Regional Outreach program, fulfills these roles (MSU 2010). In addition to providing logistical support, the office maintains a Blackboard site that links faculty to national CSL resources and provides curriculum tools such as syllabus templates and guidelines for developing service-learning based courses. MSU's support for service learning also includes sponsoring a "Service Learning Mentor of the Year" award, as well as a Service Learning certificate for students completing 12 or more credit hours in courses with service learning designations.

While the logistical and pedagogical support of a university-sponsored office is helpful, we want to emphasize that it is not essential for creating or conducting a CSL project. Only one of the examples discussed below (ARC 350) has an official MSU Service Learning designation and involved collaboration with the SLCE. A second example (ARC 556) is not designated as a Service Learning course at MSU, but because the class is focused on teaching students how to use geophysical equipment, it simply makes sense to conduct fieldwork as part of the course requirements. In this case, the instructor (Ortmann) did not have to seek out a community partner. Rather, the community approached him with a need that happened to correspond with the timing of the class. Our third case study involves service learning that is not part of a course at all, but rather volunteer work by student members of the Geosciences Club. (At MSU, the archaeology program is subsumed within the Geosciences Department. Students seeking employment in archaeological professions select to major in the Geoarchaeology option. The Geosciences Club consists of Geoarchaeology students as well as students majoring in other options.) We believe that the variety of projects presented here will demonstrate the diverse forms that CSL can take in university education in general, and archaeological education in particular.

MSU Service Learning Projects

Phase I Archaeological Surveys for the City of Murray and Calloway County Residents

ARC 350, Public Archaeology, has been a designated service learning course at Murray State University since 2008. Originally titled "Contract Archaeology," the course was reorganized and re-titled as "Public Archaeology" to emphasize that all modern

cultural resource management work derives from legislation rooted in the idea that cultural resources are public resources and that CRM can play a crucial role in increasing public understanding of, and stewardship for, these cultural resources. To this end, the course is

centered on a Phase I archaeological survey in which the students participate cooperatively in the entire project, beginning with the development of a scope of work and budget; to the background review, site check, field work, map preparation, artifact analysis; and ending with preparation of a state site form and a technical report of investigations submitted to the Office of State Archaeology (OSA) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), respectively. There is very little traditional lecturing involved since the course is hands-on and requires group work for most of the semester, in addition to several weekends of

fieldwork. At each stage of the survey, class discussion and short lectures provide students with background in cultural resource legislation; the Section 106 review process; procedural elements of a Phase I survey; and, last, but definitely not least, engaging the public and other relevant communities.

In 2008, the lead author and six students in the ARC 350 course undertook a Phase I survey for a parcel of land owned by the City of Murray that was under consideration for development of a fire sub-station (Homsey et al. 2008) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. North-facing view of 2008 Phase I survey project area (a), view of feature #1 in project area (b), ARC 350 student recording shovel test pit (c), and several members of the ARC 350 class (d).

Because they received a federal grant to develop the sub-station, the City was required to conduct a cultural resource assessment. The City contacted the archaeology faculty at MSU to inquire about contracting for these services. Fortuitously, the request came at the start of a semester in which ARC 350 was being taught;

the City readily agreed to allow the ARC 350 class to conduct the survey as a service project rather than as a traditional consulting contract. During the survey, we identified features representing several structures and a light scatter of modern brick and whiteware (Homsey et al. 2008). Surprisingly, we could find no record of

a structure, either through a deed search at the Calloway County Courthouse property office, or through a review of available aerial photography. As a result, students interviewed numerous community stakeholders including members of the Fire Company and local residents in an attempt to identify and date the structures. (Interviews with local residents eventually determined that these were ephemeral structures in existence for only two-three years and constructed sometime after 1960, making them too young to constitute a historic property and therefore ineligible for the NRHP [Homsey et al. 2008].) This process was infinitely more valuable to the students than a traditional lecture in which they are passively told that Phase I projects can quickly become complicated and even multidisciplinary. For their final project in the course, students worked as a team to submit a technical report of investigations to the SHPO (Homsey et al. 2008) and to present a poster at Murray State University's annual Scholar's Week event (Figure 2).

In 2010, the ARC 350 class again worked with the City of Murray to survey a second parcel of land also under consideration for the same fire sub-station discussed above (Homsey et al. 2010). While the students worked on this project, a call came in from the owner of a local private golf course who had inadvertently encountered cultural materials while renovating one of the holes. While the land was privately owned and therefore did not require a federally mandated cultural resource assessment, the owner asked us to evaluate the construction area because his family had lived on the land for generations. He happily agreed to allow the students to work on it as part of their service learning effort. He was particularly interested in the artifacts, as his family's oral history told of a homestead on the far edge of the golf course. But because no structure remained, many in his family dismissed the claim. The results of a surface collection confirmed the presence of a domestic homestead, as well as an underlying prehistoric lithic scatter.

This project allowed the students to compare and contrast federally mandated projects to non-mandated projects. Even more importantly, it allowed students to interact with and educate the public, not just in the history of a single family, but also on the prehistory of the region. The family appeared astonished to learn that "real Indians" (the family's term) once lived in the area. While this reaction was somewhat amusing to our class, it highlighted the need to educate the public about the human past. The land owner graciously donated the recovered artifacts to MSU to use as an educational collection and asked that we conduct additional archaeological survey when the family continues renovation of the adjacent portions of the golf course. Even more satisfying, the family is now considering recording the site with OSA by filing a state site form, despite initial hesitation to do so for the mistaken fear of losing their family business. As in 2008, students worked together to submit a letter report to the family and present a poster at the 2010 MSU Scholar's Week (Figure 3).

Geophysical Evaluation of the City of Cadiz East End Cemetery

In 2007 the MSU Department of Geosciences purchased a magnetic gradiometer and a ground penetrating radar (GPR) unit for use as research and teaching instruments. In an effort to incorporate these instruments into the teaching curriculum at MSU, an existing course focusing on the application of remote sensing techniques in archaeological research (ARC 556) was restructured to focus exclusively on the application of geophysical surveying in archaeology. The increasing application of specialized methods in archaeological research, such as geophysical surveying, has stimulated a need to provide students with the knowledge and skills to understand these complex techniques and to learn to apply them appropriately. As a result, ARC 556 was restructured to provide students an understanding of the physical principles on which geophysical surveying instruments operate, as well as hands-on training conducting geophysical surveys and interpreting the resulting data.

In 2010, members of the Cadiz (Kentucky) Renaissance on Main program along with Cadiz Mayor Lyn Bailey contacted the MSU Department of Geosciences and offered to contract the university to conduct a ground penetrating radar survey at the city's East End Cemetery. The City of Cadiz sought to identify the locations of possible unmarked graves so that a permanent monument could be erected to memorialize them. Their historical research on East End Cemetery revealed the names of at least 45 individuals who were buried in the cemetery but whose grave markers were lost, moved, or never emplaced. Some of these burials date as early as the mid-19th century. Rather than contracting MSU to conduct the survey, the members of the Cadiz Renaissance on Main program agreed to allow students enrolled in the geophysical surveying course to conduct the research as part of a service project (Ortmann 2010).

East End Cemetery in Cadiz covers an area of approximately 4.5 hectares. Near the center of the cemetery are several areas that are nearly devoid of grave markers. In consultation with members of the Cadiz Renaissance on Main program, Ortmann and his students selected two separate areas for ground penetrating radar surveying. The lack of grave markers, coupled with the central location of the plots, suggested these areas held the highest probability of containing unmarked graves.

Reburial of Human Remains at Wickliffe Mounds

The Geosciences (GSC) Club is a student organization open to all students interested in the varied subjects taught in MSU's Geosciences Department. Since August, 2009, GSC Club students have been involved in preparing human remains from the Mississippi-period (ca. AD 1100-1350) Wickliffe Mounds site (15Ba4) for on-site reburial (Figure 5; see also Figure 3).

The Wickliffe site was first excavated in the 1930s by an amateur archaeologist, Fain W.

Under Ortmann's supervision, the ARC 556 students surveyed the two portions of the cemetery with a ground penetrating radar unit equipped with a 400 MHz antenna (Figure 4). A total of 21 potential unmarked graves were identified during the survey. The survey also revealed that the area originally presumed to have the highest probability of containing unmarked graves only contained one possible unmarked grave. The other 20 potential unmarked graves were surprisingly discovered in a portion of the survey area that was situated along the upper slope of a steep hill, and was originally considered to have a lower probability of containing unmarked graves. After the survey was completed, the students processed and analyzed the data and helped prepare the final report in consultation with the course instructor. The final report was then submitted to the city of Cadiz and members of the Cadiz Renaissance on Main program (Ortmann 2010).

This project provided students with a better understanding of geophysical surveying in particular and public archaeology in general. It afforded students the opportunity to collect and analyze geophysical data and to present these data to non-specialists. Through this valuable learning experience, the students provided a beneficial service to a local community.

King, in order to create a tourist attraction. (For a detailed account and background on Wickliffe research, see Wesler [2001]). King uncovered a large portion of a cemetery, built a shelter over the exposed remains as the centerpiece of his tourist attraction, and also excavated human remains in other parts of the site. When MSU accepted the site as a donation in 1983, creating the Wickliffe Mounds Research Center (WMRC), the exposed cemetery apparently had changed little since King's time.

Figure 4. Field images of ARC 556 students surveying the Cadiz East End Cemetery.
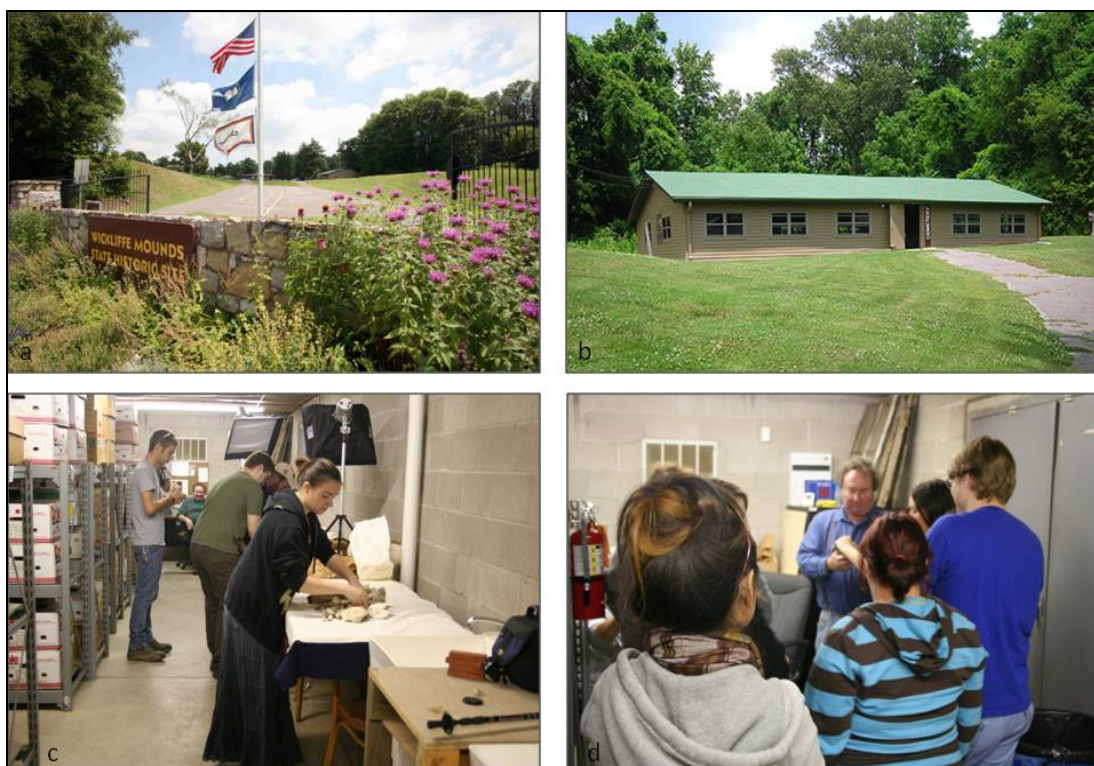

Figure 5. Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site (a), former cemetery exhibit building and present reburial site of the 1930s King and 1980s-2000s WMRC excavations (b), MSU students bundling burials (c); and Dr. Robert Corruccini (SIU) speaking to SIU, SEMO, and MSU students (d).

WMRC researchers, however, realized quickly that King's ostensibly in-situ cemetery was in fact partly staged. As efforts to document the site and cemetery continued through the 1980s and 1990s, the WMRC engaged in discussions with representatives of a number of Native American groups about the ethics of displaying human remains and the violation of Native Americans' traditional respect for their ancestors. Although the Mississippian occupants of the Wickliffe site cannot be traced to a known group of descendants, the WMRC agreed that these medieval-period ancestors should be treated with more respect, and that all human remains should be removed from public display.

By the mid-1990s, several developments had affected the situation. NAGPRA had become law. Hugh Matternes (2000) had completed an analysis of the human remains removed from the cemetery. The WMRC had agreed that the ultimate disposition of the human remains should be reburial on site, and had established a policy of documentation without removal of additional burials discovered through ongoing research. The Intertribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma had designated the Chickasaw as the lead tribe for consultation about reburial, because the Chickasaw were the last recognized claimants to far western Kentucky when the United States acquired the land in the Jackson Purchase of 1818. There, however, progress towards reburial stalled.

In 2004, the Wickliffe site changed ownership again, becoming the Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site (WMSHS). Kentucky State Parks leaders agreed to honor the WMRC promise to rebury the Wickliffe ancestors. They renewed consultation with the Chickasaw Nation, whose representatives agreed that reburial on site would be appropriate and also would avoid the question of repatriation, since no individuals would be removed from the grounds where their families had interred them.

WMSHS and the Chickasaw Nation jointly asked the help of the MSU archaeology program to prepare the ancestral remains for reburial. During the fall and spring semesters from August 2009 until November 2011, GSC Club members devoted one Saturday per month to preparing the Wickliffe human remains for reburial (Figure 5b, c, d). Student volunteers from Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO), organized by Dr. Carol Morrow, and doctoral students in biological anthropology from Southern Illinois University (SIU), under the direction of Dr. Robert Corruccini, also travelled to Wickliffe to help.

Following a protocol established in consultation with Chickasaw Nation representatives, each set of remains (identified by burial number or other provenience such as feature or square-and-level) was arranged on a cotton cloth and photographed. The participants verified or corrected the counts of specimens from the collection catalogue, and recorded age, sex, MNI and other data (e.g., evidence of trauma). Each set of remains was then bundled in unbleached muslin and tied with cotton string. Each bundle contained a plastic tag recording the burial number or other provenience, and each was labeled with ink on the outside of the bundle.

The bundled remains formed two groups, those from the cemetery and those from elsewhere on the site. Remains from both the 1930s King and the 1980s-2000s WMRC excavations were included. In June, 2011, the Mound C cemetery remains were reburied under the supervision of Chickasaw Nation representatives. Each bundle was placed as close as possible to its original location as documented in WMRC

excavation records. The WMSHS removed the former exhibit building and restored the mound. Parks personnel, Chickasaw Nation representatives, volunteers and students completed the reburial of the second group of remains (those from elsewhere on the site) in a previously-excavated area in late February, 2012. Representatives of the Kentucky Heritage Council observed both events, and both were conducted under permit from the Office of State Archaeology.

A total of 33 volunteers dedicated more than 900 person-hours to this project. MSU students have the satisfaction of knowing that they contributed to the resolution of a situation created nearly 80 years ago, in a time when archaeological ethics and practice were quite different from today. They helped to resolve a conflict between Native American and archaeological perspectives about the relationship of the present to the past, and to reconcile the principles of anthropology, which puts the people we study first, and archaeology, which puts sites and collections first. They aided the WMSHS's responsible management of the Wickliffe site in a way that will contribute to public education about Native Americans and archaeology for the foreseeable future as the park develops interpretation of the changed exhibits and landscape for visitors. They helped the Chickasaw Nation fulfill obligations of respect to the ancestors. They learned first-hand that archaeology is both scientific and humanistic.

Discussion

In all three of the CSL projects described above, students actively collaborated with their teachers, each other, and community members within the project frameworks. Such collaborative research raised important ethical issues pertaining to representation, ownership, preservation, and stewardship (Nassaney 2010). In a traditional classroom such ethical issues can be raised, but learning shifts from passive to active when students discover these issues themselves through the course of their engagement in various aspects of the project and their interaction with community members. As Nassaney (2010:16) notes, students are challenged to think about why sites are threatened, how sites can be protected, and whose stories get preserved in the process. The collaborative nature of CSL fundamentally alters the traditional teacher-student relationship since emphasis is shifted from passive teaching to active learning. It also allows students to realize that learning occurs not just in the classroom from a teacher, but in the real world from non-academics including local landowners, residents, municipal leaders and workers, and indigenous communities, to name a few.

The development of a designated Service Learning course or a CSL project, while clearly beneficial to students and communities, is not without its challenges. A CSL project requires, first and foremost, a commitment of time and energy from both students and faculty. Since these projects typically involve fieldwork, data analysis, and engagement with community members, a large portion of the work must be conducted outside of the classroom. A second challenge for CSL projects occurring as part of a university course is that the instructor must be able to change the project as unanticipated circumstances dictate; the course cannot be planned or structured in any great detail but rather must be fluid in order to adapt to the nature of the project.

Another barrier to developing such courses is that the academic rewards of tenure and promotion are often based primarily on research and publication rather

than on innovative teaching and community service (Baugher 2010; Nyden 2003). It is important to note that research and service learning need not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Indeed, recent studies have shown that research, teaching, and outreach can and should be integrated (e.g., Baugher 2007, 2010; Nyden 2003; Zlotkowski 1999). Service learning is ideally suited to this integrated approach provided the community is involved in the research project from the beginning. While the case studies presented here were not specifically designed to integrate research into the project, there are many recent excellent examples in which CSL has successfully been integrated into ongoing research programs (e.g., Chilton and Hart 2010; Levine and Delle 2010; Mendoza 2010; Thacker 2010).

Despite these challenges, we feel that the benefits of CSL efforts far outweigh the difficulties in developing them. For students, applying what they are learning to a real project clearly makes them feel like emerging professionals in the discipline. Students participating in the projects described here demonstrated genuine enthusiasm for all of the activities associated with the projects. Unlike the traditional classroom, every student engaged in the project. In an attempt to quantify some of these subjective observations, students exiting ARC 350 completed an anonymous survey to rate various aspects of the course on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent) (Table 1). In response to the question "the [CSL] project enhanced student learning and interest in subject material," 100% of students responded with a 4 or a 5. In response to the question "the project helped me identify a need in the community," 100% of students responded with a 4 or a 5. These responses quantitatively confirm our observation of student behavior. From a more practical perspective, students gained confidence in field techniques and course content. In response to the questions "the

project helped me gain practical hands-on skills" and "I feel better prepared for a career in archaeology/CRM," 100% of students responded with a 4 or a 5. ARC 350 students additionally submitted a portfolio at the end of the semester, containing all their assignments pertaining to the project, their field notes, and a personal reflection essay. One student wrote: "as an undergrad, field experiences are often limited and it was valuable to [me] to handle an actual project…we were able to participate in every step of the process which gave me an idea what our future careers could possibly be like."

From a teaching point of view, being able to draw on the experiences students gain during their service learning projects helps to reinforce new concepts in subsequent classes because the students acquire new knowledge more intuitively than if they had not participated in the projects. Most importantly, these projects help to humanize the discipline. Unlike cultural anthropology students, archaeology students can only see the cultures they study through the lens of artifacts. It is easy for new archaeologists to focus solely on the artifacts, forgetting that the artifacts themselves are not people, but rather reflect a people's culture—in effect, make them real. Students participating in the Wickliffe reburial project exemplify this well; they no longer view the Wickliffe remains as faceless individuals but instead as members of a living community. Several student participants were so influenced by this experience that they have pledged to continue the project by preparing additional remains (housed at MSU) for further consultation with interested Native American representatives. Understanding why they are undertaking the project and what it means to the Native Americans descended from that community puts a human face to the remains that is not otherwise easily gained.

Table 1. Selected end-of-semester survey questions and student responses from ARC 350, Public Archaeology, course (Fall 2010).

The CSL project…	% of Students (n=6) Responding:					
	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Fair (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)	Average Rating
…enhanced student learning & interest	0	0	0	17	83	4.83
…made the class more practical and interesting	0	0	0	33	67	4.67
…helped me to identify a need in the community	0	0	0	33	67	4.67
…successfully met a community need	0	0	0	33	67	4.67
…helped me gain practical, hands-on skills	0	0	0	33	67	4.67
…better prepared me for a career in CRM and/or archaeology	0	0	0	33	67	4.67

Conclusion

The integration of CSL into traditional archaeology programs is a relatively new approach to teaching and practicing the discipline, arising, in part, as a result of changes in the discipline that have made archaeology increasingly public over the last several decades (Nassaney and Levine 2010). As the projects discussed here demonstrate, CSL has much potential for bringing students into contact with the public, including those of other cultural groups that they may not have recognized as having a vested interest in archaeological research. While the integration of such creative programs is not without challenge, the benefits to students, educators, and the community are many. Students gain valuable hands-on experience and communication skills, value their work within the broader context of our cultural heritage, and obtain a sense of civic responsibility and engagement. For faculty, CSL provides an invigorating and fluid alternative to traditional lecturing; offers an opportunity to change public understanding and misconceptions about archaeology; and allows faculty to interact with students in a non-traditional setting that—in the experience of the authors—allows them to better understand their students' strengths and weaknesses so as to better serve them in the classroom. Finally, for community members, the benefits vary depending on the type of community involved, but include establishing a dialogue between themselves and archaeologists, promoting awareness of and appreciation for cultural resources and indigenous community concerns, facilitating navigation through the admittedly complicated Section 106 process, and creating a sense of shared interest in the community. As such, Community Service Learning is essentially a cooperative educational effort in which both students and the community are empowered in a mutually beneficial partnership.

Acknowledgements

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Editor's note: This paper was accepted after Tier II review (see Author's Guidelines).