REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON SERVICE LEARNING

To the Provost and Vice-President for Student Affairs

In Partial Fulfillment of its Mandate

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I.  BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION.

In 1991 Calvin College joined Campus Compact, a national coalition of colleges and universities which also has a strong state organization called the Michigan Campus Compact. The purpose of Campus Compact is to increase student involvement in community service, to increase public, federal, and foundation support for student involvement, and to promote the value of civic responsibility by people and institutions. Calvin College joined the Campus Compact with the particular interest of exploring with other colleges and universities how to integrate service into traditional academic curricula. It seemed to some faculty members and to the academic administration that building a more direct link between theory and practice through service had potential as a pedagogical tool.

In January, 1992, an ad hoc committee, appointed by the college President upon the advice of the Provost, began studying the theory and practice of linking service and academic study. (See Appendix A for the mandate of this committee.) The committee looked carefully at several documents which expressed the aim and goals of the college and its curriculum (including CLAE, PECLAC, the 1989 "Final Report of the Core Curriculum Study Committee" and the new "Expanded Statement of the Mission of Calvin College").

In July, 1992, a team from Calvin College, at the invitation of the Campus Compact, spent a week with 14 other college and university teams studying the current thinking and practice of integrating service with academic study. The team was comprised of three of the committee members, George Monsma, Henry Hoeks and Rhonda Berg, along with Frank Roberts and Ken Bratt. The goal of the team was to learn from institutions such as Cornell, Stanford, and Brown Universities and Christian College Coalition schools such as Messiah and Azusa Pacific Colleges how to make more and better use of service activities in achieving our educational goals. In the course of this intensive week, with many opportunities to look at the issues from a variety of perspectives, the team drafted a report. That report, reviewed and revised by the committee, is hereby presented as the report of the committee.

One of the tasks of the committee was to define service-learning for Calvin College, in order to develop recommendations for its use at Calvin in the curriculum, the co-curriculum, or both. One of the difficulties we encountered is that the term "service-learning" is used in a variety of ways in a variety of contexts. For our purposes we define service-learning as "activities which are designed both to contribute to the meeting of community or individual needs and to aid in the development of the
knowledge and understanding of the service giver." Such service-
learning could take place both within or outside of the curriculum,
but would always combine activities designed to meet needs of
others with reflection on the service experience in ways designed
to advance the knowledge of the service giver/learner.

In this report the committee makes recommendations about the
use of service-learning in the curriculum of Calvin College. In
view of the wide variety of activities that various people include
under the term "service-learning", we have coined the term
"academically based service" in order to clarify our
recommendations. By this we mean "service activities that are
related to and integrated with the conceptual content of a college
course, and which serve as a pedagogical resource to meet the
academic goals of the course as well as to meet community or
individual needs". Thus academically based service has a narrower
focus than service-learning in general.

The committee views academically based service as a
pedagogical strategy, a practical tool, rather than a philosophy of
education. It serves curricular goals rather than shapes them.
But it fits well Calvin's educational goal of preparing students
for lifelong Christian service. We believe it is a powerful
strategy which deserves greater consideration by faculty members
and support from the academic administration.

Viewing academically based service as a useful pedagogical
strategy, but by no means the only good strategy, led the committee
to the conclusion that its use by faculty members should be
voluntary. Faculty members should evaluate its potential in terms
of the goals and content of their courses as well as their own
ability to be effective with it.

II. THE TRADITION OF SERVICE AT CALVIN.

The current discussions within the American higher education
community of integrating service with academic study may be
unfamiliar to many members of the Calvin faculty. But Calvin
College has a strong tradition of community service by both
students and faculty, separately and together. Some faculty
members have also made explicit connections between service
experiences and their teaching.

The Student Volunteer Service (SVS) is a notable example of
Calvin's support and encouragement of students' efforts to make a
difference for disadvantaged groups. In 1964 two students, with the
support and encouragement of faculty members, began a tutoring
program to assist young people in inner-city schools to improve their academic achievement. They called the program K.I.D.S. (Kindling Intellectual Desire in Students). In the first year, with a budget of $156, 35 students tutored in five inner-city public schools. The program grew quickly and expanded into other areas of service, such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters and helping low-income people move their household belongings. Today over 600 students volunteer each semester in over 60 community organizations through the program, which is now called the Student Volunteer Service. Faculty have been involved in this program over the years as board members and mentors for spring-break service projects. Some have been initiators of new projects such as the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, begun by Leon DeLange, and the TASK program, begun by Dale Topp, which brings music education to inner-city children.

The level of student participation in SVS has been remarkable. Of the 1992 graduates of Calvin, over 50% of the women and 35% of the men had participated in the SVS program sometime during their time at Calvin. Although the program has retained a strong emphasis upon inner-city education with tutoring, teacher assisting, and special education volunteering, students are involved in many other areas as well. Students assist people lacking the basic necessities of life by working in food pantries, raising money to purchase and deliver holiday food baskets, and helping with basic home repairs. They are involved in one-to-one friendships with "at-risk" youth, elderly people in nursing homes, developmentally disabled people, and parents who are struggling to break the cycle of abuse and neglect in their families. Calvin students also help out in a wide array of after-school recreational programs and clubs. They are valued volunteers in hospitals and social service organizations like Bethany Christian Services and Ramoth House.

SVS provides a focal point for students desiring to serve in the community and for community organizations which wish to involve students in meeting the needs of people they serve. It has established relationships with agencies and is continually monitoring and evaluating the students' experience in service and the satisfaction of the organizations which use students' service. SVS also provides transportation support to volunteers. SVS once had only a few student coordinators. Today it is led by 14 student coordinators, a full-time director, and a 2/3 time office coordinator. Remarkably, the SVS program is primarily supported through the operating budget of the college, which demonstrates the strong institutional support for the role it plays in involving students in service roles in the larger community.
It should come as no surprise that faculty at Calvin College have not only been very supportive of student involvement in community service, but also are models for such service. When we begin to enumerate the ways faculty are involved in the wider community, we observe that the tenure requirement of service reflects a strongly shared value which is embraced, not resisted, by the faculty. In addition to extensive involvement as leaders in local churches, faculty members are involved in a host of community efforts. Examples of organizations they are or have been involved with include Camp Tall Turf, Recycle Unlimited, Inner City Christian Federation, Grand Rapids School Board, city and county commissions, Habitat for Humanity, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Hope Network, Women's Resource Center, political parties, zoning commissions, Degagé Ministries, Heartside Ministries, Grand Rapids Center for Ecumenism, humanities and arts councils, Bethany Christian Services, Pine Rest Christian Hospital, Christian school boards, United Way of Kent County, Project Rehab and the Guiding Light Mission.

This commitment to direct community service is also reflected in the curriculum itself. Several faculty members and academic departments have initiated efforts to link service with academic learning. Both the Teacher Education and Social Work programs make students' service in the field a prerequisite to entrance. The Social Work program also requires community service work in its introductory course, and the Recreation program includes community service in every level of its curriculum.

In addition to program requirements, some faculty members include service as an integral part of courses they teach. For example a Basic Christian Ethics course includes the opportunity for students to perform volunteer service and to write a reflective term paper as an alternative to a library research paper. Another example is a Computer Science course in which the students write programs for non-profit service groups. Students in an interim interdisciplinary decision-making course have worked with community agencies to propose solutions for problems the agencies have identified. Students in engineering courses have designed equipment for a local recycling organization. As a result of a 1992 Faculty Development Seminar, faculty members are integrating student service experiences into courses in Labor Economics, Statistics, Social Psychology, Child Psychology, Management of Not-for-Profit Organizations, and Christian Perspectives on Learning. Many of the internships and practica (in Education, Business, Political Science, Social Work, Criminal Justice, the Chicago Metropolitan Program, and the Christian College Coalition's
Washington and Latin America Programs) place students in non-profit service organizations. Over the years several Interim courses have also had a service component.

Students and faculty at Calvin have already evidenced a strong interest in community service. This provides a potential educational resource which could be used more fully. Presently many students simply volunteer without doing the critical reflection which would help them to learn more through these experiences. Faculty members are often not aware of the service experiences of their students that could be used to enrich their teaching. Increased use of academically based service could involve more students in thoughtful service and provide faculty members with a powerful experiential pedagogy. Furthermore, if students and faculty members become more involved in thoughtful service in the community around Calvin, the community would benefit and relations between the community and Calvin would be enhanced.

III. CALVIN'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND ACADEMICALLY BASED SERVICE.

The recommendations of this report not only build upon a long and admirable history of community service on the part of Calvin faculty members, staff, and students, but are also consistent with the educational philosophy which generated the college and has sustained it from its inception. The Reformed confessions which articulate the central tenets of our faith lay special emphasis on the sovereignty of God over every dimension of reality and on the vocation of believers, in covenant with their Redeemer, to live in gratitude as agents of renewal in the world.

Three major educational implications follow from these principles. First, there is nothing in our curriculum or communal life on which God makes no claim. Therefore, in every area of study and every aspect of our life as a community, we seek to live in obedience to Christ's call to loving service. Moreover, since our world belongs to God, we do not withdraw from it, but seek to engage it with a vision of renewal.

Second, Christian education as we understand it addresses the entire human person. It is aimed not at narrow intellectual development or learning for its own sake, but rather at the shaping of the heart, will, and mind for enacting faith in life. Therefore, we seek explicitly to connect the way we think with how we live. We do not give our minds alone to God. As we state on the college seal, we offer him our hearts: "COR MEUM TIBI OFFERO, DOMINE, PROMPTE ET SINCERE."
Third, we see our educational enterprise as a communal mission directed toward a needy world. Accordingly, we see our work not as an individualistic effort focused on fulfillment of the self, but one which aims at public and corporate discipleship. These three principles have led Calvin to define its educational mission in terms of preparing students for lives of Christian service.

These educational principles, expressed in various ways, have been repeatedly expressed in Calvin's guiding documents. In *Christian Liberal Arts Education* (CLAE), for example, we find such statements as the following:

The Christian's allegiance to God is not exercised merely in some special and isolated 'religious' activities, the others being neutral and indifferent. On the contrary, his allegiance to God is exercised in the whole width and breadth of his life, in the whole scope of human activities. (p. 30)

The aim of Christian education, then, will be to educate the student to live the Christian life. The development of Christian culture will be our ultimate aim. Not faith added to understanding. Not just faith seeking understanding. Rather, faith seeking cultural expression. (p. 33)

Christian education . . . must not be based on those withdrawal tendencies which have so often invaded the church. Equally, it must not be based on accommodation tendencies. Rather, . . . it must aim at preparing the student to live the life of faith in contemporary society. (p. 37)

This vision has inspired commendable achievements by Calvin staff, students, and graduates over the years. But fulfilling this vision has always been difficult, and we should never be content with a partial realization of our mission. We must constantly rededicate ourselves to it and explore new strategies for accomplishing it in an everchanging world. Nicholas Wolterstorff, one of our own professors and a major contributor to CLAE, later remarked:

[CLAE] said that Christian education is for Christian service in the world. That has the ring of the transformation/liberation approach. But then it suggested that the best way to prepare students for that goal is to introduce them to the various academic
disciplines . . . . The transformation/liberation goal was in no way allowed to shape the curricular means . . . . (Chimes 2/22/80)

Such observations, among many other factors, have led to recent reconsideration of the mission of our college as well as the curricular and extracurricular means by which we seek to accomplish that mission. Thus it is particularly timely that we consider the value of academically based service at Calvin in the context of our newly revised statement of mission. Among the relevant themes which stand out in the new "Expanded Statement of Mission of Calvin College: Vision, Purpose, Commitment" are these:

--An emphasis on connecting education explicitly with action and service: "Education at Calvin College aims at developing that Christian wisdom which envelops knowing and doing, which compels perspective and praxis to enrich each other. . . . Calvin promotes a structure and atmosphere . . . which make mutuality in service of God and to neighbor the means as well as the end of its education." (p. 12)

--An emphasis on education which fosters Christian commitment and participation in society as well as knowledge and competencies. (pp. 13-14)

--A call for "pedagogical pluralism" and efforts to strengthen connections between the curriculum and co-curriculum: "Calvin College challenges its teachers to employ pedagogical techniques that quicken the interest of students, recognize the varying learning styles and capabilities of students, and actively engage the student in learning. The teachers also aim to make subject matter of the various disciplines relevant to the lives of students and encourage students to take responsibility for their learning." (pp. 19-20)

--A redefinition of the communities we serve, to include not only the traditional circles of our students and our mother church, but also many "servant-partnerships" and the increasingly diverse constituencies with whom we have established contact. (pp. 30-31) (All quotations and page references are from the October 7, 1993, version.)

IV. THE PEDAGOGICAL VALUE OF ACADEMICALLY BASED SERVICE.

We see academically based service as a pedagogical strategy which can be used to enrich our teaching and enhance a student's learning. It is not a replacement for the traditional lecture-
discussion mode of classroom teaching. Rather it is an additional strategy that faculty can use effectively in certain situations. In an earlier section, we cited several concrete examples of its application. In this section we would like to sketch somewhat more broadly some evidence for its effectiveness.

First of all, there is substantial anecdotal evidence that academically based service can enrich teaching. As mentioned earlier, several Calvin faculty have used it effectively. In addition, during the 1992 Institute on Integrating Service with Academic Study, at Brown University, Calvin's team consulted with professors from several institutions who have used academically based service. They provided numerous examples of the power of this strategy as used in a wide variety of disciplines at institutions of the calibre of Antioch, Brown, Cornell, Stanford, et al. These professors were excited by the high level of energy and enthusiasm, and the depth of learning, of many students in courses which related community service to the topics and issues studied in the courses. (See Appendix B for syllabi of a few of these courses.)

Secondly, there is a growing body of educational theory which provides support for the value of experiential education; academically based service is one form of experiential education. Figure 1 gives a simplified view of David Kolb's model of experiential learning.1 The circle represents Kolb's perspective on the dynamics of such learning. Typically people start at the top with concrete experience (which may be vicarious). They reflect critically on this experience and this reflection leads them to abstract conceptualization. They then test their concepts by means of experimentation--this is often informal, but it may be formalized. Lastly they take their tested concepts with them to a renewed perception of their concrete experiences and the cycle continues. In Kolb's view, experiential education is a pedagogy in which opportunities to engage in each step of the cycle are explicitly provided.

Advocates of academically-based service often refer to Kolb's model; we too believe this model provides a helpful framework for understanding how such service can have educational value at Calvin College. By providing carefully chosen concrete experiences related to the goals of a course and providing sufficient opportunities for reflection and experimentation, conceptualization can be enhanced and students' thinking more effectively transformed. Of course, service experiences are not the only types of concrete experiences which can be used effectively within this model. However they are a particularly powerful type of experience for use at Calvin College as they are so directly related to the understanding of the Christian life that informs the mission of the college.

Furthermore, academically based service can be a powerful strategy because it brings together the experiential and the analytic. Students who are more experientially oriented can be "turned on" to analysis as a natural fulfillment or completion of experience. Students who have a more analytic style of learning will do better analysis as they have opportunities to test their theories with active experimentation followed by reflection. Thus academically based service is yet another way to attend to "diverse levels, gifts, and styles of learning" among students who choose Calvin for an education that "promotes lifelong Christian service. ("The Mission of Calvin College: Vision, Purpose, Commitment")

Thirdly, there are many scholars, teachers, and practitioners who have been seeking ways to integrate service and academic reflection. Representatives of over seventy organizations interested in service and learning participated in consultations which led to the "Wingspread Special Report" (copies available from SVS). This document states that when service and learning effectively interact,
participants:
• Develop a habit of critical reflection on their experiences, enabling them to learn more throughout life,
• Are more curious and motivated to learn,
• Are able to perform better service,
• Strengthen their ethic of social and civic response,
• Feel more committed to addressing the underlying problems behind social issues,
• Understand problems in a more complex way and can imagine alternative solutions,
• Demonstrate more sensitivity to how decisions are made and how institutional decisions affect people's lives,
• Respect other cultures more and are better able to learn about cultural differences,
• Learn how to work more collaboratively with other people on real problems,
• Realize that their lives can make a difference.

These assertions are consistent with the experience of faculty at Calvin and elsewhere who have used academically based service. Many students and faculty at Calvin that have participated in academically based service have testified that it often both deepens their understanding of the subject matter and its application, and increases their motivation to live lives of Christian service. There have been no statistical studies of the results of courses at Calvin which use academically based service. But a recently completed study of Calvin students who participated in SVS spring-break programs, which combine service with faculty/student reflection on that service, indicates that the students' commitments to Christian service increased significantly.

We do not believe that academically based service is appropriate for every course or every professor. But we are persuaded that if done well, academically based service is a teaching strategy which is not only consistent with Calvin's educational philosophy and mission, but also promotes the college's overarching aim in new and powerful ways.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. That the Educational Policy Committee encourage the faculty to incorporate academically based service where appropriate in courses in the Calvin College curriculum.

Rationale: Academically based service is a strategy which is consistent with Calvin's educational philosophy and which
can aid in the accomplishment of the goals of particular courses and in the fulfillment of the mission of the college.

B. That the college provide support for faculty working on the development of academically based service components for courses. This would include released time for a current faculty member who, in cooperation with the SVS Director and her office, would devote at least 2/7 time to the following areas:

1) arranging appropriate faculty development forums and seminars related to academically based service,
2) establishing and maintaining a repository for resource materials on academically based service such as articles, books, and sample syllabi,
3) establishing a coordinating mechanism for referrals to service sites,
4) advising faculty members who are developing academically based service components for courses, and
5) developing procedures for evaluating academically based service at Calvin College.

Rationale: Many Calvin faculty members have little or no experience with academically based service. The recommended support will enable faculty members to use this strategy more effectively.
C. That the Provost seek funding for providing the above-recommended support for faculty members who are developing academically based service components for courses.

Rationale: In addition to Campus Compact, several foundations are currently interested in funding programs or activities supporting academically based service. Securing such funding would enable the college to provide support to faculty members without drawing on existing sources of support for the operating budget of the college.

D. That the use of academically based service should meet the following criteria:

1. The service aspects must be related to and integrated with the conceptual content of the course, and designed to contribute to the achievement of the pedagogical goals of the course.

2. These courses must have a significant reflective aspect relating to the service component. This could include class discussion, journal writing, or papers based on the service experience. Standards for the quality of reflection and the expression of it should be comparable to the standards set for traditional academic work.

3. There must be a reciprocity of benefits between the students and the recipients of the service.

4. Referral agreements should be made with organizations which help to empower people or at least do not encourage inappropriate dependency.

5. Service referrals for these courses normally should be coordinated through an appropriate office on campus.

6. Students must receive appropriate orientation prior to taking up a service position.

7. Service referrals must be made to organizations which provide appropriate supervision.

8. There must be a written agreement between the organization, the faculty member, and the students regarding the conditions and expectations for the service aspects of the courses.
9. There should be feedback from students and organizations regarding the effectiveness of both the service and learning aspects of the students' service activities.

Rationale: Criteria 1 and 2 will help to insure that the use of academically based service contributes to the achievement of the goals of the course involved, and that the work involved meets the standards normally expected of students at Calvin College. (Of course it may be appropriate for Calvin students to engage in co-curricular service that does not meet these criteria.)

Criteria 3 and 4 will help to insure that the service performed by the students is of real benefit to those who are being served.

Criterion 5 will help to provide a standard institutional relationship between Calvin and the organizations in which students are performing institutionally based service. This will help to insure that criteria 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 are met, and will protect the participating organizations from many, perhaps competing, requests from different faculty members at different times and in different manners. It will also help faculty members in finding good sites for academically based service.

Criteria 6, 7, and 8 will help to insure that the students will both learn and be of service, in a setting that will not place unreasonable demands on them, the faculty member, or the organization in which they are performing their service.

Criteria 9 will help to improve academically based service over time as we gain more experience with it.