The opportunities Hope faculty and staff have to impact students go far beyond the classroom — be it connecting first-year students to needs in the community, advising campus media or helping students make contact with business professionals.

At the Volunteer Services office, Wilma Hart spends a great deal of her time connecting students to service projects in the surrounding area.

“We get a lot of requests from the community about needing volunteers,” said Hart, the college’s volunteer services coordinator. “If we get a call from an agency that needs a group of students for a particular project, it’s channeled through the Volunteer Services office.”

During the first weekend in September, Hart coordinated the “Time to Serve” project, in which more than 400 Hope students offered their time to local agencies, nonprofit organizations, churches and individuals.

“It’s a great way to meet new people, and it helps you find self-fulfillment while building up the community,” said Britnee Longwell, a junior from Indianapolis, Ind., who co-chairs the college’s volunteer services council with junior Caitlin Lamade of Wharton, Ill.

Students find out about volunteer opportunities through a variety of avenues, including a volunteer fair held the first week of classes. Some opportunities are of a large scale, such as the annual Dance Marathon held in March to raise funds for Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital in Grand Rapids, Mich. About 1,000 students were involved in last year’s event, raising $186,000 for the hospital.

There are smaller events, such as the “Run and Raise” that was introduced last year.

“We just grabbed rakes, went into the neighborhood and started raking people’s yards,” Hart said.

Other activities during the year include Thanksgiving food drives, Operation Christmas Child and Easter baskets for Hope’s CASA (Children’s After School Achievement) program.

Sometimes the learning experiences take students halfway around the world. Dr. Stephen Hemenway, professor of English, has taken nearly 2,000 students to Austria as part of Hope’s Vienna Summer School program since he became its director in 1978.

Dr. Hemenway, who has taught at Hope since 1972, is a big believer in students spending at least a part of the college career studying overseas. “It makes them more open-minded, more tolerant about the way other people not only act, but believe,” he said.

Dr. Hemenway recalled one Senior Seminar class he taught on campus in which nearly all of the students had spent at least one semester studying outside the United States. “The level of conversation was elevated, because people had been exposed to other cultures, other religious perspectives,” he said.

Dr. Hemenway also advises the Environmental Issues Group on campus, which he founded in the late 1980s. The group often has speakers addressing environmental issues, and also participates in a number of cleanup efforts each year, including one in the fall along Lake Michigan.

“Students should get involved with at least one organization … in which you do things that are different from your classes,” Dr. Hemenway said.

For students considering careers in business, the temptation for many is to focus solely on making contacts that will help them get hired after they graduate. But for students in the George F. Baker Scholars Program, the approach goes far beyond networking with business professionals, said Tony Muiderman, professor emeritus of business administration, who has been the program’s advisor for nearly 30 years.

“We want to provide opportunities and experiences for undergraduate students which are outside the normal curriculum of the college,” Professor Muiderman said.

While students in the Baker program get to meet CEOs and other top business leaders from around the country, they’re also just as likely to meet people from government, the faith community and the non-profit sector.

“In five years, they’re going to have positions (in the business community), and be asked to give back to their communities in terms of service on boards and in other organizations,” Professor Muiderman said.

Baker Scholar students serve in the community in a variety of ways, including volunteering at the local Boys and Girls Club and tutoring.

About five or six students are selected for the program each year by a group of professionals outside the college community, based on their leadership potential, Professor Muiderman said.

Dr. Teresa Housel, assistant professor of communication, is another who believes strongly in the value of involvement in organizations outside the classroom. She says for students in a liberal arts setting who are interested in careers in the media, getting involved in more traditional sports such as basketball and flag football to some newer offerings, such as ultimate frisbee and inter- tavel water polo. Men’s, women’s and co-teams are available for students to join.

Mortensen says there aren’t a number of reasons why intramural sports at Hope are so popular, ranging from the opportunity to meet new people to satisfying a desire to compete.

“If they were involved in sports in high school, and didn’t want to compete at the intercollegiate level, it still gives them a chance to compete in something they love,” Mortensen said. “For the freshmen coming in, it gives them a chance to interact with upperclassmen and other students on campus.”

Mortensen, a former cross country and track standout for the Flying Dutch, began working with the intramural program her senior year as an intern. “It’s just being around sports and activities, and I just thought it was a good fit,” she said.

In addition to students being involved in the games, students help set up equipment and coordinate game schedules. Mortensen always keeps in communication with students for opportunities to add new sports.

“I do surveys to get a general idea of what the students want, and try to implement them,” Mortensen said.

Students should get involved with at least one organization … in which you do things that are different from your classes.

— Stephen Hemenway

Across campus, members of the Hope faculty and staff make a priority of providing meaningful opportunities for students to learn and grow beyond the classroom. From left to right are Tony Muiderman, Kristen Post ’09 Morrison, Wilma Hart, Dr. Teresa Housel and Dr. Stephen Hemenway.