

# An importance of service-learning

[Education](#), [Learning](#)



## **The Ethical Nature of Public Money through Service-Learning**

Service-learning is a hands-on activity where we reflect on our experiences and volunteer our time to assist those who are in need. Through reflection we can understand how service-learning works and why it is important in the big picture of life, learning, and Drake University. With that said this part is an opinion of mine, and I am a strong advocate of service-learning. Service-learning has become the most efficient way for students to learn information. I believe that is because they are able to get hands on and correlate their learning with the real world. In the book there is a pyramid scheme which shows the service-learning is the best way to retain information overall, but past that if reflection is done properly, I believe, it can be one of the most empowering experiences. Service-learning was required at my High School as they stressed reflection to go along with it. Being a college student we have a unique opportunity and position to give back to the community around us and I do believe, personally, that it is my obligation to do such if I am in that position. There are many different ethical perspectives that we have been studying this year, thus far, and I believe that the most applicable one is in terms of Act Utilitarianism.

Act Utilitarianism is about the overall happiness value which is created by a decision which is made. It is about the idea that you intentionally walk a slugger in baseball to setup for a double play in the field. Act Utilitarianism is all about taking what makes the most happiness for a community or group of people and acting on that as a whole. Act Utilitarianism has direct ties to our project as we are receiving public money indirectly if the school begins to

pay for the hosting services eventually. In order to establish Act Utilitarianism and the value of happiness we must ask questions.

My first question lies here: if a student is required to do service as part of a project or organization, how beneficial is it and who does it benefit? My experience with this has come from my fraternity, my college, and my high school. All of these have mandatory service-learning components as part of being a “ Engaged Citizen”. What does that actually mean? I think that depends on the geography and needs of the city. Being an engaged citizen at Drake has meant being one with the community around us. Whereas, within the fraternity it means providing an activism platform for voices to be heard for Drake’s campus and raising money for something larger than ourselves.

If you are forced to volunteer or service learn, is it actually beneficial? Is it better to have two people who want to be there or is it better to have six people who may not want to be there? If you choose the former, or latter who is it benefiting within the organization that you are at? My argument for the latter would be that maybe they didn’t think they would want to be there, but after some time they actually began to enjoy it and became involved in the process. My argument for the former would be that if you bring two people who enjoy it, they will have a better time socializing and work harder, presumably. So is it beneficial to require it? I believe it is circumstantial. Our fraternity was supposed to take a trip, as a fraternity, to Monticello, IA to spend a weekend at a camp for people with disabilities. I required it, because I thought that everyone would enjoy it even if they

didn't think that then. However, we do friendship visits with our local Easter Seals camp, Camp Sunnyside. That I do not require as over volunteering has happened and I have seen that those who want to be there can make up for those who we would be missing.

Our project I believe fulfills a need in the community, however I struggle to understand the project as I know there are more pressing issues in the area: Human Trafficking , a rising crime rate , and injustices within the Des Moines political system clearing out homeless encampments . I feel that in an ethical sense we can create more aggregate happiness by volunteering with these issues, specifically.

However, I think it can be a valuable tool which can help improve some of the above issues, but it is going to need time to mature to reach that stage, and we simply do not have that time, I believe. Thus, when our Communication team begins communication, I believe that it is important to talk about what big picture/achievable is. By providing a database solution for the Des Moines area we will increase the accessibility and knowledge of non-profits in the area hopefully encouraging use.

This project is one that is minimal cost and the convince and it can be a very unique experience integrating teamwork, computer science knowledge, and community awareness. This could have reverberations throughout the city. We know that students don't learn well if they can't be fed or housed. Ideally, they will be able to find out where to go within a couple of clicks, making the system a lot more accessible to many people in the city.

I think the ethical perspective that comes in here is that a public school is funding this project which means that it is ultimately the taxpayers who are paying for this. Which brings me back to the ethical question that we have discussed for so long. If the public pays for this how much happiness are we creating and could that money be used elsewhere? What responsibilities do we have to help with this effort? Should it be a public-led effort or should it be a private-led effort? Why is the school putting this together and not a larger organization with deeper ties to these issues? Are there downsides? I don't know if there is a right answer, as like many of these questions it lies in the eyes of the beholder. However, I think what may be happening is an accurate representation of Davis and the point he is trying to make in his article: What we Don't Talk About. He talks a lot about how service is not simple and by the end he presumes that by making it simple we are turning blind to issues, and in turn only making them worse.

Service-Learning is an interesting concept which has proven to be beneficial, but to what extent should the government provide help and to what extent should we provide help? Are we obligated too and how does our current project play into this? I believe along with Davis, as we continue to simply life issues continue to dig deeper and are harder to come out of.