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## Executive Summary

The Office of Active Citizenship & Service (OACS) and International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) collaborated with the Martha O’Bryan Center in the spring semester of 2015 to launch the Redefine Program. Redefine provides the opportunity for Vanderbilt’s American and International students to explore the meaning of service by following an experiential learning curriculum focused on addressing the needs of Cayce Homes residents as identified by the Martha O’Bryan Center. 18 Vanderbilt students representing eight countries participated in three staff-led seminars and three days of community service. This report assesses participant learning outcomes and offers recommendations for ongoing program development.



*Adrianna Flax of the Martha O’Bryan Center lecturing to participants*

## Background

Piloted in the 2014-15 academic year and focused on recruiting a diverse cohort, the Redefine Program provides the opportunity for every Vanderbilt student to explore the complexities of service and social justice. Students engage in the conceptualization of service as it relates to U.S. communities and how or if the same ideas translate across cultures. Redefine exposes students to the needs of Cayce Homes residents by way of serving in targeted support programs established by the Martha O’Bryan Center. Students attend three seminars led by experts in service-learning, community development, and international student engagement. The curriculum provides a foundation for the academic exploration of service-learning from the perspectives of the community, the non-profit sector, the student, and the university.

## Learning Outcomes

Be able to think critically about service and develop an understanding of its meanings and impact globally

Develop a personal understanding of social justice and the social justice issues which surface at the Martha O'Bryan Center

Develop a personal understanding of the relationship between service and social justice

Be empowered to personally affect systemic and policy issues related to social justice

Interact with people from diverse countries

Understand and value differing perspectives

### Methodology

To properly assess the Redefine Program's learning outcomes, pre and post experience assessment instruments were created through Baseline to efficiently gather qualitative and quantitative data. OACS and ISSS staff designed these instruments, composed of Likert scale and free response questions, and distributed them in December, 2014 and April, 2015. Students responded to the pre survey before they attended a seminar or volunteered with the Martha O'Bryan Center, and to the post survey after the program concluded. The pre survey was distributed to the 41 students who initially signed up for the program and 24 responded. It's probable that the 18 students who attended the first Redefine seminar were among these 24 respondents. The post survey was distributed to the 18 students who attended the first seminar, and 12 responded. However, these 12 students are likely the 12 students who participated fully in Redefine by volunteering at the Martha O'Bryan Center throughout the semester. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that close to 100% of program participants are represented in this assessment. Students were instructed as to the importance of these surveys and asked to respond as accurately as possible, in a timely fashion. They were informed that their responses would be anonymous in order to facilitate honesty. From a methodological perspective, web-based surveys were utilized rather than paper surveys in order to maximize the response rate and facilitate the means by which students could answer. This also eliminated the need for manual input of assessment data. The surveys took approximately 10 minutes to complete.



*Stratford High School, site of the Top Floor program*

## Seminars

Three staff-led seminars guided the Redefine cohort through an experiential learning curriculum. By attracting speakers with a depth of knowledge in service-learning, international development, and community engagement, the program was robust and oriented towards critical engagement with service from international and domestic perspectives. Redefine participants were polled prior to the beginning of the seminar series as to their availability. Of the 42 students who originally expressed an interest in Redefine, 18 attended the first seminar, 12 attended the second seminar, and five attended the final seminar.

### **Seminar One:** January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015

- Topic: Service from the Community Perspective
- Guest Speaker: Adrianna Flax, Development Officer and Volunteer Manager, Martha O'Bryan Center

### **Seminar Two:** March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015

- Topic: International & US Perspectives of Service
- Guest Speakers: Ousmane Ba, Humphrey Fellow; Maegen Endert, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer; Erika Johnson, OACS Ecuador Service Project participant

### **Seminar Three:** April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015

- Topic: Service-Learning
- Guest Speaker: Lauren Moon, OACS Program Coordinator

## Community Service

Redefine participants were expected to volunteer through programs established and run by the Martha O'Bryan Center in East Nashville. These programs benefit residents of Cayce Homes and are longstanding efforts rooted in meeting the determined needs of the community. Participants were able to select a program that appealed to their individual interests, provided that the need



*Redefine participants serving in the Top Floor program*

for volunteers matched the distribution of participants' interests. Each program runs on specific days and times, creating a limiting factor in terms of scheduling. Participants were asked to volunteer with the same program throughout Redefine because of the special need for continuity in the lives of children and because this minimized the need for re-training on the part of Martha O'Bryan staff. OACS and ISSS worked with staff at the Martha O'Bryan Center to determine specific weeks conducive to volunteering, and Redefine participants were informed of these dates. Participants were organized into groups of 3-4 and were responsible for transporting themselves to and from East Nashville. Transportation proved a limiting factor and needs to be considered when planning future iterations of Redefine.

### Community Service Programs

**Top Floor** (3 participants): After-school program located at Stratford High School offering students ACT and college prep classes, homework help, and enrichment through social and cultural activities.

**THRIVE** (3 participants): K-8 after-school program centered on academic tutoring, social and life planning skills, and transitional coaching between middle and high school.

**Food Bank** (6 participants): The Food Bank at Martha O'Bryan Center, in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank, supplies food to families who are living with food insecurity due to financial circumstances.

**Early Learning Center** (3 participants): The Early Learning Center provides daycare and education services to children between the ages of 6 weeks and 4 years at Cayce Homes.



*Maegen Endert (right) lecturing to Redefine participants*

**Budget**

Expense	Date	Item	Quantity	Cost
Food	1/21/15	Domino’s Pizza	9	\$92.71
Room Fee	1/21/15	Calhoun 320	1	\$25.00
Food	3/18/15	Woodland’s Restaurant	Food for 20	\$95.00
Room Fee	3/18/15	Buttrick 112	1	\$50.00
Food	4/22/15	Smiling Elephant Restaurant	Food for 15	\$165.00
Room Fee	4/22/15	Buttrick 102	1	\$50.00
Total Budget				\$800.00
Total Spent				\$477.71
Total Remaining				\$322.29
ISSS Total				\$217.71
OACS Total				\$260.00

## Results

Laura Walaszek, Research Associate in the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Assessment, analyzed survey data from the Redefine pre and post assessments. She matched students' pre and post responses in order to see their movement (if any) along questions that utilized a Likert scale (each response was assigned a number, 1-5). She then calculated the overall average movement of the 12 students who completed both the pre and post assessment instruments in order to see the quantified progress of how each learning outcome was or was not met. For example, if Student A responded with a 3 on the pre assessment question and a 4 on the post assessment question, then Student A would have moved 1 point on that question. Taken collectively, we see how the group did or did not move. Survey results follow, organized by learning outcome.

Responses: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)



*Catherine Kelly lecturing to Redefine participants*

**Learning Outcome 1:**

Be able to think critically about service and develop an understanding of its meanings and impact globally

Question	Average Pre-Assessment Result	Average Post-Assessment Result	Movement
I understand why service activity is conducted in the United States	3.82	4.27	.45
There are differing approaches to service activity globally	4.27	4.55	.28

"I learned that motivations behind service internationally may differ...an international student lived in an area [in which] those with privilege were intermingled with those without. [T]his stark difference motivated this student to act in a more direct manner than I have been able to."

"Oftentimes cultural differences in communities globally lead to miscommunication or misunderstanding about what a foreign community actually needs. On top of that, providing short term service that doesn't continue after those serving have left, or worse creates a dependency or disability, is potentially very harmful to a community. Therefore, understanding a community and its needs are of the utmost importance and global service is no exception..."

**100%** of respondents to the post-assessment agreed that there are differing approaches to service globally.

"I can't say this enough, but the seminars have really changed my mindset about how I approach service, the motivations behind service, and the ways in which service impacts the community."

**Learning Outcome 2:**

Develop a personal understanding of social justice and the social justice issues which surface at the Martha O’Bryan Center

Question	Average Pre-Assessment Result	Average Post-Assessment Result	Movement
I understand social/cultural issues relating to social justice	3.33	4.11	.78
I understand how social justice issues impact my life	3.67	4.00	.33
I understand the social justice issues addressed by the Martha O’Bryan Center	2.29	4.33	2.04
I understand how the social justice issues addressed by the Martha O’Bryan Center impact the lives of those living in Cayce Place	2.10	4.00	1.90

"I think my definition of 'social justice' has been expanded beyond 'everyone being treated equally' to include economic, political, and social aspects."

"I believe that I have molded and honed in on my definition for social justice after the Redefine program. I am more aware of the various rights called for under the typical definition of social justice. However, I am also more aware of the innumerable hurdles that achieving social justice will have to face. It is at time [sic] overwhelming, but the program has reassured me that small steps not only help, but may be the most reasonable approach."

**100%** of respondents to the post-assessment understood the social justice issues addressed by the Martha O’Bryan Center.

"Through the THRIVE program I saw how the program was aimed at giving students the tools they needed to empower themselves...."

**Learning Outcome 3:**

Develop a personal understanding of the relationship between service and social justice

Question	Average Pre-Assessment Result	Average Post-Assessment Result	Movement
I am able to think critically about my own personal privilege	4.20	4.44	.24

"I have taken for granted how much I know because my parents gave me information as I was growing up, and how if I did not have that information the adult world would be incredibly intimidating and overwhelming."

"Service is a mode in which social justice is accomplished. 'Justice' implies the sense of equality, and 'social' implies connections to privilege and circumstance. Through the Redefine Service Program, I have seen how this connection can be made in the real world and theoretically through discussions."

**100%** of respondents to the post-assessment felt able to think critically about their own privilege.

"I think social justice can drive service. I think it's important to always consider why you are doing service, and especially important that you're striving for social justice."

**Learning Outcome 4:**  
 Be empowered to personally affect systemic and policy issues related to social justice

Question	Average Pre-Assessment Result	Average Post-Assessment Result	Movement
I feel that I am able to impact issues relating to social justice	3.67	4.00	.33
I feel societal inequality is too big for me to make a meaningful difference (note that a lower number indicates growth)	2.48	2.22	.26
In the last 30 days I took action to combat societal inequality	3.33	3.67	.34

"...the Martha O'Bryan Center remains a marvelous example of community based service for social justice. While several issues of social justice, such as economic or social equality, are much larger issues and may require generations to fully address, small steps taken on the community level are still effective in achieving equal opportunities and social justice."

"Prior to coming to the Redefine Service Program, I looked at service in a way that now seems to be very selfish - to give service in order to provide gratification to myself. While this is still a small motivation to do service, my main motivations lie in the drive to close the inherent privilege gaps in society."

**89%** of respondents to the post-assessment felt able to impact issues of social justice.

**Learning Outcome 5:**

Interact with people from diverse countries

Question	Average Pre-Assessment Result	Average Post-Assessment Result	Movement
<b>I regularly interact with people who are not from the United States</b> (asked of American participants)	4.25	3.83	-.42
<b>In the last 30 days I have had a meaningful conversation with a person who was not from my home country</b> (asked of American participants)	4.42	4.17	-.25
<b>I interact with Americans more than with people from my home country</b> (asked of International participants)	3.50	3.80	.30
<b>I regularly interact with people who are not from my home country and also not from the United States</b> (asked of International participants)	3.60	3.60	0
<b>In the last 30 days I have had a meaningful conversation with a person who was not from my home country</b> (asked of International participants)	4.40	4.40	0

82% of respondents to the post-assessment regularly interact with people from diverse countries

What did you like most about the Redefine Program?  
 "1) the opportunity for international students to work with american [sic] students in a team, 2) seminars/discussions"

**Learning Outcome 6:**

Understand and value differing perspectives

Question	Average Pre-Assessment Result	Average Post-Assessment Result	Movement
I engage in conversation with people who have different views and perspectives than me	4.29	4.44	.15
I feel comfortable engaging in conversation with people who have different views and perspectives than me	4.38	4.56	.18
I consider other peoples' views and perspectives when making decisions	4.20	4.29	.09

100% of respondents to the post-assessment felt comfortable engaging with people who have different perspectives

"I was pleasantly surprised by the openness during the discussions. It helped me understand the views from different cultural standpoints."

"Often when I have volunteered, I feel like there is a clear distinction between myself and those I am volunteering for (either based on their age - I tutor young children, or SES). In THRIVE, I had a really great time because I felt incorporated into the classroom, and like I was able to interact with the students in a way that we reciprocally shared our personalities/experiences/life knowledge."

## Analysis

In 14 of the 18 Likert scale questions, student responses show growth towards the desired learning outcomes. Of the four questions that did not show growth, two remained static and two show regression. These results indicate a positive conclusion about the efficacy of Redefine and the program's ability to teach students the intended learning outcomes. Similarly positive are the responses to questions directly asking about participant experience in the Redefine Program.

- 89% of respondents feel either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their experience in Redefine
- 67% of respondents feel personally transformed by the impact the Redefine Program made on their lives
- 75% of respondents feel the guided reflection exercises led by OACS/ISSS staff were helpful

Only one person responded to the survey question asking how the Redefine Program can improve, by writing "more service and fewer seminars".

## Strengths

When looking at the survey data, we see the strongest area of student growth occurring in the second learning outcome (*Develop a personal understanding of social justice and the social justice issues which surface at the Martha O'Bryan Center*). This is likely due to students' lack of familiarity with social justice concepts before participating in Redefine and lack of familiarity with the larger Nashville community. A focal point of the seminar series and the volunteer service was conveying key social justice themes such that students would begin to understand the reasons underpinning why their volunteer work was necessary and why societal disparity exists in relation to Cayce Homes more generally (we see movement of .78 and .33 points on these questions). Without question, the students gained knowledge and insight about the Martha O'Bryan Center through Redefine. Most participants had not visited or worked with the Martha O'Bryan Center previously, which is why we see such dramatic growth along the questions of understanding their mission and service to Cayce Homes (2.04 and 1.90 points).

## Areas for Improvement

An area for growth in the Redefine Program concerns learning outcome five (*Interact with people from diverse countries*). Students either showed negative growth or little/no movement along these questions. It's unclear why students regressed regarding the questions about interacting and talking with a person not from their country. Redefine increases opportunities for interaction with people from diverse cultures. In reviewing the pre assessment, however, we see that students were already engaged with people from other countries and with different perspectives. In this instance, different assessment questions showing whether students' interactions increased as a result of participation would have been more useful.

OACS/ISSS staff noted that many students were engaged but quiet during seminars. This may have just been a virtue of the personalities involved, but staff agree that students need more time to get to know each other to build relationships. This could be facilitated by intentionally grouping students at seminars and in their volunteer experiences. Activities outside the seminars and volunteering could also be designed to encourage deeper connections.

## Recommendations

- Partner with a non-profit organization closer to Vanderbilt's campus, ideally one that students can walk to for their community service. Transportation to/from East Nashville was logistically challenging for many students and a hindrance to participation.
- Take into consideration the schedules of Metro Nashville Public Schools and the Martha O'Bryan Center (or other non-profit partner) in coordination with Vanderbilt's schedule. School break times and staffing availability did not always sync with when Vanderbilt students planned to volunteer.
- Set the seminar schedule at the beginning of the semester such that participants can plan and make arrangements to attend.
- If partnering with the Martha O'Bryan Center again, have a preparatory meeting with their assigned staff member early in the fall semester. Adrianna Flax, the volunteer coordinator in 2014-15, has resigned. Ideally, meet with staff coordinators for the four volunteer programs in order to increase communication and better serve Cayce Homes residents.
- Focus more intentionally on encouraging American and International students to develop relationships with one another, to meet learning outcome five.