

# CRITICAL COMMITMENTS TO PARTNERSHIP IN GLOBAL SERVICE-LEARNING

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## Abstract

*In addition to many global disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of higher education within the United States were forced to move classes online and put a pause to many initiatives. Areas that were particularly affected by the pandemic were education abroad and global service-learning (GSL) programs. As GSL programs resume operations with partners around the world, there exists an opportunity to redefine partnerships with the goal of reciprocity at the center (Bartleet et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2016; Grain et al., 2019). In this study, authors conducted interviews with partner organizations in a GSL program at a large, public university in the Midwest. Through this work, the authors developed a set of guiding questions to help GSL scholar-practitioners relaunch their programs with the goal of reciprocal partnerships.*

According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities (2007), intercultural knowledge and competence is one of the essential learning outcomes for higher education. Developing students' capacity for understanding and interacting effectively across sociocultural boundaries (Bennett, 2009) is one way that higher education institutions prepare students for an increasingly globalized society. International experiences are often turned to as powerful drivers for intercultural learning, especially when students have opportunities to interact meaningfully with host nationals and experience cultural immersion (Gaia, 2015; Lewin, 2009; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Drawing from broader norms within the field of international education, global service-learning (GSL) has a similar focus on building students' intercultural competence (Hartman & Kiely, 2014). It is important to note, though, that the focus on the learning and growth for students—and the potential for overestimation of this learning and growth—often overshadows the desire for reciprocity as an intended outcome for partner communities (Smaller & O'Sullivan, 2018).

In this article, we will seek to advance a framework of questions that program administrators involved in all sides of the GSL process can use to make decisions and design their programs. The purpose of this study is to

advance questions of what it looks like for institutions to build frameworks for GSL that tend toward reciprocal partnerships and new international travel policies in a post-COVID world.

## A Brief History of Service-Learning in Higher Education

Service-learning is a transformative teaching and learning pedagogy that merges academic content with community engagement or service and includes critical reflection throughout and at the conclusion of the experience (Fullerton et al., 2015). Within the higher education context, the service-learning pedagogy emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as students demanded universities become “more involved in pressing issues facing the wider society” (Meens, 2014, p. 43). At the same time, there was a call for increased experiential learning and a rise of the free-market perspective in higher education within the United States.

As the push for career readiness and job placement infiltrated higher education, many faculty and administrators at institutions of higher education were worried the values of citizen preparedness and community engagement (some would argue the cornerstone of higher education) would be pushed to the wayside (Meens, 2014). Service-learning became a popular opportunity to maintain this civic purpose, leading to centers, offices, and national organizations dedicated to promoting and strengthening service-learning work. As service-learning gained popularity, many definitions of the pedagogy and practice were developed (Furco & Norvell, 2019). In this article, the authors draw heavily on Bringle and Hatcher’s (1995) description of service-learning as an activity “that meets identified community needs [in which students] reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (p. 112). However, the authors also utilize the broader framing of the Center for Service-Learning Practice (n.d.) to recognize that service-learning experiences take place both inside and outside of the formal classroom. In this article, the authors will focus primarily on GSL, which extends beyond classroom walls.

## Service-Learning in the Global Arena

As the service-learning movement grew in the United States, international education programs saw opportunities to incorporate service-learning programs abroad. International education is not new in higher education and has existed as far back as post-World War II (Crabtree, 2008). Once reserved for affluent students, global experiences have evolved to be more accessible, with over 68% of students studying abroad in the 2019–2020 academic year participating in short-term programs, which last eight weeks or less (Institute of International Education, 2020). Beginning in the 1990s, interest grew in traveling to *non-traditional* locations (Stephenson, 1999), including low-income countries and the Global South. Though this trend has been critiqued as contributing to power imbalances between students and institutions from the Global North and host communities in the Global South (Gregory et al., 2021; Yao, 2021), it set the conditions for expanded service-learning programs.

Bringle and Hatcher (2011) defined the pedagogy of GSL as “a *structured academic experience in another country*” wherein students engage in service activities to address community needs and deepen their learning of academic content and global citizenship through direct interaction with host nationals as well as through debriefing experiences (p. 19). Recognizing the variety of factors involved in internationalization efforts, Slimbach (2020) described five unique “drivers in the field of global education” (p. 37) for U.S. institutions of higher education and students who participate in global learning programs. These drivers include cultural diplomacy, institutional profit and prestige, personal adventure and advancement, global citizenship, and the greater good. We specifically highlight cultural diplomacy and reciprocity in the following sections, given the historical context in which GSL programs often take place.

## Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy involves all matters related to the diffusion of the language and culture of a country beyond its frontiers—at its best, it represents the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding (Carrió-Invernizzi, 2014; Mulcahy, 1999). Because it involves the use of soft power (a power with impact that is unmeasurable, subtle, and fluid), cultural diplomacy has been used in government programs as part of their public diplomacy abroad efforts (Stein, 2021). However, Mulcahy (1999) stresses that cultural diplomacy can be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or *telling its story* to the rest of the world. Given these descriptions, GSL can be characterized as a form of cultural diplomacy.

What this means is that leadership practitioners must become critical and intentional on how GSL programs are implemented to ensure they are done transparently. Without this intention, their efforts may be mistaken as forwarding a hidden agenda disguised as cultural diplomacy. This holds particular importance as leadership educators and practitioners seek to further goals of leadership education and development rather than implement GSL programs in a way that might sustain global inequities. This point becomes significant to prevent cultural hegemony in the case of exchanges and certainly when there is a power difference as is often the case between the Global North and Global South with the latter being at the receiving end. How do we ensure that there is not an imbalance in power relations? It is against the backdrop of this contemporary challenge that the work of this proposal is significant and ought to be prioritized, and it is an imperative of the field of leadership studies that these power relations are not only acknowledged but also attended to as a practice of leadership.

## Reciprocity in Global Service-Learning

We suggest that setting reciprocity at the core of global partnerships is one way to avoid the challenges related to sustaining cultural hegemony through cultural diplomacy. While reciprocity is widely considered to be a central tenet of service-learning both domestically and globally (Bartleet et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2016;

Grain et al., 2019), there have also been critiques related to U.S. higher education's unwillingness to dismantle barriers to authentic, reciprocal partnerships (Chapa-Cortés, 2019; d'Arlach et al., 2009). The rigidity of institutional structures and systems, rooted in the neoliberal nature of the modern university, resist partnerships that might threaten the stability of the embedded norms and values of the Global North. Higher education's tendency toward neoliberalism is characterized by its pressure to commodify public services as a way of enhancing the economic potential of private enterprises (Boyer, 1996; Brown, 2015). As a result, the historical foundation of the university as a central contributor to the public good is diminished as the value proposition of higher education institutions is redefined by its ability to produce and to meet the labor demands of the private sector (Harvey, 2005; Hursh & Wall, 2011; Olssen et al., 2004). Related to civic engagement endeavors, Kliewer (2013) argued that "neoliberal ideology *produces* a very specific governing and organizing regime that makes democratic and justice aims difficult to achieve" (p. 74), because it establishes boundaries around what and how work can be done so that the underlying capitalist system remains stable. In the realm of GSL, these limitations restrain reciprocal partnerships that aim to address complex issues and promote social transformation.

Despite these challenges, the concept of reciprocity continues to be prevalent in GSL literature. However, most scholars and practitioners who discuss reciprocity do not unpack their conceptualization of the term (Dostilio et al., 2012). The ambiguity around what reciprocity is and how it is enacted allows higher education institutions to evoke the benevolence implied by the term without having to make any meaningful changes to their curricular or programmatic designs. García and Longo (2015) suggested that "despite different conceptions and critiques of this term, it is widely asserted that service-learning should invoke reciprocity as an essential process to ensure that programs and approaches are concerned with the growth and development of all partners involved" (p. 26). With reciprocity undergirding the community engagement of GSL programs, Hartman (2015) explained that "we learn, grow, and support one another in ways we never knew possible" (p. 99). However, "without those collaborations and reciprocity, one party will benefit more than another and it is doubtful that the relationship will last" (Kearney et al., 2018, p. 36). As such, it is important to understand various perspectives that may inform the diverse expectations of reciprocal partnerships in order to establish transparency and intentionality in GSL program design, implementation, and evaluation.

One of the most common conceptualizations of reciprocity highlights the need for win-win partnerships. This focus on mutual benefits and responsibilities represents what Dostilio et al. (2012) described as exchange-oriented reciprocity. For example, d'Arlach et al. (2009) describe the approach that a university program took to engage with a community facing educational inequities:

Instead of creative, reciprocal, empowering partnerships to alleviate poverty, for example, service-learning takes the form of tutoring the poor. Tutoring is a safe choice: the university benefits from community exposure and the community members receive needed help. But safe does not necessarily mean transformative, as these uninspired interventions tend to replicate existing patterns of power. (p. 9)

The need to rely on the “safe choice” rather than engaging in transformative work is a clear example of institutional and systemic barriers to reciprocity. As a result of the risk and investment involved in long-term change efforts, the service-learning educators opted to settle for work that fit with the charity paradigm (Morton, 1995). While these charity-based activities met the immediate needs of the community, the lack of involvement of community members in designing and implementing the program suggests that the root causes of the issues remain unaddressed. Furthermore, this approach to reciprocity contributes to what Yao (2021) describes as academic dependency in which the host community becomes dependent on the goods and services provided by the higher education institution. While these partnerships “may provide valuable services and outcomes for stakeholders and participants . . . [they] are not likely to conceive of, or achieve, transformative goals” (Dostilio et al., 2012, p. 27). The outcomes, rather than the process of achieving them, are the focus of exchange reciprocity.

Another orientation to reciprocity outlined by Dostilio et al. (2012) is influence reciprocity, which “involves mechanisms to define the engagement process and core elements of knowledge production” (p. 26) with focus on processes and outcomes. Hartman et al. (2014) explained that reciprocity from this perspective “is expressed as a relational connection that is informed by personal, social, and environmental contexts” (p. 110). The concept of influence reciprocity is centered on work *with* as opposed to work *for* a community partner (Sandmann et al., 2010). The influence orientation may be a more achievable endeavor for GSL educators wanting to move beyond mere exchange or uncritical notions of mutual benefit.

It is important to note that mutual benefit is, indeed, a crucial outcome for GSL partnerships (Bartleet et al., 2019). However, a more critical understanding of mutual benefit is needed to deepen the reciprocal partnership. For example, Bartleet et al. (2019) drew from the concept of “generative reciprocity, which refers to the interrelatedness of people, the world around them, and the potential synergies that emerge from these relationships” (p. 26). Generative reciprocity is the third orientation to reciprocity described by Dostilio et al. (2012):

Based on an epistemology of co-production of knowledge, this orientation toward reciprocity is built upon a commitment to relationality that works to honor in a deep way the worldviews, traditions, and various cultures of all members of the partnership (as in influence-oriented reciprocity, but here toward the partners’ ways of being in addition to their ways of doing). (p. 26)

A principal element of generativity is the ability to collaboratively bring about new realities to address current issues facing our world and that these realities would not have otherwise existed had the collective effort not occurred. Generativity requires that power and ownership be equitably distributed in the partnership so that the resulting collaborative community leadership can co-construct a better reality (Shumake & Wendler Shah, 2017). While this transformative lens of reciprocity may seem particularly enticing for critical scholars and practitioners, Dostilio et al. cautioned GSL educators from operating from the belief that generative reciprocity is universally appropriate or desired.

To that end, while this framework of exchange, influence, and generative reciprocity is helpful for GSL educators to understand how they engage with their community partners, it is also important that the process of

defining reciprocity be a collaborative endeavor. Heidebrecht and Balzer (2020) explained that “trust is needed, communication must be fluid, and reciprocity must be co-defined” (p. 151). In their work with Mayan communities, they sought to actively co-define reciprocity in a way that honored the onto-epistemological foundations of the Mayan communities and their own institutional interests and perspective. The collaborative process was especially important for Heidebrecht and Balzer because “of the complexities in conceptualizing reciprocity in the context of international [service-learning] that takes place in Mayan communities where the history of tourism and voluntourism have plastered a layer of commodification on all relationships” (p. 152). They also suggested that “co-defining reciprocity with Global North and Global South participants of [international service-learning] will be an ongoing endeavor, and each subsequent encounter will shed light on ways to grow in and decolonize those relationships” (p. 155), explaining that reciprocity must not be seen as a product that can be obtained but as a commitment that is made and remade throughout the partnership.

Additionally, Shumake and Wendler Shah (2017) argued that GSL program leaders often espouse a value for reciprocity as a driving force in their work, yet they are often ill-equipped to *enact* reciprocity. As such, the authors call on GSL scholars and practitioners, in collaboration with community partners, to develop tangible strategies for reciprocity in the field to mitigate the actual harm that these programs can otherwise bring about. The need for collaborative processes of defining, constructing, and enacting reciprocity was further outlined by Kennedy et al. (2020) as they explained that “whereas service-learning and community engagement are grounded in reciprocity and mutually beneficial relationships, this has been established mainly through colonial approaches” (Kennedy et al., 2020, p. 2). GSL educators may have their own inclination toward a particular definition of reciprocity, but given the collaborative nature consistent across definitions, defining, constructing, and enacting the commitment requires work with multiple partners.

## Fair Trade Learning

To address the challenges related to traditional models of GSL, Hartman (2015) introduced the framework of fair trade learning (FTL), which was developed from existing best practices and aspirational practices for GSL. FTL integrates economic structure and sustainability of practices to design interventions that balance the benefits for students, community, and university.

This framework fosters transparency in the partnership by engaging multiple perspectives in the collaborative process of defining (a) the relationship between the community and the institution; (b) the intended outcomes of the collaboration; (c) the direction and ownership of the work; (d) the priorities of the partnership; and (e) the processes, practices, and structures involved in the partnership. While GSL scholarship often fails to surface host community perspectives in describing the impact of GSL (Clayton et al., 2010; Giles & Eyler, 1998; Hayward et al., 2015; Mtawa & Wilson-Strydom, 2018; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008; Wood et al., 2011), Hartman’s (2015) guidelines for developing FTL programs in partnership with community members recognize that “community-driven intentionality” (p. 99) can enhance the engaged experience for all parties involved because it bridges community and disciplinary perspectives. In blending community-centered and student-centered approaches to

the work of GSL, “FTL intends to make educational partnership exchange embody its idealized ends: human and community flourishing on both sides of an exchange should be enhanced through it” (p. 98). In this way, the FTL framework promotes not only an ethos of intentionality and reciprocity but also a commitment to enact these ideals.

However, even with the best intentions of reciprocity, power imbalances exist within GSL programs. One example of this is the dearth of research that exists on the impact of GSL programs on host communities (Beaman et al., 2018). In contrast, a significant body of research exists on the benefits of GSL to U.S. college students, including deepening “individuals’ cultural understanding and encourag[ing] cultural humility” (Early & Lasker, 2017) and gaining leadership development skills (Childs et al., 2003). Institutions of higher education and program directors may have structured partnerships in a way that is cooperative rather than reciprocal (Worrall, 2007). Meaning, knowledge, resources, and power are not shared equally; institutions, particularly large institutions, are working within robust bureaucratic systems (Manning, 2018); and GSL programs may exist through international education or study abroad offices, or they may exist separately. Regardless, GSL programs are a risk that the university takes on. The COVID-19 global pandemic forced GSL programs, and almost all global travel, to pause (Beaman & Davidson, 2020). While vaccine inequities continue to exist globally, we are moving toward a world in which COVID-19 becomes endemic and something that we learn to live with. As GSL programs begin to relaunch after significant disruption, the opportunity exists to rethink how to partner and how to structure programs in ways that promote equity and reciprocity.

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first was to formally bring attention to the opportunity to reconsider how U.S. institutions partner with global organizations through GSL programs—an opportunity that has surfaced because of the pause of many of these programs brought on by the pandemic. The second purpose was to create a tool for GSL practitioners to utilize as they begin to relaunch these programs and consider how to build more equitable partnerships and programs.

## Methodology

The authors set out to deepen understanding of discourses in post-pandemic volunteer policies of five community-based organizations spanning three continents. Using a qualitative approach, the authors focused on understanding how partner organizations articulated through spoken and written language their experiences and expectations around partnership. A qualitative discourse scholar, Gee (2004) points to the function of language as carrying situated meaning. This speaks to the meaning language has in one context and the power it carries forward into a different context. In this case, the word *service* carries situated meaning worth examining as programs seek to redefine partnerships and ensure their work and partnerships are reciprocal. Through interviews with two partners, and email discussion, we sought to understand how discourses demonstrated expectations and understandings of partnership.

The interviews were with organizations that serve as host partners for a GSL program at a large, public institution in the Midwest. As the authors sought out existing policies from partner organizations, only one of the

five partner organizations had formally written volunteer policies speaking directly to COVID-19. This organization, though based in and managed outside of the United States, was founded by a U.S.-American woman and regularly hosts high numbers of volunteers from the United States. In the absence of formal, written policy at other organizations, the authors invited interviews with partners. Ultimately, data for this study included interviews and email discussions with two host partners. For the purposes of confidentiality, we use pseudonyms to refer to our community partners and their organizations. One of our community partners, Gigi, is the founder of a nongovernmental organization in the highlands of Guatemala providing holistic community development interventions to promote gender equity and youth empowerment. The collaboration with Gigi stemmed from an existing partnership for one member of our team. While this was a new partnership for the unit, Gigi's organization has hosted students from another department at the university since 2018. The second community partner, Cidia, founded and directs a community-based organization outside of Cape Town, South Africa. Her organization hosts volunteers from around the world and matches them with local organizations to work alongside community members on various social issues. The university has partnered with Cidia since 2012. These interviews revealed that organizations had a shift in volunteer expectations compared to those before the pandemic (including requirements that volunteers be fully vaccinated against COVID-19). Those expectations had not been written into formal policy.

Because of the lack of written policy, scholars drew on the understanding that absence of discourse—what is missing or what is not spoken to—by actors is also data to attend to. In this case, we offer insights in the discussion as to the absence of policy for organizations outside of the United States in addition to the proliferation of policy for organizations in the United States as a necessary step before GSL could continue in post-pandemic times.

## Steps Toward Reciprocity

Additionally, in order to build out recommendations and a tool for GSL practitioners' consideration, we reached out to community partners to ask them to reflect on what they had learned about their community and our shared program while collaborations were on hold during the pandemic. Two partners participated in these conversations via email and phone calls. Through these conversations in which we engaged the voices of our global partners, we heard common themes and fresh ideas for revamping partnerships. In asking the general question of what the partner's experience of hosting volunteers before the pandemic had been, we heard from one partner the following:

*As an organisation our experience of hosting volunteers has always been one where we as an organisation tried facilitating the volunteer experience to be mutual benefitting. One where the volunteer, organisation where the volunteer has been placed, community where they lived during their program walks away more knowledgeable saying we learnt so much from each other (volunteer and host) from this experience and can now take the lessons learnt and make an even greater positive impact in this world.*



We heard similarly from another partner that they were most hoping for the goal of reciprocity, described as mutual benefit, as we make a return to GSL.

One partner spoke of the high unemployment rate in their country—exasperated by the pandemic. They questioned whether it was right to engage global volunteers in community challenges right now:

*[Our country] has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. . . . With this being said the most logical question to ask oneself is why should we even consider hosting international volunteers and continue with international volunteer programmes when we should recruit people from our own communities to come and help out within their own communities. This ultimately makes sense. Right? But reflecting and my experience is contrary to this. Because of South Africa's economical state many organisations are closing down and if they are not closing down they are working on shoe string budgets. Workers are COVID-19 fatigued and filled with anxiety. My experience of having an international volunteer come during a pandemic helped remind me, us of the resilience and beauty of our people and reignited hope within the organisation and the community. We were all just trying to survive this pandemic and we were just looking down that we forgot to look up and see the beauty and hope that still exists. Having a volunteer come and call these things out reminded us all again. The social engagement between volunteer and community members motivated community members to get involved and help, and as we operate as a social entrepreneurship, we could employ people on a part-time basis, which also generated an income for people within our community.*

Several ethical considerations surfaced in this exchange, especially given GSL partnerships tend to promote student mobility from the Global North to the Global South (Heidebrecht & Balzer, 2020). Health disparities across socioeconomic lines exemplify vast differences in impact between the Global North and Global South. And while the COVID-19 pandemic created a nearly universal experience of loss worldwide, marginalized communities experienced significantly more challenges in access to care and treatment. This global experience may have allowed program partners from the Global North to acknowledge challenges related to hosting international volunteers in a time of crisis. Although in the case of our one partner, the international volunteer inspired renewed hope within the community, the initial hesitation points to likelihood that the added labor of hosting northern volunteers is not a new phenomenon.

Lastly, a common theme we heard from partners was that they are looking forward to getting back to connection and that this connection fuels transformation. Below is one partner's reflection on GSL programs over the past two years—during which time they had not been hosting global volunteers.

*That volunteerism involves human connections, which for me is the core of everything, the ability to create this synergy between the volunteer, the organization, and the community so that, together, we can broaden not only your understanding, but also your mind, your heart, your spirit so that we can transcend as human beings to co-create a new humanity. It is because of this that we should instil in the young people who come to volunteer the commitment, passion, and ability to come without expectations and with an open heart, mind, and willingness so that this can be a special experience.*

As we prepare for a post-pandemic era, GSL educators have an opportunity to recommit to the communities with which we collaborate to foster a mutually beneficial connection, remove unnecessary burdens for global partners, and cultivate meaningful connections.

## Implications for GSL Practitioner-Scholars

As we worked to build a tool to assist GSL practitioners as they relaunch their GSL programs alongside partners, we recognize the tension that exists between the desire to build truly reciprocal programs and the pull of institutional policies and guidance. Health insurance coverage, risk tolerance of campus administrators and offices of international programs, and international travel policies have changed for many institutions as a result of the pandemic. We would be remiss to not acknowledge the tensions of building reciprocal partnerships and programs while also working within the limitations of higher education policy and guidance.

As GSL practitioners return to in-person global programming and strive to build more reciprocal partnerships, we recommend that they consider an iterative process of four phases of questions and action: partnership inventory, listening session, institutional guidance, and program preparation integration (Figure 1). While the graphic below depicts an iterative cycle, the authors also envisioned a tree with strong roots, a deep well, and an iceberg that all represent intentional, deep partnerships stemming from a solid foundation. Ultimately, we chose the cyclical image to illustrate that reciprocity is an ongoing process—it is a commitment that is made and remade throughout the life of a partnership. We will outline questions to consider and actions to take within each of these phases. The questions emerged from the conversations we had with global partners. During these conversations, we heard stories of the “before” times (pre-COVID-19 pandemic) and also some reimagining of the future. After hearing from partners, we utilized their thoughts and questions to help craft the sets of questions below.



Figure 1 Four phases of GSL program relaunch. To build more reciprocal programs, scholars and practitioners can utilize a cycle of partnership inventory, listening sessions, institutional guidance, and program preparation integration.

## Partnership Inventory

As a first step to GSL program relaunch, GSL practitioners should evaluate and reflect upon the global partnerships they have currently established. Conversations with partners will be necessary to hear how the community has changed and how the partner organization has been impacted. Partners (and GSL staff) should be willing to invest in solidifying the relationship post-pandemic. Critical literature on GSL suggests that educators must do this work to place a greater value on quality rather than quantity of programs (Schroeder et al., 2009). Continuing to deepen and strengthen solely those partnerships in which an educator has established strong relationships is one way to mitigate power differentials because there is ideally an existing relationship of trust. As part of this process, practitioners may consider the following questions:

1. Have you invited partners to your institution before? In the name of reciprocity and trust-building, what would it look like to bring partners to campus as a visiting scholar or community partner?
2. How might you leverage their knowledge, skills, and expertise in your classrooms and programs?

## Listening Session

After facilitating a partnership inventory and determining which partners are interested in moving forward with the relationship, practitioners ought to ask partners intentional questions to learn about changes they hope for in the partnership or programs. In this process, practitioners must also attend to issues of power—specifically, what may contribute to partners, or prevent them from, sharing fully about their experiences. The same question should be one that practitioners ask themselves. In my position, what prevents me from participating fully in this discussion? While asking these questions does not eliminate power differentials, it does invite critical reflection on the role of power in the partnership and in advancing future work. This may lead programs to engage an outside facilitator in organizing these discussions or to consider the format and process differently to promote as much feedback as possible.

Below are examples of questions:

1. What was your experience hosting volunteers (generally) before the pandemic?
2. Through the pandemic, what learning have you had regarding volunteers? We know it's likely you haven't hosted anyone with your organizations—What reflections have you had during the past two years?
3. As we start looking to the future after the pandemic, what is the vision you have for hosting volunteers?
4. Compared to working with individual volunteers or other types of organizations, are there differences in working with universities? If so, what are they?
5. How might you like to see our partnership or program adapt? What possibilities are you looking forward to as we relaunch our work together?

When the authors asked this final question of partners, we heard feedback that one partner may be interested in new initiatives, including awareness-building campaigns related to the mission of their organization and

partnering on research initiatives. Depending on the scope of the GSL program, connections to other departments engaged in the type of work the partner is seeking and resource sharing are two examples of how to further reciprocity and trust in the partnership.

## Institutional Guidance

Throughout the pandemic, many got used to responding to guidance and policies that changed frequently. As GSL practitioners begin relaunching programs, referencing the new international travel policy put forth from their institutions is a critical next step to return to global programming. Institutions may have adjusted how students, faculty, and staff register for international travel or how international travel is approved. There could be new policies around availability of health care in host countries or travel warnings put forward by U.S. State Department or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As practitioners work with partners to deepen reciprocity and build meaningful partnerships, university-level conditions must also be considered.

1. Which institutional partners are critical to connect with as we relaunch GSL programming?
2. Are there institutional partnerships with whom we have not worked with in the past but should? Who are they?
3. What are the implications (if any) on our GSL program of the new international travel policy? How should we adjust our planning based on this new guidance?
4. What are the implications of campus COVID-19 vaccination requirements on GSL programs? If there are no campus COVID-19 vaccine requirements, how might GSL scholars and practitioners navigate expectations of vaccine requirements before students travel abroad?

## Program Preparation Integration

Program preparation is a critical component to effective GSL work (Hawes et al., 2021). Many practitioners discuss the ethical considerations of GSL; issues of power, privilege, and identity; and context related to the host country—historical, educational, political, religious, and more. In addition to these concepts, and to build more reciprocal partnerships, we would encourage GSL staff members to consider the following questions and ideas.

1. How could practitioners leverage the knowledge of partners into the preparation period?
  - a. How might partners assist in sharing and illuminating new ways of being, doing, and thinking with students in advance of their travel? For example, the cultural importance of respecting and incorporating nature into daily life.
  - b. What information would partners benefit from knowing, having, and exploring about volunteers? Ivan Illich raised questions about how to protect and prepare local communities for these foreign volunteers; what can preparation do to mitigate the culture shock of foreign volunteers arriving on site prior to their first step in country?

Another consideration for GSL staff at U.S.-based institutions is equitable compensation for global partners.

2. How are global partners compensated for their efforts? Is this built into the program fee? If partners are assisting with the preparation period, how is that time and energy reflected in the compensation model?

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating and impacted most facets of our world. Higher education in the United States also changed dramatically—including a pause on many, if not all, global initiatives. GSL programs were included in the long list of activities that were no longer safe for participants and for communities. As GSL practitioners now seek to restart these programs, we find ourselves at a pivotal point in the work. The pandemic, having wreaked havoc globally, has gifted us the opportunity to consider how we hope to partner and build GSL programs. With goals of reciprocity and equity in mind, GSL practitioners can engage partners in new conversations.

Furthermore, the process of collecting formal, written policy provides insight into distinctions in the operations and expectations of U.S.-based organizations as compared to host partners. One area for further research could be how expectations of written policy differ between U.S. institutions of higher education and global community-based organizations—as evidenced by the absence of policy in this case.

It is clear to us that leadership programs engaged in service-learning must consider the implications of their partnerships and the expectations that go along with partnership. This must be advanced as a foundation of GSL rather than as a by-product of GSL. This article offers initial insights as to how organizations may begin to pivot post-pandemic into more reciprocal and equitable GSL efforts.

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