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A Proposal
For the Development of
FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY
SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM

by

Dan Kahl
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ProjectSERV AmeriCorps

January, 1998

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1/20/98

TO: Fort Hays State University
FROM: Dan Kahl, Director, ProjectSERV AmeriCorps
DATE: January 1998
RE: Proposal for Service Learning Program

“We are a nation founded upon active citizenship and participation in community life. We have always believed that individuals can and should serve. It is crucial that service toward the common good be combined with reflective learning to assure that service programs of high quality can be created and sustained over time, and to help individuals appreciate how service can be a significant and ongoing part of life. Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both. Those who serve and those who are served are thus able to develop the informed judgment, imagination and skills that lead to greater capacity to contribute to the common good.”

Preamble, Principles of Good Practice
National Society for Internships and Experiential Education



I. Introduction:

“Service Learning” is quickly becoming a style of education that is recognized for its’ effectiveness and practical benefits. Linking class curriculum with hands-on applications is often referred to as “experiential education”. Service Learning is a form of experiential education identified by an equal emphasis on academic learning and service to others. The combination of focusing on meeting community needs, identifying learning objectives, and intentionally reflecting on what is being learned makes service learning different from plain volunteerism or community service.

Service Learning is sweeping the nation in public and private schools, colleges, and universities, as educational institutions recognize this powerful pedagogical tool that is having a significant impact both on academic performance and on civic responsibility.

Nationally, evidence of the effectiveness of educational enhancement through these programs is growing, with over 200 colleges and universities currently offering Service Learning programs.

The effectiveness of Service Learning is being researched and evaluated by many schools and institutions. The Search Institute, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, has surveyed over 250,000 youth from across the United States. Through the results of this extensive survey of youth in grades 6-12, the Search Institute found that students who engage in service activities one hour or more a week are about half as likely as their peers to participate in risk-taking behaviors such as binge drinking, problem drug use, daily cigarette use, frequent alcohol use, vandalism and skipping school. While it is not clear that service "caused" this effect, it is reasonable to assume that service has a positive influence.

Conrad and Hedin (1989; 1991) synthesized the research from a number of Service Learning studies. Their synthesis showed students involved in Service Learning demonstrated increased achievement in:

- basic skills, including expressing ideas, reading, and calculating;
- advanced skills, including problem solving and critical thinking;
- increased motivation to learn;
- Increased observation, inquiry, and application of knowledge skills

In addition, the synthesis pointed to growth in students' personal and social development. Students showed increased:

- self-esteem and sense of personal efficacy
- sense of personal responsibility
- moral development and reinforcement of values and beliefs
- exploration of new roles, identities, and interests
- willingness to take positive risks and accept new challenges
- social responsibility and concern for others
- political efficacy and civic participation
- knowledge and exploration of service-related careers
- understanding, appreciation, and ability to relate to people from a wide range of backgrounds and life situations

A number of studies have shown the positive effects of Service Learning on the community or recipients of the service. A sourcebook by Cairn and Kielsmeier (1991) shows that service learning provides:

- ◇ benefits to the community from direct assistance, human involvement and personal empowerment
- ◇ community development and renewal
- ◇ an infusion of creativity and enthusiasm from participants
- ◇ students are viewed as current and future community resources and community minded citizens

Service Learning can take form at Fort Hays State University through ProjectSERV AmeriCorps by an intentional matching of University education goals with local community needs through a structured learning process. ProjectSERV AmeriCorps staff sees a natural transition of the program from the current community building services that ProjectSERV initiate and coordinate, to the development of a Service Learning Program at Fort Hays State University.

This proposal for a Service Learning program is based on collaborative efforts and partnerships. The proposed program is designed to create relationships of joint interests, resulting in mutual growth and benefit of everyone involved. It is a program that links studies from all disciplines of the University together through the common goal of quality experiential education. It is a program that assists departments in maximizing their potential and reaching their academic goals.

The Fort Hays State University Service Learning Program is designed to provide practical educational experiences and develop desired skills in graduates. Through matching student skills with community needs, the Service Learning Program will enhance students' abilities to effectively deal with the post-graduate world while addressing and satisfying needs of the local community.

II. Assessment of Need

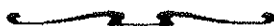
The concept of a Service Learning Program at Fort Hays State University is a natural method of fulfilling community needs, enhancing student education experiences, and strengthening the relationship between Fort Hays State University and Western Kansas.

For Fort Hays State University, the need for such a program arises from the increased demand for post-graduate students to have meaningful experiences and applicable skills to offer to the business community upon graduation. The need for students to also have a sense of civic responsibility and understanding of community function and roles is also detailed as a goal of the University experience. According to studies reported through the Corporation for National Service, "students involved in service learning programs scored significantly higher on measures of personal and social responsibility, acceptance of cultural diversity, and service leadership than a comparison group of students."

Communities in Western Kansas are struggling with many issues today. Kansas's youth are involved in negative risk-taking behaviors and communities are struggling with housing issues, family issues, community health and safety issues, and environmental concerns. Needs exist for programs that can help reduce risk-taking behaviors in youth, and that can identify and address a gamut of other social issues and needs. Service Learning is an important step toward building the connections and partnerships needed to maintain healthy and mutually beneficial relationships between the University and the local and area community. Connections with local service and organizational systems have revealed dozens of community objectives and needs that are receptive to serious, organized assistance and leadership. Community leaders, including the Hays City Manager and city staff and the Director of the Ellis County United Way, have expressed a willing interest to be involved in cooperative service learning programs. This partnership spirit was also reflected in President Hammonds' comments to returning University faculty this fall. "We need to concentrate this year on developing more joint interests, more mutual activity and more concurrent enterprise.... In building these new partnerships, we must move beyond strategy, structure, and systems to a framework built on purpose, process and people." (Dr. Hammond, in address to faculty, Aug. 1997.) Through Service Learning, the students, the community, and the University will all have important needs addressed.

“A man may hear a thousand lectures, and read a thousand volumes, and be at the end of the process very much where he was, as regards to knowledge. Something more than merely admitting it in a negative way into the mind is necessary, if it is to remain there. It must not be passively received, but actually and actively entered into, embraced, mastered. The mind must go half-way to meet what comes to it from without.”

- *John Henry Newman, 1852 The Idea of a University*



III. Mission statement and Goals:

Fort Hays State University Institutional Goals:

A fundamental component of the mission of Fort Hays State University is to ensure a quality educational experience for students. The University recognizes the importance of a solid experiential background for graduates. “... *Graduates are provided a foundation for entry into graduate school, for employment requiring well developed analytical and communication skills, and for coping with global complexities of the 21st century.*” (FHSU Vision 2020, 1997, p5).

The activities and leadership of the institution of Fort Hays State University have a profound and multifaceted influence in the lives of citizens of Western Kansas. Not only does Fort Hays State University serve as a primary component in the educational systems of the State of Kansas, the University also impacts the economic, social, and cultural climate for the area. The University recognizes and addresses this deeper commitment to serving the communities of Western Kansas, as reflected in the Fort Hays State University mission. “*The university is responsible for providing public service to the community, the region, and the state of Kansas. Programs consistent with the university’s academic and research activities emphasize the importance of Fort Hays State University as the cultural center of western Kansas.*” (FHSU Vision 2020, 1997, p.5).

The University also understands the importance of positive connections with, and

service to, the local and area community. Indeed, one of the key roles of the University involves service to the public. ***“Public service is an essential function of Fort Hays State University.”*** (FHSU Vision 2020, 1997, p.9). The relationships and partnerships formed through service to the community are foundational to the mutual advancement of the University, the students, and the community.

Service Learning Program Mission Statement and Goals:

The Service Learning Program is developed around the philosophy that students, working with community citizens, can have a significant positive impact on community enhancement while gaining powerful experiences and education for themselves. We believe that students learn best when they are able to apply concepts in settings that reflect various community endeavors, and that Service Learning is a valuable teaching technique which can effectively support current instructional strategies. Supported by these beliefs, the Service Learning Program mission statement was constructed.

Mission Statement:

“The Service Learning Center is building responsible citizens and strengthening communities through linking formal education to the world of work, and facilitating structured service opportunities”

In pursuit of the above mission, the Service Learning program at FHSU will strive to:

- ◆ Enhance current educational approaches with hands-on experience.
- ◆ Provide Fort Hays State University solid and meaningful linkages with the communities of Western Kansas.
- ◆ Serve the community through helping to identify and address community needs.
- ◆ Serve the students of Fort Hays State University through expanding their experiential background.
- ◆ Expand the number of opportunities for students to be actively involved in community issues and solutions.
- ◆ Enhance student experiences in internships and practicums through structured

reflection.

IV. Program Structure:

The program structure will be designed around four key components:

1. Development of a "Service-Center" as a clearinghouse for projects and service learning.
2. Collaboration with classes interdepartmentally to develop class formats and to enhance curriculum.
3. A three credit hour class in Service Learning.
4. Development of a Certificate Program for FHSU students

1. The Service Clearinghouse:

Service opportunities abound. The Service Learning program would also serve as a campus volunteer resource center for community projects. Community organizations that seek assistance with community-serving projects or programs would be able to contact the program to request support. Each student service experience would be accompanied by a reflection/evaluation session that would assist the students in reflection and drawing meaning from the event, and would help the Service Learning program with continuous improvement.

2. Collaborative Class Work:

Many classes currently at FHSU are seeking ways to enhance their student learning experiences. Participating instructors will offer Service Learning as an assignment option. Instead of twenty hours research, students may serve twenty hours of service time. Instructors are encouraged to balance the assignment options. It is recommended that additional assignments be integrated with the service experience. However, any tests, presentations or papers that are affiliated with the service experience are at the discretion of the instructor. Students are responsible to serve at their site, for attending a reflection session through the Service Learning Program, and for any associated assigned class material. The Service Learning Program will coordinate

placements and provide supervision and resources for reflection and experiential enhancement. It is important to mention that instructor grading is to be based on the student's learning and ability to apply academic concepts to community situations. The grading is not to be based on the quality of service that the student has provided.

3. The Service Learning Class:

This three credit Service Learning class offered through Fort Hays State University is designed in a format that mixes current theories of social action and planning structures with local community enhancement through self or group directed projects. Projects undertaken are in partnership with area schools, organizations, city government, county government, or community leaders.

4. Development of a Certificate Program:

Students could receive a *Community Development and Service Certificate* through a program of the Service Learning Program. The successful completion of nine credit hours of coursework would be required along with 100 hours of established service.

Required classes for the Certificate Program include:

3 credit hours ~ IDS 420 Introduction to Service Learning

3 credit hours ~ IDS 301 Contemporary Issues in Leadership Studies

3 credit hours ~ SOC 384 Introduction to Social Problems.

Students receiving a certificate in Community Development and Service are recognized for their outstanding commitment to the community and others.

The program will be based on the Principals of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning as developed through the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education.

How the Program Works:

Service Learning can take many forms at the University, ranging from short-term, "service assignments" to semester-long group projects. As a Service Clearinghouse, the Service Learning Program will match walk-in volunteers with short-term volunteer opportunities. Participating students will then be asked to attend one of the upcoming scheduled reflection sessions for the purpose of deeper exploration of community service

and for our program evaluation.

The majority of student involvement is anticipated from the collaboration with class instructors at Fort Hays State University. Service Learning is another tool or method to help students learn the subject matter of the respective class. As the instructor prepares the class, this new learning tool could be included, offering students a research option for a major paper, test, or assignment. For example, an assignment for a class might be a paper, eight to ten pages in length, worth 150 points. The student could choose if they would like to base their paper on twenty hours of research or twenty hours of service experience. Both assignments would carry requirements – the number of required references, for example, or the clear illustration of an example from the students' service to reflect a key concept from class.

Any instructor that would like to incorporate Service Learning into their class curriculum would contact the Service Learning Center. The staff at the Service Center will consider the class objectives to be incorporated, and identify local partner agencies that can serve as possible placement sites for service-learning students. Students will contact agencies, and “apply” to do their service at the agency. Service Center staff will oversee the student placements and ensure that adequate arrangements have been made with the agency. Units of fifteen to twenty service hours per placement are recommended. Students will serve their hours at the site, and will then be involved in a reflective session through the service center. Students will also be responsible for the paper or presentation as established by the instructor in the course syllabus. It is important to note that the grading of the service learning project must be based on the learning, not the service that was provided.

Students involved in the Service Learning class would also be applying content to service hours, on an even greater scale. As a component of the Service Learning class, teams or individual students will identify a social need and organize an approach to meet that need. This may include recruiting community volunteer involvement in a community -benefiting project, or involvement with, and evaluation of, an existing service agency or program. Students involved at this level will be serving a greater number of service hours in the semester.

To receive a Community Development and Service Certificate, students must take the required classes and have an additional 100 hours of established documented service.

This service must be arranged through the Service Learning Program. Past service experience will not be acceptable toward the 100 hours of service. Service through other educational programs or organizations will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

To ensure effective linkage of course content and service, several important processes must be followed. First, the goals of the learning experience must be clearly expressed and understood by the student. This will be important in seeking the most meaningful match for service. Second, the student must go into the experience with eyes open. In other words, the student must be intentional to focus on a concept or idea that relates to their class. At the time of enrollment, methods of focusing on the experience are shared with the student. Third, the student must have guided reflection. Reflection will take place through the writing of assignments, and small group sharing at the reflection session near the end of the semester. In this small group, students from all disciplines will come together to share their service experiences, and how it related to the class(s) that they enrolled through. These methods of reflection are important for the student to apply the content of learning within the context of working systems. The ability to effectively mix content and context adds value to the educational experience, and provides the student the opportunity to fully experience the complexities and conflicts that relate to the subject matter presented.

Working Through Partnerships:

As a component of the proposed Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, the Service Learning Program will be a key connection point for all Fort Hays State University programs. Important partnerships with the Social Work and Sociology Department have already begun to form as we collaborate on sharing resources for the Family Development Center. Partnerships with the Leadership Studies Program have already begun to show exciting potential as we develop new ways to activate students in meaningful learning projects that benefit communities in Hays and Western Kansas. Cooperative linkages are forming with community governments, other educational entities, and other community programs. University students working in local schools help to coordinate and facilitate service learning projects and programs with elementary, middle, and high school youth.

V. Structure and Governance:

The Service Learning Program would be a component of the proposed Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences.

VI. Role of the Faculty:

The faculty will play an important role in the Service Learning Program. Two University employees will oversee the program to encourage and counsel students, evaluate and record progress, keep in constant contact with community needs and leaders, teach service learning classes, and guide students through the service learning process. Collaboration with other faculty will also be an important part of the program. The Service Learning faculty will work closely with faculty from other disciplines to craft service learning opportunities that meet the objectives of each class curriculum. Faculty working with the service learning program will continue to be the primary planners and instructors of the classes. The Service Learning program will assist faculty with student project identification and placement, evaluation, supervision when necessary, and educational resources related to Service Learning.

VII. Resource Needs:

Service Learning activities tie in closely with the objectives of ProjectSERV AmeriCorps, and its sister national program Learn and Serve. Initially, AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve money may be available for starting such a program here in Western Kansas. Contingent on the receipt of the grant support, the University responsibility for office space, supplies and equipment, will remain constant for the development of the program. Office placement would be at the discretion of the proposed Center for Interdisciplinary Studies. However, the Sociology and Social Work departments' proposed Family Development Centers' mission and outreach services fit well with the Service Learning program, and may be a possible location for the program office.

VIII. Desired Outcomes:

At the Fort Hays State University Service Learning Program, we can anticipate outcomes that will benefit all parties involved with the program. The University will gain a valuable learning environment for putting formal knowledge into creative and practical application for the common good. We can expect that the students will benefit from a meaningful and effective application of theory and methods, as well as form healthy relationships with the community. The community can reap the benefits of the University student expertise and community improvement projects that are spearheaded through the program. In summary, expected local service learning outcomes will include:

University Outcomes:

- Enhanced student leadership/enrichment opportunities;
- Strengthen relationship with community;
- Outstanding, meaningful education through action;
- Program to develop responsible, community minded, involved students.

Student Outcomes:

- Expanded experiential background
- Enhanced ability to apply learned concepts to social and professional context
- Practical and meaningful opportunities for active involvement and direct learning.
- Opportunities to exercise responsibility in a supportive, public medium.
- Recognition for community impact
- Resulting higher employability

Community Outcomes:

- Assistance with achieving the City's strategic goals
- Achieved goals result in greater economic stability and higher community marketability
- Involved community members in the work and responsibilities of living in community.
- Area non-profit service organization assistance resulting in more effective service and productivity.

IX. Program Assessment and Evaluation:

The Service Learning program is committed to continuous improvement. Program assessment and evaluation would be continuously requested from partner organizations, collaborating University instructors, and participating students.

Partner organizations:

The Service Learning program will seek representation from each partner organization to be involved in an advisory council. This council will be consulted on a quarterly basis for feedback and evaluation of the quality of service that is provided through the classes. In addition, community partners will be consulted on trends, plans, needs, and opportunities for continued service opportunities.

University Instructors:

When collaborating with faculty in the development of service learning structures that meet the needs of their curriculum, the instructor of the class will be responsible for evaluation and learning assessment. The Service Learning program will assist through providing tools to assess other aspects of the experience, including social efficacy, civic attitudes, and service motivation. University instructors that are incorporating service learning activities into their curriculum are also asked to assist with evaluation through comparison studies and tracking.

Students:

One of the key elements to Service Learning is the “processing” and assessment of activities and experiences. Evaluation is an important component of the students’ reflective experience. Through reflective questioning and activities, the students are able to critically apply learned information to the complexity of personal and professional interactions. Evaluation is a necessary component for the Service Learning Program to assess the greater impact of the program. Continuous feedback will be sought from all persons involved to ensure quality systems of operation and service. Students in the Service Learning class will be given a pre and post assessment that reflects attitudes toward community service and self-confidence in leadership skills and initiative.

Summation:

A Service Learning Program, located within the Department for Interdisciplinary Studies at Fort Hays State University, offers a forward focused, collaborative venture that would help to strengthen the network of University Departments. The program would strengthen the interdepartmental relationships as well as the relationships between Western Kansas communities and the University. The program offers a proven effective method of providing a richer "high touch" education for students at Fort Hays. Perhaps most importantly, the program offers communities structured guidance for self-development and methods to identify and address community needs. Thus, in partnership, Fort Hays State University truly is building a positive future for itself, and the citizens of Western Kansas.

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