

Christie Schichtel
Alma College



Assessing the Greater Outcome of Service Trips

Christie Schichtel received her bachelor's degree from Grand Valley State University in 2009. While she majored in French, her commitment to service and the social sector came through volunteer experiences and coursework in nonprofit administration. Christie joined Michigan Campus Compact as an AmeriCorps*VISTA and serves on the Alma College campus in the Center for Responsible Leadership, developing leadership and service initiatives on campus and in the surrounding community.

Interested in giving back to the community while learning more about the environment, immigration, education or affordable housing? The Alma College Center for Responsible Leadership sends approximately 10% of its student population each year to do just that as they serve with Alternative Breaks, service trips that volunteer with nonprofit agencies during academic breaks. The ultimate goal of the Alternative Breaks program is to create active citizens, those who are educated on community issues and advocate for social change. Yet, until recently, there was no specific assessment to document how these trips impacted students beyond the week-long trip.

Christie Schichtel worked with the Alma College Director of Institutional Research to develop an evaluation plan. Using a well-developed assessment tool from James Madison University, Christie gathered data from sixty students. The forty-question Alternative Break Questionnaire assessed each individual on subscales of personal competency, interpersonal relationships, social justice, civic action, and interpersonal problem-solving. The results of the assessment showed that there were differences between pre-trip and post-trip, especially with the scales of social justice and personal competency. The Alternative Break program will continually use this assessment to see its role in fostering active citizens.

A note from her supervisor, Sallie Scheide: Christie's determination to pursue and implement a comprehensive assessment tool has enhanced our evaluation and assessment of alternative break service trips. This data will be a starting point for a longitudinal study. The results will be utilized in annual reports and will be extremely useful as we tell our stories of service and volunteerism to both campus constituents and in the community. We are grateful to be able to include assessment information as part of our alternative break service story.