GETTING ENGAGED—
IN THE COMMUNITY

Creating a large-scale service event as part of first-year programming

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Today…

- History of service in orientation at SUU
- Why service?
- The event
  - Planning, leadership, day of, community sites, follow-up
- Feedback and assessment
- Q&A
Orientation at SUU

- A required one-day program for all first-time, full-time students during the summer
- Followed up by a four-day “Thunderbird Flight School”
- Initially only one hour could be devoted to actually participating in service
- Previous activities included quilts and toys
Orientation Learning Objectives

• “Orient” students to service and service-learning as an opportunity to enrich and elevate their educational experience
• Introduce students to the concept of civic responsibility and engagement
• Make students aware of the Service & Learning Center
• Help students make a “connection” to both the community and the university
  • Aids in both retention and persistence
• Most importantly for our program: Allow time for the students to connect and build the friendships they’ve initiated at orientation
Why service?

• “Service participation shows significant positive effects on all 11 outcome measures: academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding), self-efficacy, leadership (leadership activities, self-rated leadership ability, interpersonal skills), choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college” (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee, 2000).

• Service-learning has a “positive impact on personal, attitudinal, moral, social, and cognitive outcomes” (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996).
Service-Learning Objectives

• Introduce students to concepts of community
• Introduce students to the Service & Learning Center, Center leadership
• Introduce students to the community/community partners and service/service-learning opportunities
Planning

- Shift toward a half-day event
- Securing community sites
  - Initial contact via letters
  - Follow-up phone calls
- Dividing students
- Transportation
- Supplies
  - Donations
  - Campus funding
Leadership

- Overseen by the Service & Learning Center in conjunction with the VP for Student Services, New Student Orientation
- Utilized a variety of campus groups for day-of leadership including:
  - Student service leaders
  - Greek organizations
  - Student government
  - FYE course instructors
  - Other faculty and staff
More on leadership…

• Group leaders attend a training session the day prior
• Service leaders help assemble supply kits day prior
  • Any needed supplies—rakes, shovels, gloves, rags, all groups have camera
• Group leaders
  • Check students in as they load bus
  • Collect waivers
  • Keep everyone involved
  • Have an eye toward safety issues
  • Call role and collect reflection sheets as students load busses to return to campus
The BIG Day

• Students meet together for an overview
• Divide students into groups with a leader
• Travel by bus to community sites in groups of 20-50
• Meet with community partner for short site orientation
• Work, work, work!
• Complete reflection sheet, return to campus
Sites/projects include

- State outdoor areas
- Historical sites
- Public schools
- Animal shelters
- National public lands
- Special Olympics
- Family centers
- Women’s shelter
- Homeless shelter
- Senior centers
- Highway/road cleanup
- Native American Tribal Center
- City parks
- Literacy center
- Food bank
- City offices
- Benefit carwashes
Follow-up

• Slide show of the day’s events at the first Bread & Soup Nite of the year
• Related reading/seminar in FYE course
Feedback/assessment

- Community partner feedback

"What a pleasure it was for me to visit the freshman students from your University working on our recently planted trees here in Parowan last month. This was the second year we have had these fine young men and women as part of your innovative 'Community Service Saturday'… It was a great idea to get these youth involved in out-of-classroom experiences, especially those that will help them understand the value of community service."
Feedback/assessment

• Student feedback
• Overall, very positive (over 98 percent**).
• Coding of open-ended reflection sheet indicates that students leave the event with an understanding of what community means, as well as their role in it.
Feedback/assessment

- Student feedback, continued…
- “Real education is all about doing! The community is where students get to do. By connecting with our community we are in turn connecting with our education”
- “Being involved lets you feel that you are a part of something bigger than yourself. I feel like this is “my” town and I belong to it just like it belongs to me.”
- “You can learn a lot about a school by how they help in the community.”
- “This opportunity was AWESOME! Thank you!”
Feedback/assessment

- Challenges
  - Site disparity--carwash vs. pulling sticker weeds on a dusty trail
  - Site orientation disparity
  - Meaningful follow-up
  - Transportation
- ** Assessment—a note about the student reflection process…
Feedback/assessment

• Changes for this year include:
  • Orientation template for community partners
  • On-site leadership—a student service leader at each site
  • Potential shift to staggered departure times
  • Send a list of suggested readings/discussion questions to FYE instructors

• Overall, Service Saturday has been a great event that meets Orientation, Service & Learning Center and University objectives
  • Provides social association
  • Orients students to community, Service & Learning Center
  • Provides mission fidelity
Questions and discussion