Community-Engaged Projects in System Analysis and Design

*TREO Talk Paper*

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**Abstract**

Community-engaged scholarship is the production and application of academic knowledge in collaboration with community expertise. It connects multiple facets of scholarship to the understanding and solving of pressing social, civic, and ethical problems. Through mutually-beneficial partnerships, knowledge and scholarly products are created to address real-world problems and/or foster change.

This research will explore community-engaged opportunities by reviewing projects finished or planned for a System Analysis and Design course. These projects involve engaging local non-profit organizations and the university representatives to partner with the class members to analyze and design an information system that fulfills a need for the community partner.

Since Fall 2012, I have engaged community partners in projects for my students in MIS 413 System Analysis and Design. Working with community partners gives the students a chance to work on real-world projects, and gives the community partners a chance to get some work done for free, as well as participate in the teaching process. The community partners provided their expertise in their respective areas and guided the students in designing/re-designing an information system to fit their needs.

The collaboration process entailed the students met with the community partner several times during the semester in addition to email messages and phone calls. The meetings were to determine the initial scope of the project, and to gather business requirements about the needs of the new information system. Towards the end of the term, the community partners met with the students to fine tune the design specifications and features of the new information system.

These projects have helped the students in several ways, including:
1. It gave them a real-world project to work on.
2. It gave them experience working on a project team to reach a common goal.
3. It introduced them to the project process, including a request for proposal, submitting a proposal, fine-tuning the proposal with the client, and presenting the final information system design to the client (community partner), and how the proposals were judged and the “winner” of the project was chosen.

Though implementation is not part of the course, a few of the partners did implement parts of the new information system. All were very happy with the new information system and looked forward to a day when they could implement part or all of it. The student teams who “won” the bid to do the project (ie, had the winning system design), were given a prize (gift card) by the community partner.

This talk will discuss each project and the lessons learned along the way.