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Special Topics, General

Special Topics in Service Learning

1995

USD and Community Partners. .. A Team Approach to Service-Learning

Learn and Serve America

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A Team Approach to Service-Learning

The University of San Diego received a Corporation for National Service "Learn and Serve America: Higher Education Enhancement" grant during the 1994-95 academic year. Over 325 students from 18 classes enhanced their classroom learning by integrating course theory with their community service-learning experiences. How and why did this happen?

USD administrators and faculty saw increased student community service as one way to put the University's values into action. Ten years ago, they initiated the Volunteer Resources (now Community Service-Learning) Office. Student and faculty leaders received support from this Office as Associated Students Community Service, the Social Issues, and the Experiential Education Committees developed strong community service and social issues programs. An Advisory Committee comprised of faculty, students, and community partners built upon existing collaborative efforts to plan for integrating community service-learning into academic study. A Corporation for National Service "Learn and Serve America" grant was awarded to help put that plan into action.

Introducing the service-learning team:
Faculty members: believe that real life experiences enhance learning; participate in curriculum development workshops; revise their course curriculum to include service-learning; and work closely with a student leader chosen from their class.

Student leaders: link with faculty to provide service-learning information and support to their classmates; enroll in a field experience leadership seminar to enhance their theoretical understanding and practical skills.

Community partners (agencies and schools) provide:)1 placements for USD students and 2) a person who serves as liaison to USD, and 3) helps the community become an extension of the classroom. Persons who acquire service engage in reciprocal learning with USD students.

USD students: choose the service-learning option and a specific placement; link with and offer service to individuals or small groups; participate in reflection, then integrate their experience with classroom learning.

Mentors for faculty members and student leaders: share their own experience with peers who are incorporating service-learning for the first time.

Office for Community Service-Learning staff (graduate student, administrative assistant, and director/grant program manager) provide support to team members.

All teams need coaches! In addition to the Corporation for National Service program staff, USD received recognition as being chosen one of ten *Demonstration Projects for Continuing Improvement,.* Consultants are working closely with our team to. . .continuously improve!