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MANU 556

The Partners in Action and Learning project is an example of Miami-Dade Community College's efforts to promote service learning on campus. Results from student satisfaction surveys reveal information on the motives and effects of service learning on students.

Commitment to Community: Service Learning at Miami-Dade Community College

Robert J. Exley

The president of a large university once asked Miami-Dade Community College president Robert H. McCabe what Miami-Dade does. Without hesitation, he answered, "We preserve democracy. We make it possible for thousands of people to gain a college education, people who would otherwise be excluded from higher education, and their education makes it possible for them to become active, committed, and productive citizens." He went on to describe in depth the many accomplishments of the college with regard to its leading the way in providing an open door of access buttressed by a fixed belief in the student's "right to succeed"; however, it is in those first three words—we preserve democracy—that he most accurately describes the culture of our college.

We do believe that we are the "people's college" and that we play a vital role in preserving our American way of life, our democracy, and the individual visions of freedom that our country's name evokes for so many. We do believe that every single individual who wants to attend college should have the opportunity to do so, and we couple that with a commitment to providing them the guidance and structure they need not only to attend but also to succeed. If one has any doubt that America remains a place seen by many throughout the world as "the place," we invite you to sit in one of our classes where fifteen countries are represented in a class of thirty students. Come and hear these students describe their personal dreams for the future, or listen to their stories of the family sacrifices that make it possible for them to be here studying at our American college.

Faculty members at Miami-Dade Community College (M-DCC) have been using community service experiences to enhance their courses for over twenty years; however, the past four years have seen a renewed commitment to this teaching pedagogy. A more formalized service learning effort also includes the overt goal of reinvigorating individual commitment to community good. This chapter will provide an overview of how M-DCC now practices service learning, with emphasis on its Partners in Action and Learning project.

Service Learning at Miami-Dade

M-DCC is a large, multicampus, urban community college with five campuses, more than 50,000 students, and nearly 950 full-time faculty members. Miami-Dade County, Florida, provides a rich and diverse setting for the college. Over fifty distinct ethnic groups can be found in the county, and the campuses range from the urban Medical Center Campus, which specializes in health career education, to the Homestead Campus, a rural campus in far south Dade County. The sizes of the campuses range from 1,500 to more than 23,000 students. The student body is a diverse one, with more than 50 percent of the students being classified as nontraditional. The challenges facing our faculty members and students alike are many. However, M-DCC is known as an institution of higher education committed to innovative teaching with a high priority placed on student learning. In short, M-DCC believes in doing what's right to further the education of its students.

Service as a part of different courses is nothing new at M-DCC. In fact, sixty-five faculty members are listed in a collegewide directory that describes how they utilize service in their courses. Faculty members and students at M-DCC have been involved with our community since the early days of the college and remain involved today. The difference now is that a collegewide effort is underway to determine how best to integrate service learning with a specific focus on civic education into the general education curriculum. The first challenge we faced was to define what we mean by service learning.

David Johnson, in our *Faculty Guide to Service-Learning*, defines *service learning* as "the process of integrating volunteer community service combined with active guided reflection into the curriculum to enhance and enrich student learning of course material" (1995, p. 1). The faculty member uses service as the vehicle for students to reach their academic objectives by integrating teaching objectives with community needs.

At M-DCC, service learning is characterized by three traits. First, service learning demands sound, academically anchored partnerships. The nature of the partnership between the college and any community agency must be based on a shared commitment to the student's education. Second, service learning requires that the service assignments be driven by community needs. It is essential for the community agencies to identify the needs of their constituents as the service opportunities for students. Third, service learning must include a faculty-led reflection component. It is essential that faculty members develop

the skills necessary to harvest the learning available through the students' service experience. The most important aspect of a service learning course is the reflection component.

In fact, because community service experiences often produce conflicting emotions and cognitive dissonance in our students, faculty members are presented with rich opportunities to foster student learning. Rogers (1980) writes, "If a person's attitudes toward, reactions to, and feelings about the challenge s/he has experienced are facilitated with support, feedback, and integration, then the probability of achieving accommodation is increased" (pp. 18-19). The support the student receives is key to integrating the experience into the course constructs. With the faculty member's help, each student begins to realize the benefits of service learning as he or she resolves internal conflicts regarding the personal and community issues brought out by the service learning experience. Furthermore, the student begins to comprehend his or her place in the context of community responsibility. For as Silcox (1995) writes, "Meaningful service is not about doing good to someone; it is about the dignity and growth of the giver and the receiver" (p.11). To sum up, service learning at M-DCC requires an active involvement in the learning process from faculty, student, and community members as we connect real-life issues with course theory and context.

Partners in Action and Learning

The Partners in Action and Learning (PAL) project is one of sixty-five initial Learn and Serve America: Higher Education grants funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a new government organization created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. We are now entering the second year of a three-year grant. PAL has three primary goals: (1) to pilot-test campus service learning centers to determine the most efficient means for administering service learning programs, (2) to provide extensive faculty development on service learning through educational workshops and direct faculty minigrants, and (3) to produce a comprehensive long-term plan for service learning at M-DCC including adoption of college policy and assignment of resources.

The first year of the program resulted in the establishment of two pilot centers (one at the Homestead Campus and the other at the Medical Center Campus), the completion of a successful faculty minigrant project involving sixteen faculty members, and the convening of a college ad hoc committee on service learning under the direction of the college vice president for education. The fall term (September through December 1994) was devoted to educational workshops and finalizing the plans for opening the two pilot sites, and the winter term (January through May 1995) saw the implementation of the minigrants and the opening of the two centers. During this time, more than eighty faculty members attended informational service learning workshops, and fifteen faculty members were awarded minigrants. Finally, the winter term alone

saw 755 students under the direction of twenty-six faculty members complete nearly 21,000 hours of service in 145 different agencies throughout Dade County. Every single student received academic credit based on the quality of his or her demonstrated learning.

Analysis of 428 comprehensive student satisfaction surveys reveals some interesting information on the motives and effects of service learning on students. Regarding motivation, the most often reported motivation for becoming involved in service was the gaining of course credit (73 percent, 314 of 428)—in other words, an academic reward for demonstrated learning through the service. The next most often reported motivation items were “the desire to help others” (60 percent, 255 of 428) and the wish for a “new experience” (59 percent, 252 of 428). Of note is that “social concerns” were not a significant motivation for student involvement, with only 28 percent (122 of 428) of the students reporting this item.

However, a comparison of experienced versus nonexperienced service learning students reveals some important differences: the students who remain in service are motivated by the desire to help others (73 percent, 47 of 64) followed by the wish for new knowledge (61 percent, 37 of 64). Also, 39 percent (25 of 64) of the experienced students reported that “social concerns” were a factor. Students who reported that this was their first semester of being involved with service were categorized as “nonexperienced” and all who reported two or more semesters involvement were labeled “experienced.”

As for effects, the four effects most often identified by the students were (1) a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship (75 percent, 321 of 428), (2) a sense of personal achievement (70 percent, 300 of 428), (3) a sense of social responsibility (69 percent, 297 of 428), and (4) a positive attitude toward experiential programs like this one (67 percent, 286 of 428). It is particularly noteworthy to see that 69 percent of the students reported that they had an increased sense of social responsibility when one recalls that only 29 percent of the students reported “social concerns” as a motivation for involvement. There did not appear to be any appreciable difference for the experienced versus nonexperienced students; however, students in both groups (75 percent for nonexperienced and 77 percent for experienced) reported that their attitude toward citizenship responsibilities was positively affected.

We believe that Partners in Action and Learning is providing us with the kind of information and data necessary to demonstrate that service learning is a vital teaching tool for both enhancing the content of courses and furthering the civic education of our students. We agree with Astin (*Higher Education and the Future of Democracy*, 1994) when he says: “If we genuinely believe that it would be in our own best interest, not to mention the interests of our students and the society that supports us, to embark upon a major effort to introduce a central focus on democracy and citizenship into our curriculum and cocurriculum, we have both the autonomy and the intellectual skill to do it” (p. 26). This is precisely what we are doing through Partners in Action and Learning.

Although PAL involves numerous courses and faculty members, the next section of this chapter describes the course that I teach and how it uses service

learning as an essential teaching strategy for addressing one of Etzioni's (1993) basic principles of civic literacy: the pursuit of self-interest balanced by a commitment to community.

Applied Leadership Theory Class

Nowhere will one find more “pursuit of self-interest” than in the highly competitive arena of honors programs. Every honors student receives significant financial support in the form of scholarships and tuition waivers, and in return they are required to complete a core set of honors courses. In addition, every honors student must fulfill a minimum of thirty hours of service to the community for the express purpose of initiating an awareness of one's individual responsibility to the whole. My course is one of the required courses and includes a mandatory service experience.

CLP 2001 is an honors course in leadership that emphasizes understanding of oneself as a unique individual as the basis for developing effective leadership abilities. The main themes include personal assessment, values and expectations, power, motivation, decision making, modeling, and situational leadership. The course addresses the specific leadership skills of planning, organizing, and conducting meetings and presentations. Applied learning experiences are the primary teaching strategies used in the course. The course syllabus states:

As Honors students, you will be held to a high standard of performance in this class. Also, the only reason that we have class is for you to learn. You are the most important player in this course. My responsibility as your professor is to provide you with the best opportunity for learning that I possibly can. A key to your success in this and future college courses is that you develop the ability and willingness to THINK. What this means is that I hope to use the course materials to challenge you intellectually and affectively. The subject matter of CLP 2001 is based on the everyday conflicts and concerns you and I face in life whenever we attempt to serve as a leader, and we must all deal with these issues in ways that resolve rather than avoid both internal and external conflict.

I utilize two basic texts: *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes and Posner, 1987) and *Writing for Change: A Community Reader* (Watters and Ford, 1995), as well as supplemental readings. The first text provides the leadership theories and applied examples. The second text is a service learning reader intended primarily for English and writing courses; however, it contains a superb collection of essays for connecting service to learning. As found in the course syllabus, the course competencies are as follows:

1. *Personality and Self*—you will demonstrate a knowledge of your own personality tendencies and their impact on your leadership effectiveness.
2. *Leadership Components*—you will demonstrate a knowledge of the key aspects for leadership which must be included in your personal leadership strategies and actions.

3. *Leadership Skills*—you will demonstrate knowledge and use of specific leadership skills necessary for serving in a leadership position.
4. *Leadership Responsibilities*—you will demonstrate knowledge of and appreciation for the complexities of individual versus community needs as a leader.

Writing assignments serve as the primary means for evaluating student progress and for facilitating the necessary reflective component. In addition to the writing assignments, various small group assignments and classroom discussions are required of students. The most challenging aspect of the course is to truly connect the service experience to leadership theory in such a manner that the students begin to apply the fundamentals to their own lives and decisions.

Each student is challenged to explore and practice the five basic skills of effective leaders as identified by Kouzes and Posner. Leaders (1) challenge the process, (2) model the way, (3) inspire a shared vision, (4) encourage the heart, and (5) enable others to act. In addition, Gardner's (1987) four moral goals of leadership serve as a basic yardstick for each student to evaluate motives and actions. The moral goals of leadership are (1) releasing human potential, (2) balancing the needs of the individual and the community, (3) defending the fundamental values of the community, and (4) instilling in individuals a sense of initiative and responsibility. This dual emphasis on skills and moral goals results in rich dialogue and serious thought. The student's service placement provides the "real life" setting for the student to both assess the leadership practices of the placement staff and his or her own actions.

Writing assignments make up the bulk of the course's grades. As a part of this course, each student must complete three individual writing assignments, called "feedback reports," in which each student assesses his or her learning to date. Each report is based on a critical discussion question, as follows:

Report I "What is the leader's responsibility to self and community?"

Report II "How should a leader use power, motivate followers, facilitate change, and address inequality?"

Report III "How has your service experience influenced, changed, altered, clarified and/or reinforced your opinions on community and leadership?"

Each student must complete a two-part final examination where he or she describes a "leadership problem" (often this problem scenario is based on the student's service learning experience) and proposes a "theory-based" solution. The final examination includes a written report, an oral presentation, and an oral defense of the proposed solution. The oral presentation and defense occur in the class with class members participating in questioning the proposed solution.

Conclusion

Service learning at Miami-Dade Community College is but one of the examples of how the college is committed to its students and its community. It

does, however, provide the most striking example of M-DCC's commitment to making a difference in the lives of our students through focusing on the development of civic literacy. In the context of cognitive development theory, higher education is very good at moving students from the stage of dualism, where knowledge is perceived as either black or white, to that of relativism, where varying opinions and points of view are acknowledged. We in higher education have become quite adept at challenging students' biases, prejudices, and pre-formed values. We can move students along the cognitive development road to the point that they do acknowledge the existence of many questions. What we have failed to do very well is support the students' movement on to the highest level of cognitive development where they make a moral commitment to values and beliefs that are truly the result of their own thinking and processing of varied information. It is only with this type of cognitive development that one can truly devote himself or herself to the betterment of others in true virtue. The ability to be completely devoted to one's own values and principles and yet demonstrate the tolerance of others with differing values only comes with higher-order cognitive development, and service learning provides an extremely effective teaching strategy for this to occur. We at Miami-Dade Community College agree with Martin Luther King Jr.'s comments in *On Being a Good Neighbor* when he said, "One of the great tragedies of man's long trek along the highway of history has been the limiting of neighborly concern to tribe, race, class, or nation" (Barber and Battistoni, 1993, p.557). We are doing everything we can with our service learning activities to extend our concern beyond the traditional limits of an academic institution.

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This chapter focuses on issues related to a new "civic literacy" work force competency by examining some underlying social and technological changes that influenced the creation of the standard. It concludes with a description of a national-level curriculum development and implementation project.

Incorporating Civic Literacy into Technician Education: Why? How?

Elizabeth A. Mathias

Technicians face daily the effects of complex societal and technological change. They use expensive, highly sophisticated equipment, responding quickly to changing customer specifications with the expectation that products are virtually defect-free. Their customers are both internal and external to the enterprise. Technicians work in teams solving complex problems whose solutions often have wide-ranging consequences. An employee's vision and value system can affect team performance.

As the idea of work changed from one of tasks to be performed to one of teams solving problems and appreciating consequences, the need for technicians with civic literacy skills became more apparent. Civic literacy, defined for the high performance workplace, requires employees to have a vision beyond tasks; they must "understand and be able to describe the larger social, political, economic and business systems in which the employee and the firm function" (Packer, 1994, p. 31). This definition came from the work of two national panels that met together in Washington, D.C., in 1993-1994. One panel was convened by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), with membership drawn from large and small manufacturing industries or their employee associations. The second panel was of educators drawn from community college system heads or presidents and convened by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC). In addition to a civic literacy competency, the panels described twenty-one other work force standards. The National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technological Program funded a project to teach some of these competencies.