

## **Public Scholarship in Kinesiology: A Case Study on Economic Impact**

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*This case study discusses a seldom explored outcome of public scholarship in higher education: economic impact. The case study connects student field experiences and faculty scholarship to the sustainability of academic departments, providing administrative leaders with the information and tools necessary to both survive and thrive during times of economic uncertainty in higher education. The case study demonstrates the economic impact that a kinesiology program has made in the local economy and the reciprocal benefits for students and faculty. The study concludes with four principles recommended to assist departmental leaders who wish to link student and faculty inquiry with community needs, while also working toward becoming “recession proof” as universities continue to cut budgets and programs.*

Colleges and universities across the United States are facing budget cuts, shortfalls, and elimination of personnel and programs due to recent economic downturns. Administrators have been asked to reduce spending, find new and innovative sources of revenue, and make difficult decisions that impact the entire campus. While many colleges and universities have chosen to eliminate programs and resources, the need remains for departments of kinesiology across the country. As the leading experts in health and wellness, our role is vital in keeping the nation’s citizens healthy, and our services may be one way to reduce health care related costs. It has been estimated that in a business of about 1000 employees, the cost of obesity alone is approximately \$285,000 per year (Finkelstein, Fiebelkorn, & Wang, 2005). Departments of kinesiology should be engaged on the front lines of improving the quality of life in workplaces and communities.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette enrolls over 16,000 students in 10 colleges and schools, 78 undergraduate degree programs; based on a recent economic impact study, UL Lafayette had a spending impact of \$755 million in 2008. However, during the recent economic downturn, UL Lafayette was forced to cut \$4.3 million from the fiscal year budget in 2008-2009. For individual programs, such as kinesiology, mid-year cuts included a 10% reduction in all areas of the departmental budget (supplies, operating expenses, travel, etc.). UL Lafayette was fortunate in that it made no cuts to personnel, but many colleges and universities did not fare as well.

## **The Impact of Community Engagement on Student Learning**

Community engagement is an oft-used term whose definition may be slightly altered by a particular institution or foundation. In terms of university relationships to the community, Furco and Miller (2009) defined community engagement as “a responsive relationship bringing the University into mutually beneficial partnerships with place-based or area-of-interest based communities” (p. 51). In addition, it is recognized that universities have the potential to contribute significantly to the economic and cultural health of the local community (Zlotkowski, 2001). Using the knowledge and previous experiences of faculty, coupled with the workforce of students, community problem solving should be commonplace in the areas where universities are located and in disciplines like kinesiology with clear community-oriented missions.

Student citizenship in the larger community is a positive outcome of field experience, internships, and community engagement. Eyler (2002) cited several ways in which these opportunities are a factor in public, or “engaged citizenship” (p. 519), two of which are: “students develop a sense of personal efficacy and commitment” and “students develop lifelong learning and problem solving skills” (p. 519). Both of these are critical student learning outcomes in the kinesiology student community-based internship and field experience opportunities provided throughout the curriculum.

## **Collaboration between Kinesiology Departments and Community Partners**

Most kinesiology departments find it critical to utilize community mentors for student internships and field experiences. It is often through these experiences that our students are exposed to the latest technologies and innovations that our colleges and universities may not have the resources to provide. In addition, we know that due to changes in technology and global competitiveness, even our most recent graduates may already be behind in current skills and trends by the time they reach the workplace (Voorhees & Harvey, 2005). As explained by Huges and Carmichael (1998), “. . . partnerships have the potential to . . . combine the human and financial resources of a variety of funders to fulfill shared objectives” (p. 208).

Undoubtedly, the best internships and field experiences for students arise from those situations where the academic content from the university program blends seamlessly with the needs of the community partner who is supervising the practicum. As noted by Eyler (2002), these experiences can help integrate knowledge in situations where classroom learning can be both accessed and applied.

## The Relevance of Public Scholarship to Kinesiology

There is little doubt about the benefits that arise from collaboration between university programs and community employers and the exposure of students to the “world of work” (Foskett, 2005, p. 252). The role of higher education in producing an educated and viable workforce is of great interest (Horgan, 2002). However, we must be clear on the differences between “public scholarship” and the more general term “community engagement,” especially as related to outcomes and products. According to Peters, Jordan, Alter, and Bridger (2003), public scholarship incorporates students and faculty “into public space and public relationships in order to facilitate knowledge discovery, learning, and action relevant to civic issues and problems” (p. 76). Thus, in addition to addressing critical needs and issues within the community, public scholarship can be defined by the presence of outcomes that demonstrate the application, refinement, and creation of new disciplinary knowledge for our students. On the other hand, the more nebulous “community engagement” refers to those efforts where collaboration is used to serve as an impetus for policy and other fundamental changes (Fawcett et al., 1995); however, outcomes that advance both academic knowledge production and community practice are not always present.

Indeed, one of the features of relationships that support public scholarship is that there be an “identified mutual benefit” (Tett, Crowther, & O’Hara, 2003, p. 39) for both the university and the community partners involved. Collaboration is supported when both parties identify areas of “independence and interdependence”; the collaboration is agreed upon and justifiable; the partnerships are created for their “intended purposes”; and the organization is established and secure (Tett et al., 2003, p. 41). In educational settings, often the most successful collaborations occur when students have already completed core classes, and the internship or field experience is adding value to the core education (Ball, 1998).

A number of stakeholders, such as students, parents, business leaders, university faculty members, and others all influence the way in which we promote skill training and workforce development (Horgan, 2002). Specifically, for kinesiology programs, Roodhouse (2007) stated that, “health and social work figure strongly as disciplines where work based on learning and individual competence is essential” (p. 167). To accomplish this goal, it is critical that each sector, both higher education and community, be fully invested (Horgan, 2002). Given the current obesity epidemic in the United States, health care, and physical activity settings provide an excellent laboratory for students to engage in public scholarship through their field experiences and internships. Clearly, these opportunities must “benefit both the recipient and the provider” (Holland & Robinson, 2008, p. 18) and generate new understandings related

to the academic discipline, professional practice, and civic engagement within higher education.

### **Public Scholarship and Student Learning**

While the main purpose of the study described here is to demonstrate the economic benefits of community engagement, it is important to note that disciplinary and civic learning outcomes form the basis for field experiences and internships through the Department of Kinesiology. Community engagement opportunities through the Department of Kinesiology are divided into experiences categorized as Level I, Level II, and Level III experiences.

Level I opportunities engage students in observing, identifying, and describing various techniques, instructional styles, professional practices, and assessments in the field. Level II experiences require advanced skills, as students instruct individuals in certain content areas, select appropriate strategies and assessments, implement management techniques, and confer with their supervisor related to their performance in the field. Level III experiences for kinesiology majors include demonstrating knowledge, communicating clearly and articulately with families/community partners, providing feedback, and creating an environment of respect and support (College of Education, 2011).

Progressing through these various levels of opportunities allows students to “develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions” that will allow them to become master professionals (College of Education, 2011). By using three levels of experiences, with increasing degrees of community-partner interaction, students are progressing through these opportunities in a developmental method as they gain both content knowledge and maturity in these community experiences.

In addition, all community-based experiences are designed to meet the student learning outcomes from all five areas in the discipline (Athletic Training, Exercise Science, Health Promotion and Wellness, Health and Physical Education, Sports Management). Table 1 presents the specific student learning outcomes from all areas, including some of the opportunities to apply, refine, and generate new knowledge connected to each outcome.

Table 1.

*KNES Student Learning Outcomes and Public Scholarship Experiences/Products*

Program name in KNES	Student learning outcomes	Relationship to community-based experiences
<b>Athletic Training</b>		
A1	Prepare students to pass the BOC Certification Exam	Opportunity through clinical experiences to do hands-on practicals and prepare for BOC exam
A2	Develop critical thinking skills in students	Opportunity to practice in “real world” settings with guidance from a certified athletic trainer or physical therapist
A3	Develop decision making skills in students	Opportunity to practice in “real world” settings with guidance on decision making from a certified athletic trainer or physical therapist
A4	Instill the value of professionalism in students	Athletic Training students work alongside Board Certified Athletic Trainers and/or physical therapists and must adhere to professionalism standards in these experiences
A5	Develop effective communication skills in students	Athletic Training students must be able to effectively communicate with both patients and other staff personnel which is practiced daily through clinical experiences in the community
A6	Promote involvement of students in their professional associations and encourage students to be life-long learners	Students are members of the Sports Medicine Association and complete volunteer projects and community service projects
A7	Facilitate students’ efforts in securing a position in graduate school or in an athletic training setting	References from those in clinical community-based experiences assist students in obtaining either an athletic training job or entrance to graduate school

Table 1., Cont'd

Program name in KNES	Student learning outcomes	Relationship to community-based experiences
<b>Exercise Science</b>		
E1	Students will know specific knowledge in the area of Exercise Science	Knowledge is gained through community-based internships and field experiences throughout the program
E2	Students will know some specific knowledge in the area of exercise prescription	Students work with actual clients through community-based businesses and programs to gain expertise in exercise prescription
E3	Students will be able to assess blood pressure	Students routinely assess blood pressure on individuals and clients through the community-based programs in businesses in which they are placed
<b>Health Promotion and Wellness</b>		
H1	The student will be able to promote communication and advocacy for health through participation in community service and volunteer activities	Students gain valuable opportunities in various community programs and other community-based businesses in order to develop and refine skills in advocacy and communication
H2	The student will be able to exhibit the ability to be effective health educators through participation with a health promotion agency	Students participate in community-based health programming for clients in local health promotion agencies
H3	The student will be able to demonstrate the ability to plan, implement and evaluate health education strategies, interventions, and programs through participation in an internship in a health promotion agency	Students participate in community-based health programming for clients in local health promotion agencies

Table 1., Cont'd

Program name in KNES	Student learning outcomes	Relationship to community-based experiences
H4	The student will be able to demonstrate the use of technical skills to be competent in the field of health promotion and wellness through completion of a major oral presentation implementing PowerPoint and other strategies	Students gain experiences from the community-based organizations and these experiences culminate in a final project where students must present to their peers and faculty a presentation of their semester long learning
<b>Health and Physical Education</b>		
P1	Students will be able to demonstrate the physical education knowledge and disciplinary concepts related to the development of a physically educated person	Students work in local school settings, K-12, to gain knowledge regarding the Physically Educated Person
P2	Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to manage and motivate classes by creating safe learning environments, encouraging positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self motivation	Students participate in community-based health programming for clients in local health promotion agencies
P3	Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to successfully plan and deliver a lesson with developmentally appropriate instructional strategies based on state and national standards	Through daily and weekly opportunities at local K-12 schools, students plan and deliver developmentally appropriate lesson content to school children

*Table 1., Cont'd*

Program name in KNES	Student learning outcomes	Relationship to community-based experiences
<b>Sports Management</b>		
S1	The student will be able to consider behavioral aspects related to the establishing and maintaining of personal, commercial, corporate and clinical based programs	Through work with local sport agencies, students obtain knowledge related to the behavioral aspects of sports and physical activity programming
S2	The student will be able to use theoretical models of program planning to develop a comprehensive sport, personal health, commercial, corporate or clinical program	Students take theoretical models which they have learned in classes and apply them to program planning in a community-based setting
S3	The student will develop an intimate knowledge of legal liability considerations of program development	Students gain real-world experience with legal liability issues through their experiences in community settings and with the guidance of their community mentor

### **Exploring the Economic Impact of Public Scholarship**

While there are many obvious reasons to continue forming community partnerships for students in higher education, there are other implications for the university to consider. Specifically, in this time of economic uncertainty, university faculty and administrators would do well to examine how much their students are putting back into the local economy through these experiences. In the UL Lafayette Department of Kinesiology, student internships are usually unpaid positions within businesses in the local community. The purpose of this economic impact study is to provide academic departments and administrative leaders with the information and tools necessary to both survive and thrive during times of economic uncertainty in higher education. Specifically, this study demonstrates the economic impact made by a kinesiology program in the local economy, through field experiences and internships embedded in the kinesiology curriculum.

## Methodology

In order to obtain a yearly workforce development contribution of majors within the UL Lafayette Department of Kinesiology, several initial steps were completed. First, an analysis of all courses which require field experiences and/or internships was conducted for each of the five program areas within the department (Athletic Training, Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education, Health Promotion and Wellness, Sport Management). Once the courses were identified, enrollment numbers for those courses were obtained for the spring 2008 and fall 2008 semesters. Kinesiology 101 (KNES 101), a required course for all Kinesiology majors, was separated out from the analysis by major concentration to demonstrate the economic impact of this one required course. The monetary figures reported in this study are based on the 2008 federal minimum wage and Louisiana minimum wage, both of which were \$6.55 per hour.

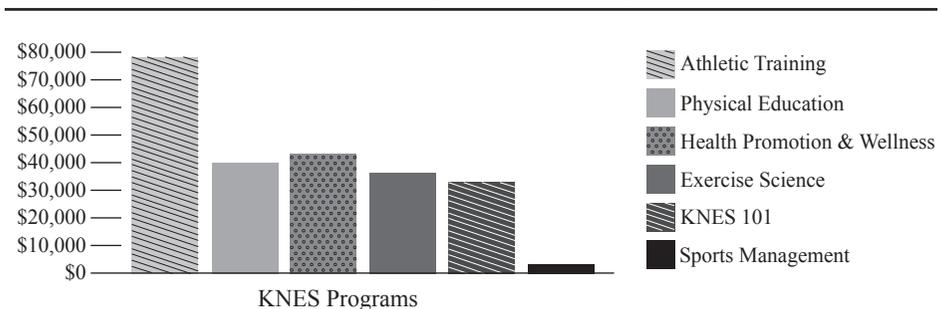
## Results

Descriptive data for all five programs in the Department of Kinesiology at the UL Lafayette are provided in Appendix A. Figure 1 illustrates the total dollar amount contributed to the local economy through kinesiology field experiences and internships.

Over the course of one academic year, students in the Department of Kinesiology at the UL Lafayette contributed back to the local community the equivalent of \$246,914.50 through various field experiences and internships. Using the minimum wage calculation, and the minimal payment possible for Teacher's Assistants (for those involved in student teaching), there is no doubt that this analysis is on the "low end" of the actual contribution. Certainly, the work in which these students were involved is likely to be beyond that of a minimum wage task.

Figure 1.

*Total Dollars into Local Economy through KNES Internships*



These estimates can also be extrapolated into the four-year contribution of students in the UL Lafayette Department of Kinesiology. Four-year estimates are reported in Table 2.

A four-year cohort of students, from all five program areas in the Department of Kinesiology, contributed over \$1 million to the local Lafayette, Louisiana, economy. Regardless of how long it takes a particular student to graduate from the Department of Kinesiology, his/her contribution to the local community, within the major, is staggering.

Table 2.

*Four-Year Contributions of Students in the Department of Kinesiology*

Program	Current number of majors	Total number of field experience hours in curriculum	Total amount
Athletic Training	122	735	\$587,338.50*
Physical Education	102	687	\$458,984.70**
Health Promotion & Wellness	44	345	\$99,429.00*
Sports Management	110	145	\$104,472.50*
Exercise Science	467	135	\$412,944.75*
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>\$1,663,169.45</b>

*\*based on federal and Louisiana minimum wage of \$6.55 per hour*

*\*\* based on federal and Louisiana minimum wage of \$6.55 per hour and Pay Grade 3 Teacher's Assistant of \$8,000 for student teaching*

## Conclusions

In times of great economic uncertainty, academic programs must be proactive in determining their contribution to the greater university community and the more global local community. Tett, Munn, Blair, Kay, Martin, I., Martin, J., and Ranson (2001) indicated that collaborative partnerships are important to add value, to address broad and multifaceted social problems, and to avoid individualism among other issues. The results of our case study indicate that through community-based field experiences and internships, one

department with 845 majors has an economic impact of almost a quarter of a million dollars in one academic year to the local economy. These experiences, no doubt, are invaluable to our students in terms of their disciplinary and civic learning outcomes, but the university and its administration would be remiss to overlook the monetary impact that these field experiences make on the local economy and businesses in our area. Selfishly, as field experience/internship supervisors, we hope these experiences lead to job opportunities for our students. However, in times of economic crisis, our students may be contributing back to the local economy on a far greater scale than anyone realizes.

This study lends credence to the necessity of conducting economic impact analyses on our college and university campuses, specifically as related to students' public scholarship contributions. However, it also requires that we go beyond the mere economic impact to further suggest ways in which our departments can become "recession proof" as universities continue to cut budgets and programs. The first recommendation, once an economic impact study has been conducted, is to ensure that both faculty members and administrators are invaluable to the mission of the department and the university. Budgetary cutbacks often necessitate the evaluation of current faculty and adjuncts. For those who are non-tenure track, this can be a time to re-evaluate teaching performance and overall contribution to the department. For those faculty members or administrators whose contribution to the department and/or college is inestimable, their positions should be safe during times of economic uncertainty.

Second, the leadership of the department must ensure that the product, both graduates and current students, are prepared to be invaluable contributors to the fields for which they are being prepared. Conducting an economic impact study is one way that administrators can ensure that they have solid data regarding not only their contribution to the local economy through internships, field experiences, and other student-related opportunities but also to the related areas of community problem solving. In addition, both students and graduates must be more than well prepared. They must have a disposition to learn beyond what they have been taught in the classroom, a passion for the civic outcomes of their field, and a skill set that will make them competitive in a market flooded with recent graduates.

Third, the department must demonstrate to others, both inside and outside of the university, that the program and students' public scholarship products have a demonstrable impact, especially on the local economy and its problems. Advocacy and publicity is the key to this principle. In times of economic hardship, when universities examine programs with low numbers in order to make tough academic decisions, the groundwork must be laid preemptively for the viability and value of a program. Publicizing "good news" from within the department, in terms of teaching, research and service is one way to

be a program of distinction on a campus. While we are often very modest in “self promoting,” it is this message that must be heard prior to times of cut-backs and furloughs. Being a program of distinction on the campus is one way to protect both faculty and students from the inevitable cuts that are currently shaking all of higher education.

Finally, the program and department must be committed to delivering ongoing excellence. The only way to continually deliver excellence is to keep changing for the better; remaining status quo is not an option. Academic departments must be intentional about measuring student development, assessing program goals, and contributions to the local economy. The UL Lafayette Department of Kinesiology requires all students who are participating in community based field experiences or internships to write a daily reflective journal to include a summary of their day, with specific reflections on how the experiences of that day relate to concepts they have learned in the classroom and to connect the learning from that day to practical applications for their future career. Eyler (2002) stated that, “recent research demonstrates that reflective, compared to non-reflective, service-learning does have an impact on their development” (p. 520). It is the desire of our department to ensure that these experiences are indeed reflective and shaping our students for a successful future.

It would be a glaring oversight if the role of faculty and faculty research was not addressed as it relates to the success of these community-based projects. There is no doubt that for every hour spent by students in the community, there are countless other hours spent by faculty to make contacts in the community, ensure learning goals can be met through a particular experience, prepare schedules, oversee students in the experiences, and trouble-shoot issues that arise throughout the semester.

Unfortunately, there are few, if any, incentives for faculty at our university to engage in this type community-based teaching; however, due to the immeasurable value these opportunities provide our students, we continue to offer them every semester. Our faculty are convinced that these community engagement experiences give us a more prepared student who is ready to be successful in the “real world.” In addition, our accredited programs such as Athletic Training (accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education [CAATE]) and Health and Physical Education (accredited by the National Association of Sport and Physical Education [NASPE]) require that students be engaged in hands-on experiences in schools, clinics, hospitals, and other community organizations.

Ultimately, these experiences have also created a wealth of opportunities for research collaboration with local entities, where students and faculty can be involved in meaningful, hands-on research opportunities. For instance,

our department recently embarked on a clinical program for overweight/obese children, which has led to research and grant writing efforts between our department and a local hospital. While no “formal” incentives exist from the university for faculty to participate in programs such as ours, we have created our own incentives through the varied research opportunities we now have.

Being able to provide hard data in times of economic uncertainty will only help the academic unit to survive and hopefully thrive in more prosperous times. If faculty and administrators adhere to these principles and are willing to do the difficult work that comes with each, their programs will be better positioned to survive in uncertain economic times.

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**Appendix A: Descriptive Data**

Program	Course	Field Experience/ Internship Hours	Number of Students	Semester	Total
<b>Athletic Training</b>					
A1	KNES 438	180	20	Spring 2008 only	\$23,580*
A2	KNES 335	180	20	Fall 2008 only	\$23,580*
A3	KNES 237	60	30	Spring 2008 only	\$11,790*
A4	KNES 238	120	20	Fall 2008 only	\$15,720*
A5	KNES 437	180	4	Fall 2008 only	\$4,716*
<b>Athletic Training total</b>					<b>\$79,386</b>
<b>Physical Education</b>					
P1	KNES 350	6	20	Spring 2008 only	\$786*
P2	KNES 449	6	20	Fall 2008 only	\$786*
P3	KNES 402	10	10	Fall 2008 only	\$655*
P4	KNES 301	10	44	Spring & Fall 2008 (22 students spring; 22 students fall)	\$2882*
P4	Student teaching	16 weeks	5	Spring & Fall 2008 (5 students spring; 0 students fall)	\$40,000**
<b>Physical Education total</b>					<b>\$45,109</b>

*Appendix A, Cont'd*

Program	Course	Field Experience/ Internship Hours	Number of Students	Semester	Total
<b>Health Promotion &amp; Wellness</b>					
H1	KNES 402	10	5	Spring & Fall 2008 (3 students spring; 2 students fall)	\$327.50*
H2	KNES 410	10	220	Spring & Fall 2008 (110 students spring; 110 students fall)	\$14,410*
H3	KNES 450	10	30	Spring & Fall 2008 (15 students spring; 15 students fall)	\$1,965*
H4	KNES 335	50	20	Spring 2008 only	\$6,550*
H5	KNES 499	240	5	Spring & Fall 2008 (3 students spring; 2 students fall)	\$7,860*
H6	HLTH 412	10	220	Spring & Fall 2008 (110 students spring; 110 students fall)	\$14,410*
<b>Health Promotion and Wellness total</b>					<b>\$45,522.50</b>

Public Scholarship in Kinesiology

*Appendix A, Cont'd*

Program	Course	Field Experience/ Internship Hours	Number of Students	Semester	Total
<b>Sports Management</b>					
S1	KNES 402	10	10	Spring & Fall 2008 (5 students spring; 5 students fall)	\$655*
S2	KNES 499	120	2	Spring & Fall 2008 (1 student spring; 1 student fall)	\$1,572*
<b>Sports Management total</b>					<b>\$2,227</b>
<b>Exercise Science</b>					
E1	KNES 499	120	50	Spring & Fall 2008 (25 students spring; 25 students fall)	\$39,300*
<b>Sports Management total</b>					<b>\$39,300</b>
<b>All KNES majors</b>					
All	KNES 101	15	350	Spring & Fall 2008 (110 students spring; 240 students fall)	\$35,370*
<b>Grand Total</b>					<b>\$246,914.50</b>

\*based on federal and Louisiana minimum wage of \$6.55 per hour

\*\* based on Pay Grade 3 Teacher's Assistant of \$8,000 per student for 1 semester

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