Serving the Need and Developing our Community: One discipline is never enough

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How can and should the well resourced and energized campus community do more for the community at-large?

Community needs, developments, initiatives and dilemmas aren’t solved, addressed, started and sustained by individuals or individual disciplines – it takes a team, a commitment and the application of multiple perspectives.
Universities already do a lot, get involved!

- RSO’s
- Student/Greek Life
- Volunteer thru CSA
- Residence Hall’s
- Community Partnerships
- Public services
- Service-Learning
Not volunteerism.....

“Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”

(Learn & Serve)
Students learn subject matter through real world application and provide a needed or helpful service.....

*win/win, right?*
Little incentive for faculty
- Extra work
- Rewarded for scholarly contributions to field
  - Getting published
  - Conference presentations

And;

- Being an effective teacher — SL is not always recognized as a best practice
Oakland University has acknowledged the merits of using SL in the current strategic plan.....

Goal #3 – “Community Partnerships”

Strategy #3.3: “Further develop partnerships, internships and collaborations that benefit students and increase opportunities for service learning”
And....

Students seem to want Service-Learning opportunities....

At my previous institution over 83% of students polled would register to take an SL course over a non-SL course.
If learning is priority

Recognize we go to Google for knowledge and information but...

Still no substitute for real experience, it's the natural way we learn – when we are interested
“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience,”
(Kolb, 1984, p. 38)

Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model (1984)

- Concrete Experience
- Reflective Observation
- Abstract Conceptualization
- Active Experimentation
How do we connect service with learning?

- Find a community need
  - Not always obvious
- Is it interesting and important?
- What can we do about it?
- What discipline(s), classes or faculty could contribute – good fit?
- Work can be done and coordinated in phases – one class builds upon the work of another, students can help plan
- Students will feel accountable to each other and community partners for their piece of the project
Listen, learn, ask questions, what is the scope?

No emergency shelter for homeless in Mt. Pleasant

• Where do homeless go?

• How does PIT count provide accurate data?

• Rental market is inflated

• Community is at a disadvantage in addressing homelessness

No single discipline or organization can solve, disciplines are ways for us to categorize knowledge not operationalize impact in our community.
Do something about it....

Get organized, make a plan

I am interested

I can help

I can make a difference

How much of a difference is up to you....and your team of doers and thinkers.

Students can help in this phase – no personal or political agenda, just ideas
Disciplines vary in how they structure, produce and validate knowledge....

Different questions, different focus, unique terminology and different ways of determining what counts as "legitimate."

.....traditionally a barrier or potentially a strength if real impact and a synergistic solution is sought.

Everyone can learn something from each other. (Mansilla, 2004)

Move beyond memorizing accepted facts or disciplinary protocols and ask "why?"
Multidisciplinary work better prepares students for:

- professional work and citizenship
- developing critical thinking, problem solving and employing multiple perspectives (Lattuca, 2004)
- Increased ability to evaluate expert testimony,
- tolerance for ambiguity,
- Sensitivity to ethical issues, disciplinary, political or religious bias,
- creative or original thinking and humility or listening skills (Newell, 1994)
Interdisciplinary team

Common purposes:
- Course development
- Faculty development
- Team teaching
- Collaboration among faculty who offer separate sections of a multi-sectioned course

Or
- To meet a genuine community need that can’t be met in the scope of one discipline
cause?...Sell me on why!

Managing patient care...better
- Future MD's, physical therapists, social workers, psychologists, nurses

Developing the next big thing
- Future engineers, businesspeople, scientists, writers, social scientists

Educational technologies or tools
- Future computer programmers, graphic designers, psychologists, curriculum developers, librarians

Social dilemma research or action
- Future politicians, social scientists, theologians, technologists, public relations, practitioners, activists, biologists
Volunteers are placed in the community and help as needed....

Service-learners can develop the community...when playing a specific role a big project....
Examples:

ICRH project
- Start by raising awareness - start dialogue, create video (LAR, BCA)
- Create social media presence, managing website (BIS)
- Develop communication or promotional plan (PR)
- Staff for guest intake (Social Work)
- Efficient way to train or orient over 1000 community volunteers (HR, MGT)

Additional needs
- Health care check-ups and referrals (HP, Mobile medical bus - PA, CMED)
- Counseling, social service referrals and advocacy (SPD, Soc. Work)
- Future service center or day shelter design (HEV, Int. Design)
- New interns (PR, Soc. Work)
Coe township (Shepherd) library renovation project

- Develop new layout, help with install, painting (Interior design, HON)
- Recruit community volunteers to help (PR, HON)
- Create and research for nostalgic and historical art/décor (ART)
How can I implement?

- Be vigilant, think synergy;
- Who are the players?
- What are they doing?
- What is needed?
- What can I do?
- Make connections with others who think and believe the same
- Make it known to your students
Thank You!

“Action without study is fatal. Study without action is futile.”

-Mary Beard