

# The \$100 Solution: A Service-Learning Project for Students Enrolled in an Undergraduate Agricultural Leadership Course

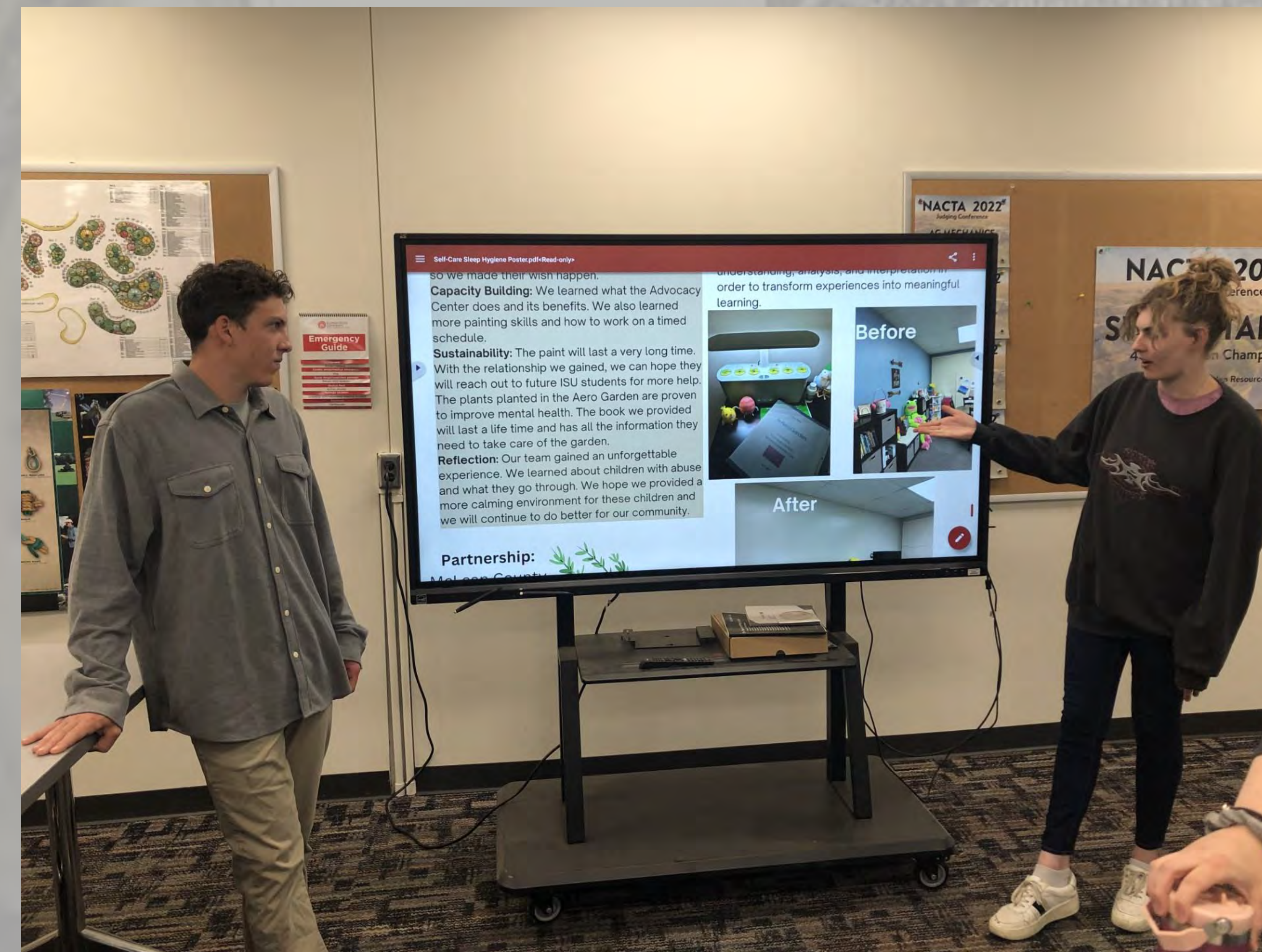
Lucas Maxwell  
Jay Solomonson

Illinois State University



## Introduction

- Secondary and post-secondary instructors of agriculture often use a variety of teaching methods and instructional strategies within their courses (Talbert et al., 2022).
- Service-learning, was developed as a means to intertwine the principles of civic engagement and the educational process (Binard & Leavitt, 2000).
- Service-learning as a teaching method continues to evolve and is increasingly being implemented in our agricultural education programs (Roberts & Edwards, 2015).
- Many benefits to using this method of instruction such as the development of teamwork, leadership, and communication skills in students (Lemons & Strong, 2016, Meyers et al., 2014; Robinson & Torres, 2007).
- Need for a clear, instructional framework for service-learning.



## Results & Implications

- Over the course of 6 semesters, nearly 100 students have partnered with 14 different community organizations helping multiple groups and individuals.
- Community partners have included local municipalities, assisted living centers, museums, and a food insecure family, just to name a few.
- Throughout this process the students were guided by the five principles of service-learning discussed above and applied leadership, communication, and change theories discussed in the course.
- Each semester students complete a written reflection assignment, and each group collectively creates a poster presentation, which is then presented during an open house during one of the final class sessions.

## How it Works

- The \$100 Solution teaches students to ask what they can do rather than self-determining the needs of others. It demonstrates that many social problems exist that can be solved with small amounts of money.
- The \$100 Solution model incorporates the five principles of service-learning: partnership, reciprocity, capacity building, sustainability, and reflection (English, 2014).
- The project is incorporated into the AGR 391 Team & Organizational Leadership course at Illinois State University.
- Students are divided into groups of 4-6. Each group identifies a community partner in which to volunteer their time. The group identifies a specific need of the organization and works with them to develop a sustainable solution.
- Each group is awarded \$100 to implement their project which must incorporate the principles of service-learning.

With a \$100 bill, what can you do to enhance the quality of life for others?



## Future Plans, Advice, & Costs

- We plan to continue to utilize this service-learning framework during future offerings of our AGR 391 course.
- It is critical to provide the student teams with adequate guidance and resources to help them identify potential community partners and to plan and implement their projects without being overly prescriptive.
- It is recommended to push students to first identify a partner that aligns with their interests and then, collaboratively, identify a problem or issue they face and work to find a solution.
- Beyond the \$100 budget for each team, the only other direct costs associated with this project have been the printing of posters for the final presentation.
- Campus offices that support service learning, civic engagement, and sustainability could all be a useful resource to fund project ideas.

## References

- Binard, K., & Leavitt, L. H. (2000). *Discovering leadership through service: A workbook on integrating service learning into leadership curriculum*. Rocky Mountain Press.
- English, A. (2014). *Service-learning through the \$100 solution*. THDS Press.
- Lemons, L., & Strong, J. (2016). Developing teamwork and team leadership skills through service learning. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, 89(1), 18-19.
- Meyers, C., Lemons, L., & Hock, G. (2014). Implementing service-learning best practices from agricultural leadership education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 18(3), 159-161.
- Roberts, R., & Edwards, M. C. (2015). Service-learning's ongoing journey as a method of instruction: Implications for school-based agricultural education. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 56(2), 217-233. <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2015.02217>
- Robinson, J. S., & Torres, R. M. (2007). A case study for service-learning: What students learn when given the opportunity. *NACTA Journal*, 51(4) 2-8. [https://www.nactateachers.org/attachments/article/225/Robinson\\_and\\_Torres\\_Dec07Journal.pdf](https://www.nactateachers.org/attachments/article/225/Robinson_and_Torres_Dec07Journal.pdf)
- Talbert, B. A., Croom, B., LaRose, S. E., Vaughn, R., & Lee, J. S. (2022). *Foundations of agricultural education (4th ed.)*. Purdue University Press.