

## **Sustainability Literacy and Alternative Break 2016-2017**

Alternative Break is a student led service-immersion experience where students travel to different parts of the country during academic breaks to learn about and address unsustainable/sustainable practices. The mission of Alternative Break is to empower students to progress from members of their community to active citizens through social issue focused education, direct service, and reflection. Due to the nature of Alternative Break, it has a strong relationship to sustainability literacy. Alternative Break focuses on the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) goals related to building awareness, integrating and synthesizing knowledge, building skills and competencies, experiential and learning practice, and becoming change agents for resiliency.

### **Assessment Process**

The QEP goals of building awareness, integrating and synthesizing knowledge, building skills and competencies, experiential and learning practice, and becoming change agents for resiliency were measured through the evaluation and scoring of Alternative Break Reflection Journals. In particular, the direct measures were determined using the Sustainability Literacy Rubric. Students who participated in Alternative Breaks filled out and completed the Alternative Break Reflection journals while on their trips.

Performance targets for this assessment process was to determine the baseline of student learning outcomes aligned with the QEP goals. In addition, the assessment process will influence the operation of the Alternative Break program in the future.

### **Methods**

The Sustainability Literacy Institute assessment team, in collaboration with graduate fellows, assessed 35 alternative break reflection journals using the Sustainability Literacy Rubric. Prior to the qualitative assessment, reviewers went through a rubric and scoring training. Next, teams of three rated the reflection journals and then reconvened to discuss discrepancies in scoring that had a difference of more than one rating level. The reflection journals that were assessed were from six different Alternative Break trips: Asheville (n=7); Atlanta (n= 3); Charlotte (n=5); Miami (n=4); Washburn (n=7); and Puerto Rico (n=9).

### **Outcomes**

Below is an overview of the sustainability literacy student learning outcomes for students who participated in Alternative Break programs during the 2016-17 academic year. Figure 1 is a comparison of all QEP Student Learning Outcomes.

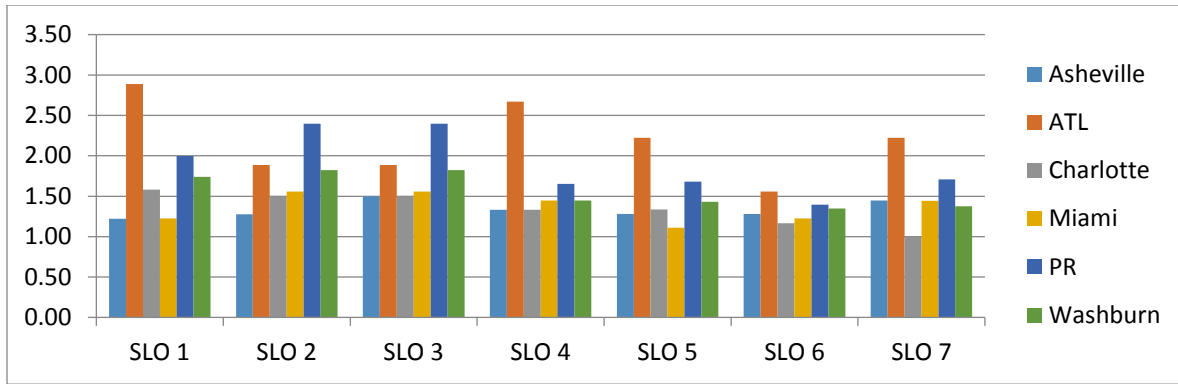


Figure 1. Comparison of all student learning outcomes based upon trips.

**Identify various elements of sustainability and relationships between them (SOL1)**

As Figure 9 shows, the total average rating for SLO1 was 1.78, *below average*; student work identified zero or one element of sustainability. Figure 2 illustrates the following information. The Atlanta Alternative Break trip had the highest average rating of 2.89, *average*; student work identified at least two elements of sustainability, but did not describe the relationship between them. The Puerto Rico Alternative Break trip had the second highest rating of 2.00 (average), followed by the Washburn Alternative Break trip with an average rating of 1.74 (below average). The Charlotte Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.58 (below average), while the Asheville Alternative Break and Miami Alternative Break had the lowest average rating of 1.22 (below average).

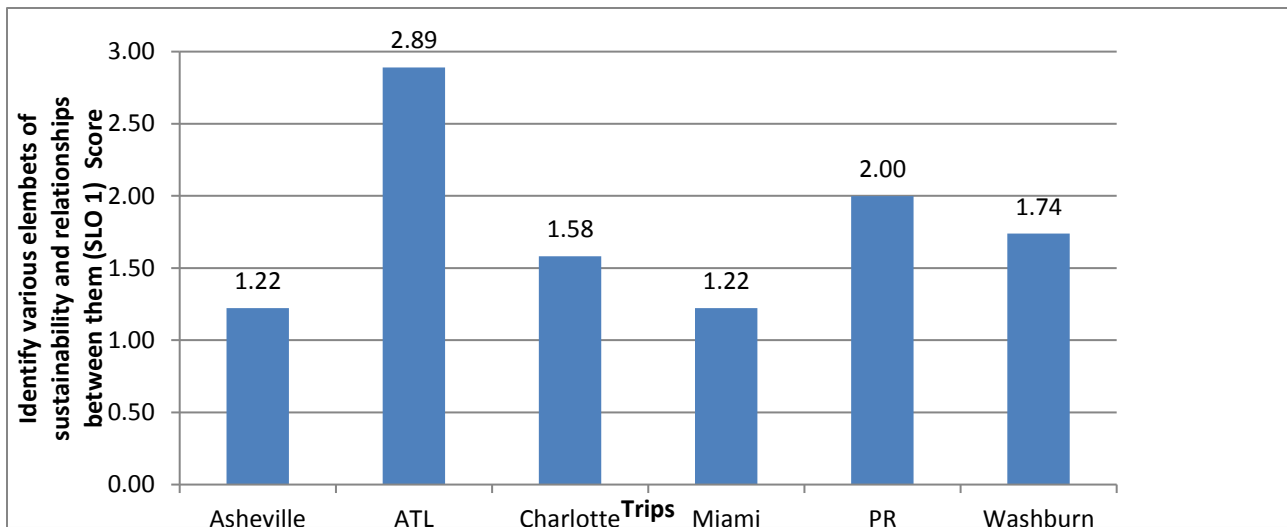


Figure 2. Average rating for identify various elements of sustainability and relationship between them.

### Identify key ways to be more sustainable in personal life and on campus (SLO2)

As illustrated in Figure 9, the total average rating for SLO2 was 1.74, *below average*; student work did not identify ways to be more sustainable. Figure 3 shows the following information. The Puerto Rico Alternative Break had the highest average rating of 2.40, *average*; student work identified at least one way to be more sustainable. The Atlanta Alternative Break had the second highest average rating of 1.89 (below average). The Washburn Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.82 (below average). The Miami Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.56 (below average), while the Charlotte Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.50 (below average). The Asheville Alternative Break had the lowest average rating of 1.28 (below average).

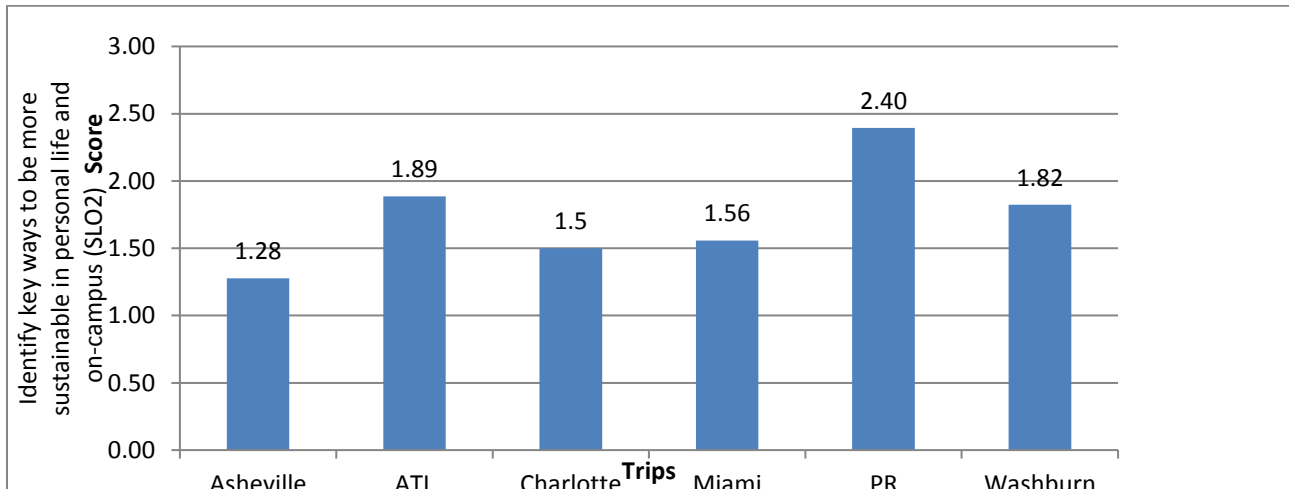


Figure 3. Average rating for identify key ways to be more sustainable in personal life and on-campus.

### Identify policies and practices that have led to unsustainability (SLO3)

As seen in Figure 9, the total average rating for SLO3 was 1.78 *below average*; student work did not identify unsustainable policies/practices. Figure 4 illustrates the following information. The Puerto Rico Alternative Break had the highest average rating of 2.40, *average*; student work identified at least one unsustainable policy/practice. The Atlanta Alternative Break had the second highest average rating of 1.89 (below average). The Washburn Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.82 (below average), while Miami had an average rating of 1.56 (below average). The Asheville and Charlotte Alternative Breaks had the lowest average ratings of 1.50 (below average).

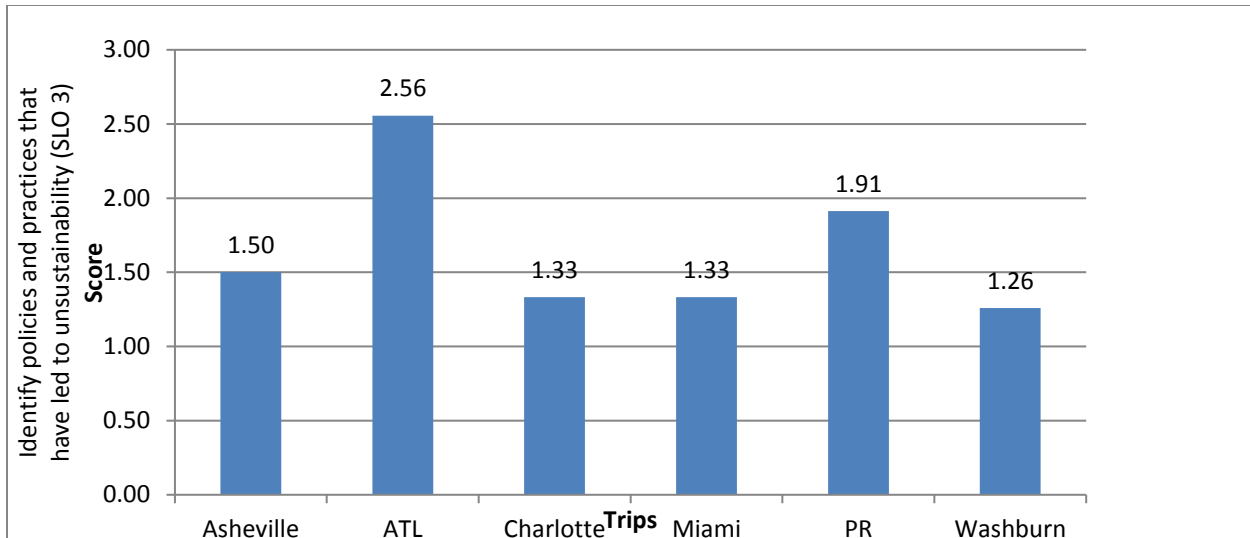


Figure 4. Average rating for identify policies and practices that have led to unsustainability.

**Synthesize knowledge from two or more systems to address a sustainability problem (SLO4)**

As Figure 9 shows, the average rating for SLO4 was 1.56, *below average*; student work did not incorporate knowledge from two or more systems to address a sustainability problem. Figure 5 illustrates the following information. The Atlanta Alternative Break had the highest average rating with an average rating of 2.67, *average*; student work incorporated, but did not synthesize knowledge from two or more systems to address a sustainability problem. The Puerto Rico Alternative Break had the second highest average rating of 1.65 (below average). The Miami and Washburn Alternative Breaks had an average rating of 1.45 (below average), while the Asheville and Charlotte Alternative Breaks had the lowest average rating of 1.33 (below average).

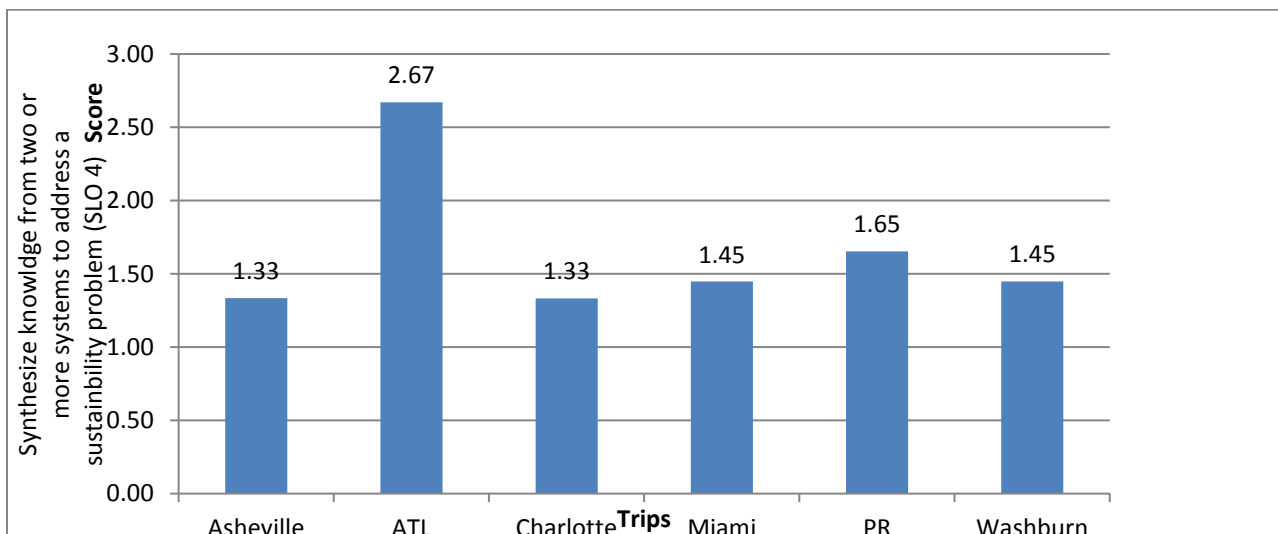


Figure 5. Average rating for synthesize knowledge from two or more systems to address a sustainability problem.

**Demonstrate the impact of production-consumption practices on social, economic, and/or ecological systems (SLO5)**

As Figure 9 shows, the total average rating for SLO5 was 1.51 *below average*; student work did not indicate at least one production-consumption practice, or student work did not address the impact of social, economic, and/or environmental systems. Figure 6 illustrates the following information. The Atlanta Alternative Break had the highest average rating under SLO5 of 2.22, *average*; student work indicated at least one production-consumption practice and provided some explanation of its impact on systems. The Puerto Rico Alternative Break had the second highest rating of 1.68 (below average). The Washburn Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.43 (below average). The Charlotte Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.34 (below average). The Asheville Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.28 (below average). While the Miami Alternative Break had the lowest average rating of 1.11 (below average).

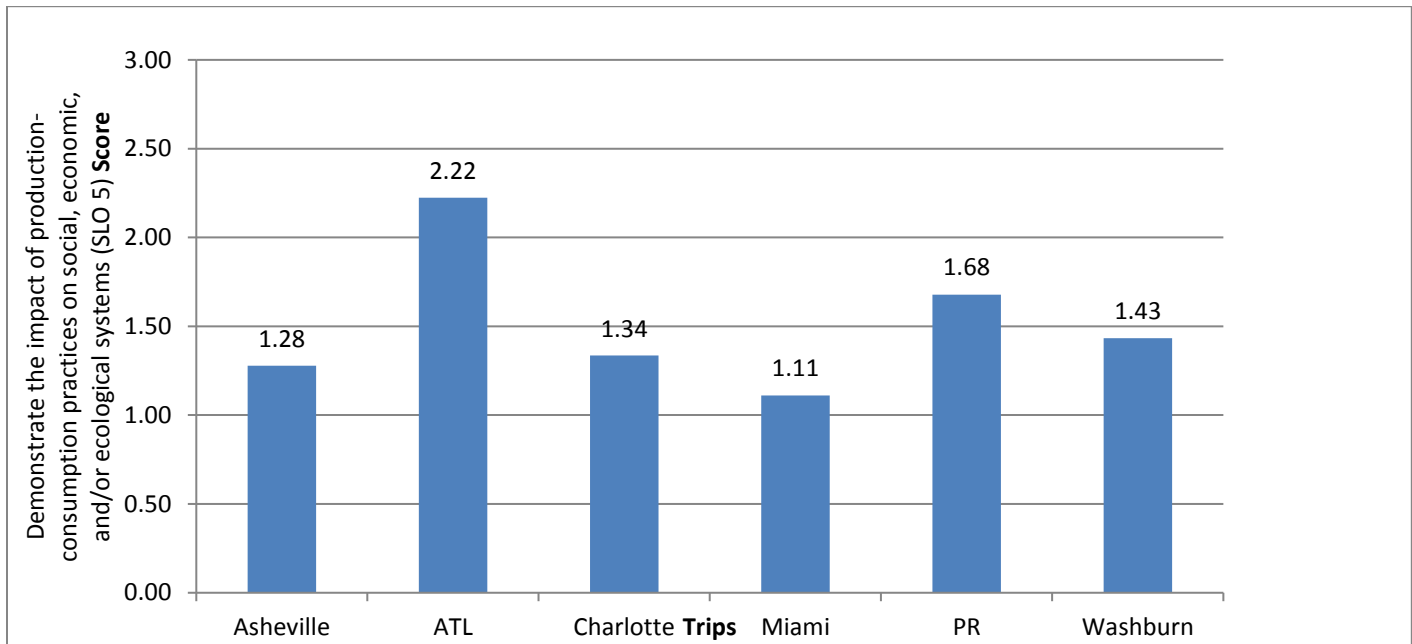


Figure 6. Average rating for demonstrate the impact of production-consumption practices on social, economic, and/or ecological systems.

**Design a solution to a given sustainability problem (SLO6)**

As illustrated in Figure 9 the total average rating for SLO6 was 1.33 *below average*; student work did not provide an outline of an effective solution to a sustainability problem. Figure 7 shows the following information. The Atlanta Alternative Break had the highest average rating of 1.56 (below average). The Puerto Rico Alternative Break had the second highest average rating of 1.39 (below average). The Washburn Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.35 (below average), while the Asheville Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.28 (below average). The Miami Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.22 (below average). The lowest average rating was for the Charlotte Alternative Break with an average rating of 1.17 (below average).

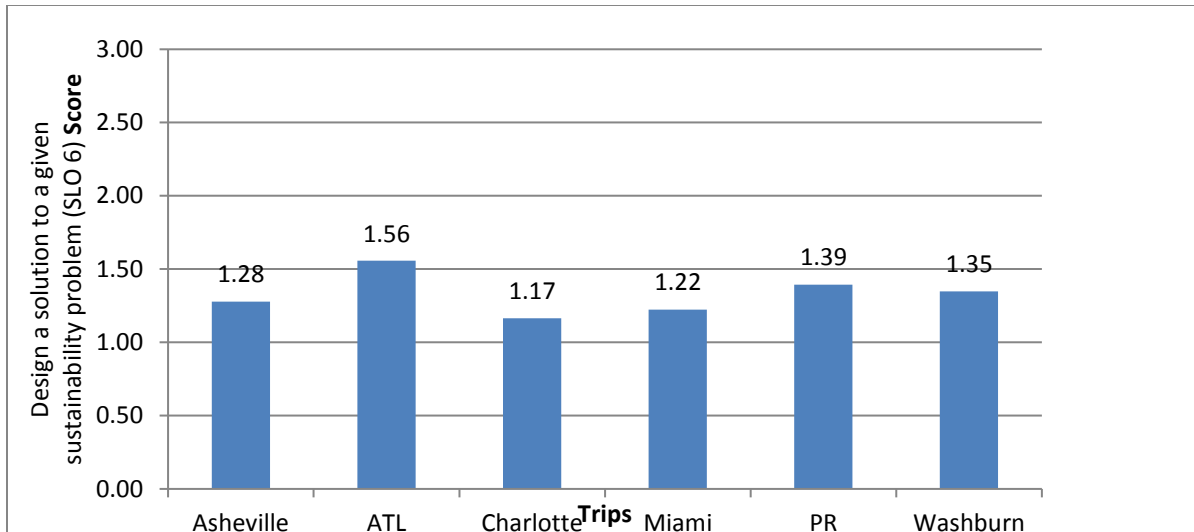


Figure 7. Average rating for design a solution to a given sustainability problem.

### Advocate for resiliency at various levels (SLO7)

As Figure 9 shows, the total average rating for SLO7 was 1.53, *below average*; student work did not advocate for resiliency or only advocated at the individual level. Figure 8 illustrates the following information. The Atlanta Alternative Break had the highest average rating of 2.22, *average*; student work demonstrated some understanding of the triple bottom line problems and resiliency, and advocated for resiliency beyond the individual level (campus, national, international), while the Puerto Rico Alternative Break had the second highest rating of 1.71 (below average). The Asheville Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.45 (below average) and the Miami Alternative Break had an average rating of 1.44 (below average). The Washburn Alternative Break had the second lowest average rating of 1.38 (below average), while the Charlotte Alternative Break had the lowest average rating of 1.00 (below average).

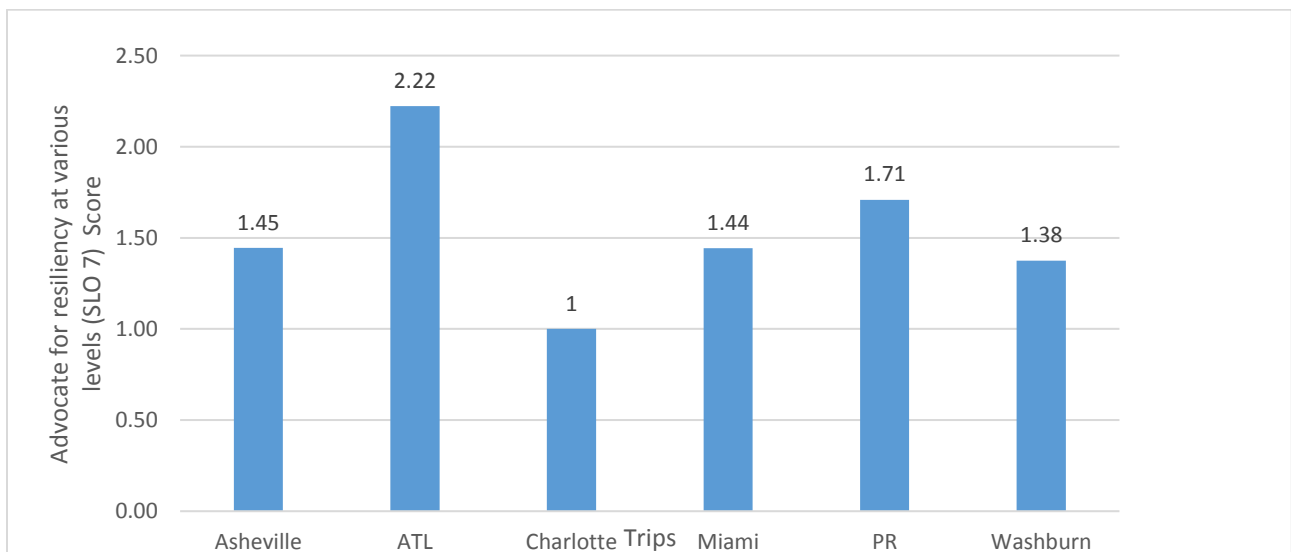


Figure 8. Average rating for advocate for resiliency at various levels.

## Conclusion

According to the assessment results, the average rating for all seven of the QEP student learning outcomes was “below average”. Baseline has now been set at “below average”. The performance target for the 2017-18 academic year is to have the average rating for all seven QEP student learning outcomes at “average”.

During the 2016-17 academic year, the Atlanta Alternative Break and Puerto Rico Alternative Break tended to have the highest average scores. Additionally, although Atlanta had relatively high ratings, it is important to note that it had a small sample size (n=3) out of the total population (N=35). Further, the Puerto Rico Alternative Break had relatively high ratings because it focused on the practice of permaculture, which has a strong emphasis on earth care, people care, and fair share- the triple bottom line.

Due to the assessment results, there will be several changes to the Alternative Break program. The Alternative break program will get rid of weekend trips and focus on just spring break trips. By doing this, CCE staff will have more time to standardize the process of training site leaders, leadership board members, and participants. Alternative Break student leaders will spend the entire fall semester attending bi-weekly trainings rather than only a month. In addition, all site leaders will go through a training on sustainability literacy. Further, by investing in Spring Break, alternative break will be more financially accessible to students. This will increase the overall population size.

The assessment process will change as well next academic year. Instead of assessing all seven Sustainability Literacy SLOs, the Assessment Team will only assess SLO 3, SLO 5, and SLO 7. Additionally, the Sustainability Literacy Institute Assessment Team may want to consider gathering data from Alternative Break participants through a focus group. One limitation of using the Alternative Break Reflection Journals is that it is measuring student learning outcomes based upon students’ written communication skills. With a focus group, the Sustainability Literacy Institute Assessment Team would be able to capture more data from students’ who have stronger oral communication skills. Additionally, it is important to note that many of the student journals provided very little detail, which likely contributed to the relatively low scores.

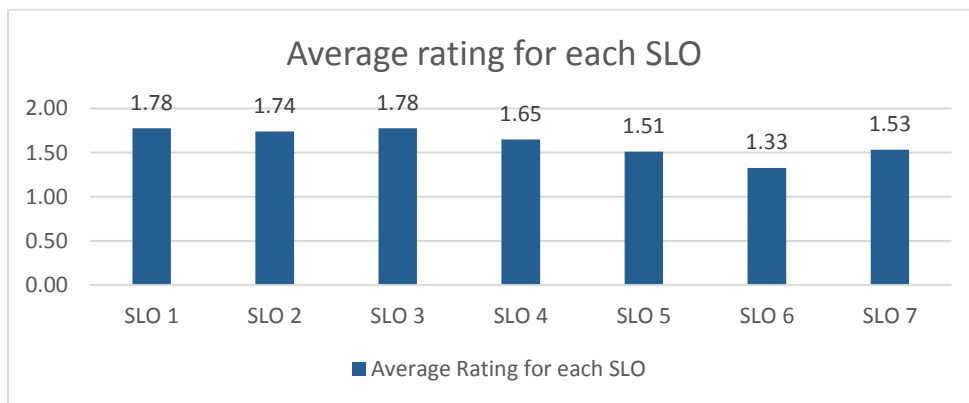


Figure 9. Average rating for each student learning outcome.

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APPLY TO THE COLLEGE

PLAN A VISIT

# Alternative Break

## Join the Movement



## Alternative Break Program

### Want to get involved in Alternative Break?

Applications for our 2020 MLK Weekend Trip and our Maymester Trips are now available.

Check out the applications for details.

- [Alternative Break Participation Application 2019-2020](#)

**The mission of Alternative Break** is to empower students to progress from members of their community to active citizens through social issue focused education, direct service and reflection. With education, direct service, and critical reflection as our guide, the Center for Civic Engagement seeks to provide students with dynamic experiential learning opportunities that allow them to explore the world of active citizenship.



# Reflection Journal

## ALTERNATIVE BREAK



CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
LIGHTSEY CENTER, ROOM 203  
160 CALHOUN STREET  
843.953.5838 || [VOLUNTEER.COFC.EDU](http://VOLUNTEER.COFC.EDU)



Alternative  
Break Program

# 9 Components of AB

1. Strong Direct Service
2. Alcohol and Drug Free
3. Diversity
4. Education
5. Orientation
6. Training
7. Reflection
8. Reorientation
9. Community Impact

**ALTERNATIVE BREAK** EMPOWERS STUDENTS TO PROGRESS FROM MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITY TO ACTIVE CITIZENS THROUGH SOCIAL ISSUE-FOCUSED EDUCATION, SERVICE, AND CRITICAL REFLECTION.

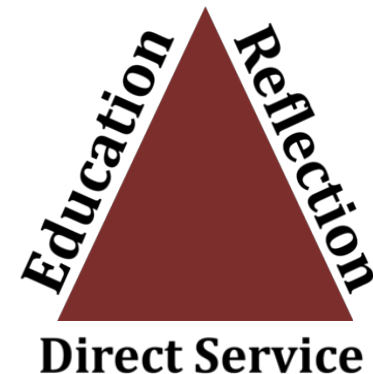


WE ENVISION UNITED, SELF-AWARE COMMUNITIES OF **ACTIVE CITIZENS** EMBRACING DIVERSITY AND WORKING PASSIONATELY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE.

THE **CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT'S** MISSION IS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON STUDENTS AND TO CULTIVATE IN THEM A PASSION FOR POSITIVE **SOCIAL CHANGE**. THROUGH THE USE OF **EDUCATION, SERVICE, AND CRITICAL REFLECTION**.

OUR VISION IS A **COMMUNITY** OF INFORMED CITIZENS COMMITTED TO A **JUST AND EQUITABLE** WORLD.

Triangle of Quality service



## Lead

Apply to join the Leadership Board or a Site Leader and be a part of the magic next year! You could get a chance to lead the very trip you went on and engage with the issue even further. Or, you could get to work behind the scenes and strengthen the program as a Leadership Board team member.

## Stay Curious

Find a way to integrate social justice into your career. Question history and the motivations of people that may have benefitted from the ongoing oppression of others.



**Alternative  
Break Program**

These are all just some ways to stay engaged! If you have any other ideas, let us know - we'd love to help any way we can. Want more? Email us at [volunteer@cofc.edu](mailto:volunteer@cofc.edu)

**Name:**

**Student I.D:**

**Destination:**



# **REORIENTATION SURVIVAL GUIDE**

## How to survive in a Post-AB world

You've just been on this amazing experience with an incredible group of people and been exposed to a deeply rooted social issue. It's perfectly natural to feel overwhelmed and frustrated upon returning to your community, but have no fear, the Reorientation Survival Guide is here!

### **Reflect**

Arrange a group reflection (after post-service) with the other participants from your trip. Talk about the experience as a whole and plan out how to support each other through the Reorientation process.

### **Organize**

Put together an event for your campus! Host a documentary pertaining to a social issue you interacted with, or put together a panel discussion. If possible, connect with other departments on campus to collaborate.

### **Learn**

See if there are any academic opportunities for you to engage with the social issue - whether it be enrolling for a course or attending a lecture by a special guest speaker.

### **Engage**

Get involved with local organizations that work with the social issue. If there aren't any in your area that you can physically get involved with, connect with other organizations and groups so you can be kept in the loop with the current state of the movement.

### **Stay Active**

Try and write to your government representatives about their stance on a particular social issue - use your voice!

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Before departing for your Alternative Break experience, how do you feel about your Education, Orientation, and Training (EOT) meetings?

Do you feel prepared for your trip? If not, tell us why.







**Using complete sentences, respond to the following questions.**

What is something that you were taught in one of your college courses that you now have a more concrete understanding of due to this experience?





# NOTES

Use these pages to write down any thoughts, revelations, quotes that you want to remember, doodles, etc.

Who gains more as a result of your short-term volunteer work - you or the community? Why?





**Check all that apply. If none of these apply, please leave this question blank.**

As a result of this experience, I have interacted with people of a different...

- Race
- Gender
- Sexual/Gender Identity
- Religion
- Culture



Please explain:

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your Alternative Break experience?







How will this AB experience change how you engage with your community?

In what ways does this Alternative Break experience complicate your ideas about volunteer work?



Describe how has Alternative Break impacted your knowledge of social justice, privilege, and oppression.

Describe how your own ideas about diversity and equity and their roles in society have been impacted by your Alternative Break experience.







What did you give/contribute as a result of your Alternative Break experience?

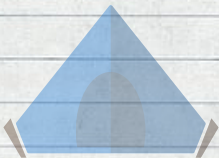
Talk about how Alternative Break influenced what you think about yourself, this social issue, the systems which you are a part of, and the world around you.





What is something that you were exposed to in the pre-trip EOT meetings that you now have a more concrete understanding of due to this experience?

What did you gain and learn as a result of your Alternative Break experience?







How has this Alternative Break experience exposed you to sustainable or unsustainable practices?

In what ways does this Alternative Break experience approach social, environmental, and/or economic problems?



COLLEGE of  
CHARLESTON

CENTER FOR  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

November 14, 2016

College of Charleston  
Quality Enhancement Plan  
66 George Street  
Charleston, SC 29424

Subject: Memorandum

Dear Dr. Todd Levasseur:

The Center for Civic Engagement is in full support the College's Quality Engagement Plan (QEP), Sustainability Literacy as a Bridge to Addressing 21<sup>st</sup>- Century Problems. As such, the Center for Civic Engagement is committed to supporting the QEP on each theme of the year through the Alternative Break program and other civic-based initiatives through our office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher J. Ciarcia".

**Christopher J. Ciarcia**

Associate Director, Center for Civic Engagement  
(843)953-0810 | [ciarcia@cofc.edu](mailto:ciarcia@cofc.edu)