The Class
As many as 300 students have been enrolled in a single section of JOUR 101 Introduction to Mass Communication. As the course was designed to introduce freshman to the broad field of mass communication, it may be one of the first classes these students take in their academic careers. For that reason, we wanted to create small groups of 5-6 students who would then collaborate on a service learning project using tools and strategies discussed in the class.
The Challenges
With 58 group projects the workload is not insignificant. A team of three reviewed the initial proposals and interim progress reports and provided feedback to student groups on each. We reviewed the final projects, read the group evaluations and individual evaluations before determining final grades. We developed rubrics for grading and managed three graders (instructor + two assistants) through use of Google Sheets.
The Results
Students tackled a surprisingly diverse array of projects, from soliciting donations of canned goods for The Pantry, to a voter registration drive to a campaign to decrease social media use, many groups took on challenging topics.

They spoke to clients, considered audience and negotiated with each other to assign tasks, and they used social media, created videos, took photos, designed flyers and launched fundraising sites among other initiatives. All of these efforts were a platform for learning about many of the aspects of communication discussed in the class, including public relations, journalism, advertising and more. Students had few comments about the project on course evaluations, but the only mentions were positive, including this one:

“I enjoyed the Service Learning Project immensely. It was very time-consuming, but I loved being able to actually experience what it is like to get involved in the community and promote a cause through various forms of advertising, etc.”