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Bridging Opportunities in Human Health Services

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Campus to Community- Bridging Opportunities in Human Health Services

TEAM MEMBERS

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Project Sponsor: Lynn Pelco, Associate Vice Provost, Division of Community Engagement

PROJECT ABSTRACT

The Campus to Community project aims to develop facilitated, in-depth site visits for VCU faculty and staff interested in exploring human health services opportunities in the Richmond community. The site visit experience will provide exposure to various community organizations specializing in human health, essentially creating a "bridge" between VCU's campus and these facilities. This initiative is intended to motivate employees to action within the Richmond community by enabling them to observe first-hand the services that these organizations provide, learn more about the organizations' missions, and engage in meaningful interactions with representatives on site. Likewise, it will allow Richmond community organizations to discuss unique needs and opportunities for partnerships with VCU.

QUEST FOR DISTINCTION

This project aligns closely with VCU Quest for Distinction themes III and IV in that it will create service opportunities aimed at improving human health. This will be achieved by linking faculty and staff who have a combined interest in human health/community engagement with community partners in need of support. These opportunities will reinforce VCU's commitment to community engagement as a means of providing high quality learning experiences and advancing excellence in research. Partnerships between VCU and the Richmond community will very likely lead to more community engaged teaching, research, and service learning opportunities that could potentially result in enhanced scholarship.

While this project is the framework for what could become a solid structure establishing valuable partnerships in the community, the long-term goal is that it will address other areas of Quest. Fully implemented, this project will help to attract and retain faculty, prepare students for civic engagement through service learning, and encourage research partnerships to support VCU's focus on improving human health.

PROJECT GOALS

- Provide in-depth exposure and increased community engagement opportunities in human health services.
- Facilitate partnerships between VCU faculty/staff and Richmond area human health services organizations.
- Foster valuable networking opportunities among VCU faculty and staff.
- Motivate VCU faculty and staff to take action in the Richmond community.

PROJECT STRATEGIES

In the initial phase of project development, our team began with a concept of engaging VCU faculty and staff on a guided bus tour highlighting Richmond area communities where service opportunities exist. Several meetings were held with both internal and external experts to elicit ideas and feedback. Simultaneously, we also began identifying and documenting a list of known community organizations with a focus specifically in human health services. After reviewing all information gathered, the team determined that this project needed greater focus and that it should extend beyond the general experiential outcome of a tour.

We revisited the project concept in its entirety and refined numerous key areas. The key questions discussed included:

- Who are the potential resources at VCU, and how do we gain their interest?
- Who are the most relevant community partners?
- What does a site visit look like?
- What does success look like, and how do we measure it?

These discussions led the team to develop a focused strategy that resulted in a structured, interactive site visit design to ensure that each step of the process has a specific purpose and outcome. The team then planned and participated in an actual site visit. We independently selected the Fan Free Clinic because of its proximity to campus and its focus on human health. As a result of this experience, we gained a great deal of valuable knowledge to help better articulate the importance of this project to others.

ACTION STEPS

In order to develop the framework for this initiative, our team:

- Consulted with an experienced community tour organizer from the University of Richmond
- Met regularly as a group to explore ideas and sharpen our focus
- Engaged the Division of Community Engagement in sponsoring the project
- Developed site visit resource documents
- Created an evaluation framework for the program (including questionnaires)
- Planned and conducted a site visit for our group with the Fan Free Clinic

To move this initiative forward, the following actions are needed:

- Identify a Richmond agency to host a pilot site visit in Fall 2015
- Plan and coordinate all logistics of the site visit
- Conduct a targeted recruitment campaign
- Accompany (or lead) the site visit to ensure successful implementation
- Administer follow-up surveys to participants
- Conduct a debrief of the site visit among organizers and seek post-visit feedback from the hosting agency

OUTCOMES

If implemented, this project has the potential to both facilitate an introduction between VCU faculty/staff and human health services organizations in Richmond, and to aid in developing rich, meaningful partnerships with lasting effects. With in-depth exposure to community engagement opportunities in human health services, VCU faculty will be prepared and eager to engage with community organizations in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, volunteer

service, service-learning courses taught in partnership with the community organizations, community-engaged research, and student internship opportunities.

The success of this project will be measured in several ways:

- VCU site visit participants will be given the opportunity to complete a pledge card at the conclusion of each visit. The pledge card will allow participants to reflect on their impressions of the community organization(s) and to identify feasible ideas for future collaboration within a specified time frame. Pledge cards will be strongly suggested with the intention that the cards solicit only genuine intentions for collaboration from participants.
- Within six months of the conclusion of the site visit, and then again in one year, participants will be surveyed to determine what, if any, collaborations or projects have been developed in partnership with the community organization(s).
- The community organization(s) will be contacted approximately one year from the date of the site visit to inquire whether there has been an increase in VCU engagement since that time.

SUSTAINABILITY

As the University further institutionalizes its commitment to community engagement, faculty, staff, and students increasingly seek mutually beneficial opportunities to enhance their teaching/learning, research, and service. Similarly, community organizations are increasingly seeking to partner with VCU faculty, staff and students to enhance their efforts. The approach described here was developed to be implemented within departments and across multiple units as the need arises. The flexibility inherent in this approach to moving people from exposure to action allows for the experience to be tailored to the interests and needs of VCU and community organizations. Furthermore, it requires minimal resources to implement. It is expected that the Division of Community Engagement will support this approach as one of its recommended ways to connect VCU with community partners.

RESOURCES

The resources required for this initiative will include:

- Bus or van transportation from VCU's campus to the selected community organization(s)
- Coordination of annual site visits
- Coordination of follow up (i.e. survey data collection)
- Print and/or digital marketing
- Print and/or digital pledge cards, site visit agendas, etc.

Costs for print and digital materials will likely be minimal. Transportation costs will depend on the mode used but should also be minimal. Primarily, the resources to sustain this program will entail human effort to coordinate a site visit each fall semester and collect data to determine whether the initiative is helping to increase VCU involvement in community organizations related to human health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For this project to be implemented and sustained, the following steps are recommended:

- Find a permanent home in the Division of Community Engagement with a designated employee or group of employees responsible for coordinating site visits each year and following up with participants and community organizations
- Secure funds for transportation and promotional materials/efforts

- Select site(s) to be visited, coordinate with the site(s) to determine needs, and schedule the visit(s)
- Promote the site visits across VCU by advertising at orientation sessions for new faculty and staff, posting in the VCU TelegRam, posting on the Division of Community Engagement's website, and soliciting participation directly through academic units
- Coordinate transportation through VCU Parking and Transportation Services

FINAL PITCH

Creating opportunities for VCU faculty and staff to develop service relationships with Richmond community health organizations will help strengthen VCU's commitment to both fostering community engagement and improving human health. Through these partnerships, the university will uphold its mission to advance knowledge and student success through a commitment to research, health care, interdisciplinary collaborations, and sustainability. This initiative will inspire participants to get involved and contribute to human health services opportunities in the Richmond community.



VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

Campus to Community: Bridging Opportunities in Human Health Services

The Community Connectors Team

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- ❖ *Antoinette Light, VCU Health Systems, Human Resources*
- ❖ *Stephanie Tignor, Global Education Office*






VCU and Community Engagement



Quite simply, we are more than an 'anchor institution' in Richmond, as some have called us. Anchors hold things in place. We are an 'engine' that makes our region go.



(President Michael Rao, Ph.D, Faculty Convocation, August 2014)



VCU and Human Health







Our challenge?

**Helping people
find quality matches**

**What does
ACTION
look like?**



Service
Research
Student Volunteer
Service-Learning Hours
Teaching
Internships

Community-Engaged

How do we
engage more
people?



EXPOSURE!



A Site Visit

An exposure opportunity for VCU faculty and staff to engage with human health focused organizations in the RVA community.



Who would participate in a site visit?

- VCU Faculty
- VCU Staff
- Not just medical professionals!



What happens on the site visit?

- Group experience
- Face-to-face with leaders
- Tour of facilities
- Connect with other VCU individuals



GOAL: Motivate to ACTION!

Sustainability



- Division of Community Engagement
- Individual departments may organize
- There is a NEED!

Known VCU Partnerships:

CROSSOVER
Health Care Ministry

FAN FREE CLINIC

Daily Planet



RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES - RICHMOND

Other Possible Human Health Partnerships:

ARC
THE GREATER RICHMOND

NAMI Virginia
National Alliance on Mental Illness

VIRGINIA BLOOD SERVICES

RAIN
Richmond Autism Integration Network

Support One
SO Connected

renew
RICHMOND

HOSPITAL HOSPITALITY HOUSE
Treating guests like family since 1984

How exactly will this work...

- ❖ Advertising
- ❖ Build interest within a department



...and how can we be sure it is effective?

- ❖ Measure outcomes by pledge card and survey



How do we know this works?



Moving Forward...

*Exposure
Partnership
Networking*

///ACTION///

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- *Lynn Pelco, PhD, Associate Vice Provost, Division of Community Engagement*
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- *Alana Robinson, Communications & Design Specialist, VCU ALT Lab*
- *Kate Bausman, Volunteer Coordinator, Fan Free Clinic*