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Bridging the Gap: Using Service-Learning Teaching Assistants to Foster Effective University-Community Partnerships

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Bridging the Gap: Using Service-Learning Teaching Assistants to Foster Effective University-Community Partnerships

Abstract

The objectives of this presentation were to: (1) describe the VCU Service-Learning Teaching Assistant (SLTA) Program; (2) discuss the benefits of integrating defined student leadership into service-learning courses; and (3) share best practices and resources.

Keywords

service-learning, teaching assistant, university-community, partnerships, teaching, higher education

Disciplines

Higher Education

Comments

Presented at the annual Gulf South Summit on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement through Higher Education, Hattiesburg, Ms.

Bridging the Gap

Using Service-Learning Teaching Assistants to Foster Effective University-Community Partnerships

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Objectives

- Describe the VCU Service-Learning Teaching Assistant (SLTA) Program
- Discuss the benefits of integrating defined student leadership into service-learning courses
- Share best practices and resources

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Service-Learning is great BUT....

Based on your experience, what are the pitfalls that prevent faculty, students, and the community from getting the most benefit out of service-learning?

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What is VCU's SLTA Program?

- A program facilitated by the Service-Learning Office that trains faculty-nominated undergraduate and graduate students to assist with service-learning courses during the semester.

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Student Program Requirements

- Nominated by faculty member
- Enrollment in online service-learning orientation
- Enrollment in monthly SLTA seminar taught by SL staff
- 5-hour weekly commitment to faculty member
- Successful completion of service-learning course*

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Program Beneficiaries

- SLTAs
- Instructors
- Students
- Community Partners
- Service-Learning Staff



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SLTA Benefits

"Be the change you want to see in the world" -Ghandi

- Leadership skill development
- Professional mentoring
- Networking
- Problem solving/critical thinking skills
- Gain community experience
- Resume-building
- Honors credit



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Instructor Benefits

"Work smarter not harder"

- Community partner liaison
- Student service tracking
- Assist with reflections (oral and written)
- Peer mentoring
- Enhance student relationships

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Student Benefits

*"You will never be a leader unless you first learn to follow and be led."
-Tiorio*



- Peer mentoring/modeling
- Structure and organization
- Student voice
- Accessibility

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Community Benefits

“Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It's important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop.”
-Dorothy Height

- Structure and organization
- Student connection
- Increased communication
- Sense of purpose
- Student accountability



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Service-Learning Office Benefits

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something." -Helen Keller

- Increased knowledge of course content and service-learning application
- Troubleshooting
- Provide more support to stakeholders
- Spread the service-learning message

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HONR 399: Service-Learning Orientation

- 1.5 credits
- Online (Blackboard)
- 7 weeks/7 modules
- Asynchronous
- Interactive Discussion board
- Mini-lectures

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SLTA Online Orientation (HONR-399-751-2012Spring)

- Announcements
- Instructor
- Syllabus and Module Activities
- MODULES**
- Class Discussion Board
- Group Discussion Board
- Module Introduction Videos
- Communication
- Tools

COURSE MANAGEMENT

- Control Panel
- Course Tools
- Course Links
- Evaluation
- Users and Groups
- Customization
- Packages and Utilities
- Help

MODULES

Create Item Build Evaluate Collaborate More

- MODULE #1--Orientation to Online Learning**
 Complete this module first. Click on the underlined text to open the folder. Inside you will find folders for readings and assignments.
- MODULE #2 -- Socio-Economic Class in America**
 Complete this module second. For this module, you will watch 4 videos and write a short (800-1000 word) reflection paper that relates to the videos. Click on the underlined text (i.e., the words "MODULE #2" above) to open the folder to find the videos and reflection paper assignment for this module.
- MODULE #3 -- What is Service-Learning?**
 Complete this module third. Click on the underlined text (i.e., the words "MODULE #3" above) to open the folder.
- MODULE #4 -- Working in Groups**
 Complete this module fourth. Click on the words "MODULE #4" above to open the folder and find the required reading.
- Module #5--Working in the Community**
 Complete this module fifth.
- MODULE #6 --- Reflection in Service-Learning**
 Complete this module sixth.
- MODULE #7 -- Roles & Responsibilities of Service-Learning TAs**
 Complete this module last.

Weekly Module Chart

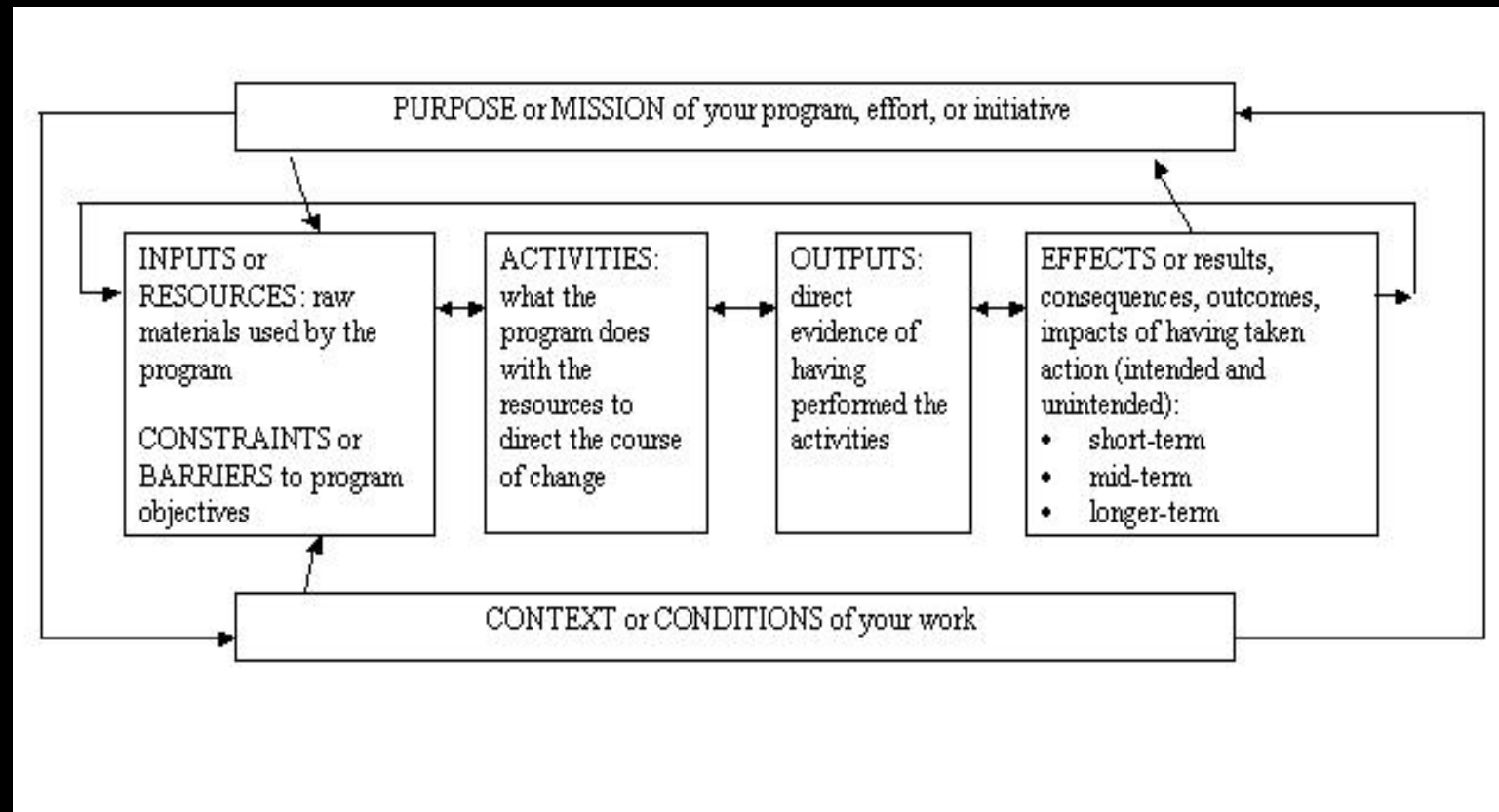
Week	Module Number	Activities	Assignments (due date)
January 30 th February 5 th	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch Module Introduction Video 2. Read one article 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Icebreaker Activity (posted before February 2nd at 5:00 p.m.) 2. Online Readiness Assessment Reaction (posted before February 2nd at 5:00 p.m.)
February 6 th -12 th	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch Module Introduction Video 2. Watch 4 short videos about socioeconomic class 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflection paper (posted before February 9th at 5:00 p.m.)
February 13 th -19 th	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch Module Introduction Video 2. Read Ch. 1 in Cress et al 3. Watch 2 short videos on service-learning at VCU 4. Read Principles of Good Practice handout 5. Practice finding a service-learning course at VCU 	<p>***There are not assignments due this week. Look ahead to Module 4 for a group assignment and begin making contact with group members and doing research.</p>
February 20 th -26 th	4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch Module Introduction Video 2. Read Ch. 4 in Cress et al 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Exercise 4.1 (p. 46)—How Am I in Groups? (posted before February 25th at 5:00 p.m.) 2. Complete Group Paper Assignment (posted before February 25th at 5:00 p.m.)
February 27 th -March 4 th	5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch Module Introduction Video 2. Read 3 articles on campus-community partnerships 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Challenges and Benefits Activity (posted before March 1st at 5:00 p.m.) 2. Reflection Exercise (posted before at 5:00 p.m.)
March 5 th -11 th	6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch Module Introduction Video 2. Read Ch. 6 in Cress et al 3. Read Reflection Toolkit Handout 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Multiple Choice Quiz focused on Modules 3 & 6 (completed before March 2nd at 5:00 p.m.)
March 12 th -18 th	7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch Module Introduction Video 2. Read Ch. 7 in Cress et al 3. Review Roles and Responsibilities Table 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Multiple Choice Quiz focused on Modules 4 & 7 (completed before March 15th at 5:00 p.m.) 2. Complete Orientation Reflection Exercise (completed before March 15th at 5:00 p.m.)

HONR 492: SLTA Seminar

- Monthly 2-hour meetings
 - Topics include leadership, diversity, and social justice
- Facilitated by SL staff
- Student development focus
- Reflection intensive
- 50% of grade based on online instructor assessment of student performance

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Using Logic Models



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