

Creating a Civically Engaged Campus

February 1st to February 19th, 2010

Twenty-two faculty and staff members participated in this virtual workshop, where they shared their thoughts on the subject in an online discussion board.

“One small step I could take would be for my Basic Math students to use what they learn in class (such as geometry, percentages, proportions, etc.) and talk about the different ways they could use this information in their daily life (or help someone else solve problems in their daily life).” **Carol Ising**

“Becoming involved in the groundwork of Habitat for Humanity would show Learning Center students the usefulness of their math class. We could encourage them to participate, but never mandate it. Realistically, students attending LC classes (and most classes here) are struggling to maintain decent grades while juggling families, full-time jobs, and finances. To ask them to add an outside project to their classwork would truly be a burden unless it could be done after the kids go to bed or before morning classes. Community projects are definitely a worthwhile and rewarding endeavor, but how they are accomplished has to be carefully thought out. Also, you cannot discount the extra workload of organization and responsibility placed on the teacher. In the video *The Value of Service Learning* the projects were suggested by the community, then implemented by the students. With this process the projects will truly be a complement to the community not something a teacher decided would be a good idea. Maybe a class, school organization or continuing ed class could be developed to explore worthy community projects.” **Cathy Gagnepain**

“One small step I might take would be to discuss the content learned in my chemistry courses in ways that my students will be able to utilize in their personal lives. For example, after learning about the law of conservation of mass, which spells out the fact that matter is neither created nor destroyed in chemical reactions, my students could possibly, especially if they are parents, provide a lesson to their children and their classmates about recycling. Recycling is a perfect example of how to deal with the idea of the law of conservation of mass. Where will the byproducts of decomposition of plastics, metals, and chemicals such as fertilizers, aerosols, and pharmaceutical drug metabolites end up after they are introduced to the natural environment? Let’s say one of my students goes to school with their child. They could possibly lead a discussion with the classmates about the importance of recycling due to the law of conservation of mass. They may even be able to bring this knowledge to any council they may be a part of in the community that deals with decisions regarding natural resource management, pollution mitigation, wastewater utilization, etc...more informed students means more informed citizens.” **Wesley Whitfield**

“My Business 101 currently interview and write a detailed report, covering key competitive and management categories, on a local commercial enterprise. I plan to add to the course requirements an additional interview and report of a local civic organization that will include current level of community involvement, an

assessment of effectiveness, and explore how additional involvement could be achieved if the organization desires. Business writing, parenthetically, is one of my key learning integration goals.” **John Myers**

“I no longer teach public speaking, but if I were to add a service learning component to the course I would team students with local health departments to assist in disseminating public health information. Depending on the needs to the organization, students could prepare presentations for health department employees or they could be the ones going out to schools to present the material. Either way, students would be using the information from the course (how to effectively write and present an informative speech) and providing a service to a community organization.” **Laura McCloskey**

“One essay mode that is an option to teach in Comp [Composition] I is *Process Analysis* (in a nutshell, the student must write a detailed process of something). I don’t know if this sounds silly, but I suppose I could provide several suggestions for students to attend something community-related that includes a process, such as a student’s open town or county meeting and write about the process of how his/her town/county conducts its business (i.e. a council meeting, a zoning meeting, a court hearing, etc) or attend an open community club meeting... However... it would be more beneficial to find something that the entire course could be incorporated with.” **Lauren Ermel**

“A&P [Anatomy and Physiology] students could volunteer at a local hospital or nursing home for an hour then share that experience with the rest of the class.” **Kim Foster**

“A democracy, as Mr. Lang describes us, (though the correct characterization of us is a representative republic), requires a knowledgeable and engaged citizenry. If we are doing our job correctly, that knowledge is gained both in the classroom and in various outside the classroom settings, i.e., the local hospital, foodbank, tutoring program, and in many kinds of jobs for pay.” **John Myers**

“Agreed, Terry, that we should be cognizant of the risks involved in ‘forcing volunteering’, but—and I know this isn’t a terribly popular philosophy—I think it’s our responsibility to push/nudge/waterboard students out of the comfort zones and into ‘real’ world scenarios. Many theorists postulate that learning doesn’t begin until /application/ (Praxis), and I tend to agree that moving beyond the classroom is necessary if our students are truly going to learn the material we teach them. If there are a couple of bad seeds interacting with some of our community organizations, I’m willing to bet they won’t be nearly bad enough to outweigh the efforts of the rest of our students.” **Bryan Peters**

“I would just make sure that whatever service learning project is incorporated has a component that the student would lose credit for poor performance.” **Terry Kite**

“As an instructor of composition and one who is also participating in the HIEE initiative, I have been trying to think of ways to incorporate service learning. One intriguing idea pitched to me that would fit ENG 101 involves students visiting nursing homes and interacting with residents with the goal of writing a resident’s personal narrative. Another idea I was thinking of for the Compare/Contrast essay mode would require students to engage in two volunteer activities that share some basis of comparison, and then constructing their Compare/Contrast essay around the comparison of the two experiences.” **Lauren Ermel**

“Lauren’s comp/cont [compare/contrast] idea is a good one, no doubt, but it is /a lot/ of work (for teacher and students) for just one paper. If, however, you make the service learning project the guiding force of the semester’s work, it’s much easier to transition into and out of different assignments. To stick with the nursing home example, you could begin the semester with the narrative, move onto a definition or exemplification paper about something at the nursing home, move into a process analysis about the running of the nursing home, and so forth. It wouldn’t just be a quick in and out affair for the students, and they would gain an intimate understanding of the cause they’re studying.” **Bryan Peters**

“In attempting to provide enriched experiences for our students, I wonder if we could find ways to derive more benefits from the experience of our students who have been in the workforce and/or have had civic experiences. The recounting of those experiences could be easily integrated into the course objectives and structure.” **John Myers**