



# Bringing a campus-wide day of community service to St. Mary's

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ENST 450: Applied Sustainability Practicum

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*"Where people contribute to a spirit of caring and an ethic of service" – The St. Mary's Way*

## Background

Community service is not only beneficial to those being served. The educational potential of experiential learning through service is vastly underappreciated. It gives memorable personal context and understanding to what would otherwise be abstract issues, such as poverty, pollution and privilege. The multitude of problems which could be addressed transcend disciplines. Service is a major, but underutilized tool in sustainability – to concern oneself with the well-being of the natural world could not exclude concern about those who live in it.



Figure 1. Logos for organized days of service at other institutions.

Several other schools - the selection presented above is just a small group - have annual days of community service. These events seek to involve as much of the campus as possible by providing a wide diversity of service events. A large-scale event is capable of both reflecting well upon the school on campus and in the surrounding community and catalyzing broader participation.



Figure 2. A selection of logos of established student service organizations on campus. While our event will seek to involve all service clubs on campus, participation of widely recognizable groups will help lend more credibility to a day of service. These groups have community relationships which could facilitate project initiation and organization. We would additionally capitalize upon existing social relationships within the group, creating a social incentive to maximize participation.

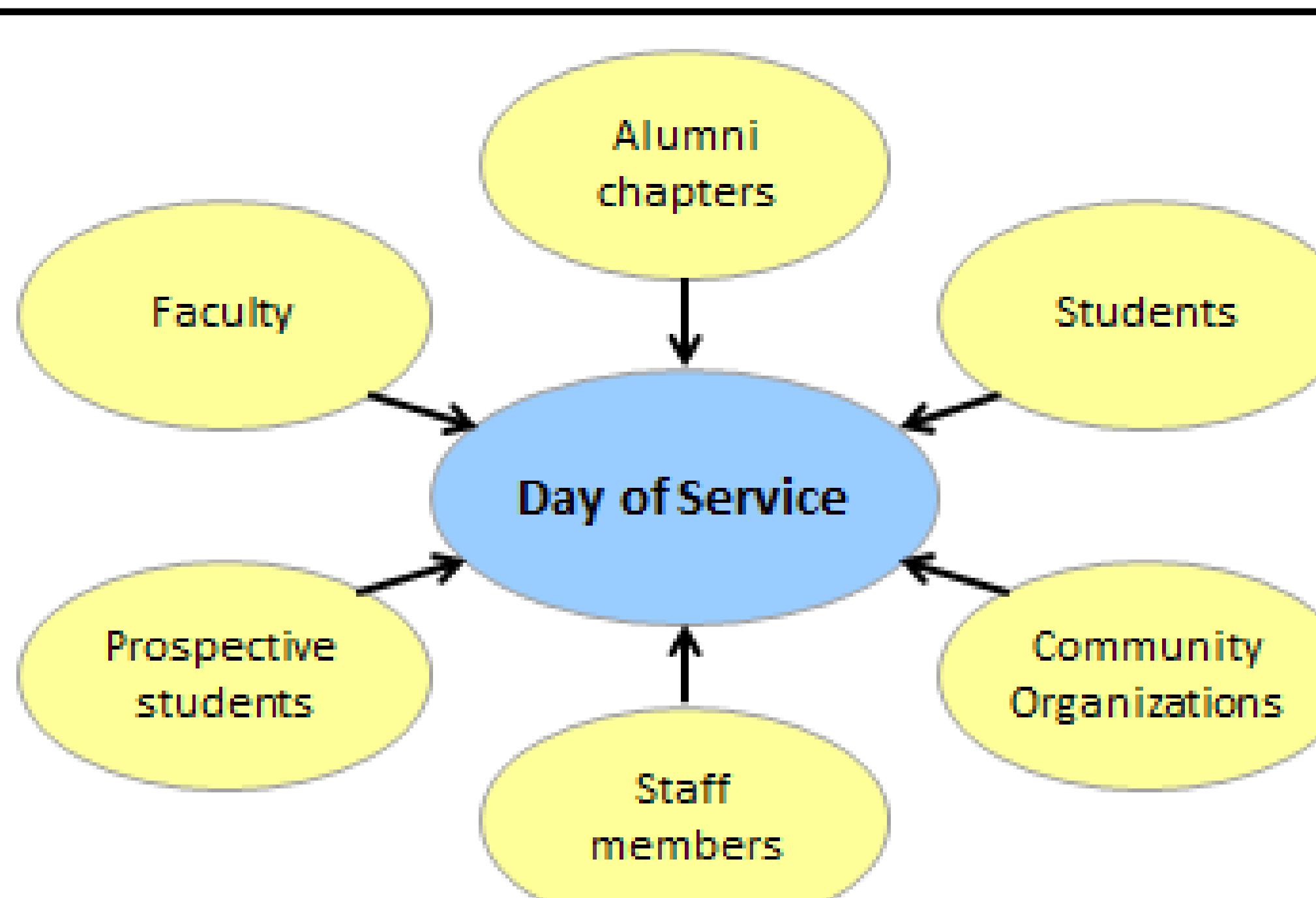


Figure 3. Groups which would be brought together by a college day of service.

## Benefits

- Improved on and off campus relationships
- Enhanced understanding of local issues
  - Projects address these issues
- Opportunity for college to self-promote
  - Increased admissions and donations
- Affirmation of The St. Mary's Way



Figure 4. Oyster planting service event incorporated into new student orientation.

## Planning

- Lisa Coté and student workers in the Office of Orientation and Service Activities
- Tentatively scheduled for April 2016, on the same date as Christmas in April
- **Potential partners** – groups would organize their projects using existing community relationships
  - Service clubs
  - Physical Plant
  - Academic departments
  - Local alumni chapters
- **Publicity**
  - Email, flyers, tabling, word of mouth
  - Rely on groups to independently publicize their own events
  - Widespread, grassroots initiative
- **Transportation**
  - Maximize on-campus events
  - Encourage carpooling
  - Designated drivers for state vehicles



Figure 5. Student participation in Habitat for Humanity, an off-campus, heavily community-oriented service organization.

## Looking Ahead

Community service is largely inexpensive, but large-scale organization requires a large time investment from many people. Increasing the number of student workers in the Office of Service and Social Change would expand potential in terms of both project ideas and organization. Deliberately seeking academically diverse students would maximize diversity of service interests. Such an effort should be combined with an increased social media presence of service at St. Mary's to increase awareness of student involvement. This project will help to seek expand web presence by requesting that participants post pictures of their experience. A greater awareness of the opportunities for service and the benefits which one can derive from it could greatly expand participation within the St. Mary's community.

## Acknowledgements

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