

**UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE  
GROUP FIVE– SERVING CITY AND REGION**

4/10/2008

**Introduction/Analysis**

While Xavier clearly enjoys a national reputation based largely on the success of its graduates, the achievements of the university is inherently integrated to the city and region in which it is charged to serve. This report aims to identify and clarify how Xavier can leverage its national reputation and its commitment to service among students, faculty, and staff to benefit the city of New Orleans and the region.

The mission of Xavier University is “To promote a more just and humane society” in which efforts continue to be made to uplift Xavier creed, but nearly three years has past since Hurricane Katrina, in which the main concerns of the community are rooted in: Adequate and quality healthcare, community leadership training, community planning & neighborhood development, attracting more local business, and school system financial and teaching resource deficiencies.

Understanding that the services provided by Xavier University are inextricably tied to the economic hardships of post-Katrina New Orleans, university initiatives have been implemented to engage student, staff, and faculty in performing more community service activities. Due to Hurricane Katrina, the needs of the New Orleans community have changed, and as a result, college students [staff, and faculty] with time, energy, and creativity are need more the ever<sup>1</sup>.

The Center for Student Leadership & Service operates as the central hub for volunteer opportunities in which student organizations such as Mobilization at Xavier (MAX), Xavier’s Activity Board (XAB), and other student leadership organizations, which may or may not operate under the Center of Student Leadership & Service, offer sponsored opportunities for students to engage in community service activities.

Resources to aid faculty and staff in promoting and performing service learning are mainly acquired through the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT), Institutional Advancement & Media Relations, and the Institute of Black Catholic Studies (IBCS). Faculty members also engage student participation through departmental delegated Student Service Learning Programs (SSLP) and summer science enrichment programs.

Identification of Xavier’s strengths and weaknesses are needed to determine how Xavier can best leverage its resources to increase its community presence. The “Serving City and Region” Committee identified the following as university strengths:

- Education
- Healthcare Information & Resources
- Large Available Student Workforce
- Diverse Ethnic/Religious Affiliations
- Available Space for Community Events

The weaknesses of the university, in respects to Xavier serving the greater community, have been identified as issues within this report, and recommendations made accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> “The M.A.X” Brochure. Volunteer Services: Center for Student Leadership and Service

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**Key Issues:**

Although Xavier has proven the success and advancement of its academic program, the following have been identified as key concerns/barriers to optimally “serve city and region”:

- Lack of Faculty & Staff Service Participation
- Awareness & Communication of Opportunities within Xavier
- Awareness & Communication of Xavier Activities to Broader Community
- Non-Globalization of Core & Departmental Curriculum
- Awareness & Procurement of Non-Institutional Department Funds for Service Learning
- Lack of Community Based Business Partnerships & Affiliations

**Recommendations:**

- **Development of Self-Serving Projects**

**Concerns Issues:**

- Lack of Faculty & Staff Service Participation
- Awareness & Communication of Opportunities within Xavier
- Awareness & Communication of Xavier Activities to Broader Community

Engaging the faculty for service participation is severely stifled by the increased teaching load, especially post-Katrina. Staff members are not exclusive of such constraints either. Developing self-serving service projects in which service participants have a tied incentive/benefit would increase participation. An example of a project could be the rebuilding of Bolden Child Care Center. There are a number of faculty and staff that have infants and children that need care while at work, but the increased cost of living, security & availability, and time are all issues that XU parents face. Engaging the faculty, staff, and students to rebuilding the facility w/ incentives in the form of daycare discounts or other promotions not only provides XU parents with a convenient, reliable, and secure method of daycare, but also provides the greater community with the same benefits.

Service projects in which the participants can receive a tangible benefit due to completion seems to be the most efficient and reliable way of engaging XU faculty and staff. Individuals will have more motivation due to now having an active stake in the finalized product/project.

- **Campus-Wide Networking and Service Events**

**Concerns Issues:**

- Lack of Faculty & Staff Service Participation
- Awareness & Communication of Opportunities within Xavier

Achieving a positive culture of campus cohesiveness is an important aspect of overall student life and crucial to the student-teacher interaction, in which networking and service events can be a great catalyst. Combining service projects with networking events allows for maximized student, staff, faculty interaction, while also providing grounds for all participants to become social beneficiaries of incentives such as food, games, information exchange, networking, etc. The united effort increases XU service workforce and lessens the time stigma placed on service learning/activities by highlighting the social networking as a main event. For

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example, a service activity such as “campus-wide cleanup” combined with a “fish fry/crawfish boil” is a great way to engage all the students and faculty/staff into service while also rewarding participation.

The service activity, and more importantly, the networking event, must be engaging to all levels of the XU community. For example, in Xavier’s past, “Beer Blasts on the Yard” was a definite crowd attractor. Understanding that times change, health concerns, and Xavier’s reputation, a “Beer Blast” may not be the best method for soliciting university participation, but it was an even that attracted staff, faculty, and students, whether on or off-campus.

- **Electronic Faculty/Staff Grants Portal**

**Concerns Issues:**

- Lack of Faculty & Staff Service Participation
- Awareness & Communication of Opportunities within Xavier

Xavier enjoys a national reputation for providing quality academic programs, especially in the field of science; but the notoriety does not necessarily transcend throughout smaller departments within the university. Unlike the sciences, procurement and the flow of funds exclusive of university funding is not automated, therefore, smaller departments that would like to establish long-term service activities and programs, but require additional funding, are often times overshadowed. Providing a faculty/staff grants portal has the potential to increase Xavier’s presence within the domestic and global community by allowing all departments to tap into additional resources for accomplishing specific service projects. Currently, the Office of Student Leadership and Service Learning provide opportunities to engage departments in service learning, but it is on a rotational basis. The grants portal would be facilitated and maintained by the Office of Institutional Advancement given its current involvement in soliciting external funding sources and Xavier charity.

The portals purpose is to make departments aware of monies available that would otherwise go unnoticed. The funds will allow departments to expand the scope of service learning and teaching, while also providing an efficient means to identify and procure additional funds, thereby increasing the financial involvement of faculty/staff, and the opportunity to provide students with additional and reliable resources for service learning.

- **Internationalizing Curriculum(s)**

**Concerns Issues:**

- Awareness & Communication of Xavier Activities to Broader Community
- Non-Globalization of Core & Departmental Curriculum
- Lack of Community Based Business Partnerships & Affiliations

The mission of Xavier is “To create a more just and humane society”, in which the broad nature of the mission does not define “society” as exclusively domestic, but also global. Xavier is located in one of the most historically diverse cities in the world in which ethnicities of all backgrounds are represented. Preparing our students to serve not only domestically, but also abroad, is a byproduct of globalizing the curriculum and promoting international service learning opportunities. By incorporating more international studies w/in the current curriculum, students will realize the impact of their education and service in disadvantaged communities, and also reciprocate their efforts to their home institution...Xavier! Often time, engaging

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student participation in community service is stifled by the presumed lack of urgency of the situation due to its domestic locale. By allowing students to engage in more international activities, whether domestic or abroad, will expand the skill sets and humane qualities of our students, while also making the international community more aware of Xavier's support. There are many service skill sets to be learned, exclusive to Xavier, which has the potential to motivate our students into wanting to participate in more service opportunities of which the students, Xavier, and the New Orleans Community will be the primary beneficiaries.

- **Increased Community Partnerships/Affiliations**

**Concerns Issues:**

- Awareness & Communication of Xavier Activities to Broader Community
- Lack of Community Based Business Partnerships & Affiliations

Although New Orleans is still in the process of economic recovery from Hurricane Katrina, Xavier's economic impact is still great. The surrounding community has many opportunities available for the support of service learning projects; whether the support is monetary, project participation, or referral, extending affiliations with local business is of great benefit. The networking opportunities will also allow Xavier to broaden its community awareness in a cost beneficial manner. There are many services provided throughout New Orleans in which would be of great benefit to students, but the availability of the service may be unknown, thereby stifling the growth of the community business, depriving students of a needed service, and eliminates any opportunity of auxiliary revenue generation on behalf of Xavier. Considering that New Orleans is in the stages of recovery, viral marketing can be achieved to promote not only Xavier, but also businesses within the community. Strategic affiliations will have the potential to increase Xavier's brand image which will definitely impact Xavier's national notoriety and reputation.