



2003-2004 ASSESSMENT SUMMARY: COMMUNITY WORK-STUDY AND STUDENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

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PART I: ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

A. Quantitative:

Goal: Determine the number of America Reads tutors and number of elementary students tutored; the number of work-study students in community agencies; and the hours worked and tutored.

Results: The Thayne Center placed 25 students in Community Work-Study positions during 2003-2004. Of these, 16 were employed as America Reads tutors in 3 schools. Community Work-Study students worked a total of 4,752 hours, with America Reads tutors completing 3,489 hours of this.

B. Qualitative:

Goal: Determine work-study student expectations vs. satisfaction with the Community Work-Study program; partner school/agency expectations vs. satisfaction with the program.

Results:¹

Evaluations: We had a low return rate on our end-of-semester evaluations. The few that were returned were quite positive about the interactions with children and the support of the Thayne Center. They indicated some problems at the school sites, however, and this was further addressed in the focus groups.

Focus Groups: Dr. Frank Cooney led a focus group with seven America Reads tutors on April 30, 2004. The discussion focused on tutor relationships with school personnel; beginning tutor training; ongoing support and training during the year; matches with students; and recommendations for program improvement.

The tutors reported very different situations regarding their relationships with school personnel, ranging from regular discussions about the students to no contact at all. This also affected the level of training that tutors got at the school. Some tutors received training on

¹ Because most Community Work-Study students were America Reads tutors, especially those returning spring semester, these evaluations and focus groups were targeted for the America Reads program.

phonics and reading comprehension strategies while others received little or no training. In addition, the tutors wanted to have written expectations from the school so they had clear guidelines for their work.

Most tutors saw their students an average of 2 times a week and generally had positive working relationships with them. According to the tutors, approximately 50% of the students were actively engaged all of the time, 40% most of the time, and 10% some of the time.

The tutors felt that they had been well-supported by Thayne Center staff during the year.

Use of Results: Overwhelmingly, the tutors recommended that there be more training, including refresher training during the semester. To address this, the Thayne Center has scheduled with the Utah Department of Education to provide more training to America Reads tutors next year. The tutors also wanted to have written expectations from the school, so the Thayne Center now is making that a mandatory requirement for a school to continue as an America Reads partner site. There also needs to be more discussion with the partner schools about specific goals of the America Reads program.

C. Outcomes Assessment:

Goal: Examine the number of active Community Work-Study students, the hours completed by active work-studies, and the number of school children tutored.

Results: Accurate outcomes for this assessment were difficult to determine because of two big variables: how much work-study funds students were awarded and when students actually received work-study from Financial Aid. If work-study students receive a full award, they are eligible for \$1,800 a semester. At \$9.00 an hour, this means that most students would typically work 200 hours (10-15 hours a week) to complete their award. Because not all students receive \$1,800 a semester, however, we are using 125 hours as a minimum.

Of the 25 students placed in Community Work-Study positions during 2003-2004, 15 (60%) of them met this minimum. However, 4 of these students didn't even receive work-study from Financial Aid until summer semester. Since work-study funds had to be used by June 30, there was no way these students could complete 125 hours. (One student put in a valiant effort, working 93 hours in just a month.) Another student received her award halfway through fall semester and was only able to complete 53 hours, although she did return a second semester and work almost 125 hours that semester. Five of the work-study students worked less than 30 hours, either because they

dropped out early in fall semester or they weren't awarded work-study until late spring semester.

Because Financial Aid awards work-study throughout the year, it is difficult for us to gauge retention by whether a student returned for a second semester. For example, we had a 92% retention rate from fall to spring semester, but this is not an accurate number because only 13 of 25 of our students were awarded work-study during fall semester to begin with.

Use of Results: We clearly need earlier placement for tutors. The process of how work-study funds are awarded has been an on-going issue for the Community Work-Study program for several years now. To really have an effective program, we need to have SLCC tutors placed and trained early in fall semester. As our qualitative assessment showed, the tutors want in-depth training before they begin, as well as on-going training throughout the year. It's difficult to provide this structure when we have work-study students coming to us at dramatically different times. For example, our 25 tutors this year started on 11 separate dates, spanning from September 1 to June 1.

D. Intended Learning Outcomes:

Goal: To assess students' acquisition of civic responsibility through the Community Work-Study program.

Results: Though evaluations and focus groups took place, these centered primarily on issues of tutor training, relationships with school personnel, and effectiveness of the tutoring. Determining civic responsibility took a back seat to these other concerns this year.

Use of Results: A systematic attempt needs to be made in a future evaluation to assess the civic learning aspect of the program. Based on the evaluations and focus groups, it's clear that there needs to be a stronger structure in place at the partner schools. There is often confusion about the expectations, duties, and reporting lines for America Reads tutors. Until this is better organized, it's difficult to adequately determine what level of civic engagement is taking place for the tutors.

PART II: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

A. Quantitative:

Goal: To determine the number of students referred to community agencies and number of students participating in Thayne Center service projects.

Results: The Thayne Center had 5,666 student contacts in the areas of information, referral, and projects during 2003-2004.

Information & Referral:

2,043 students received information about volunteer projects or a referral to a community agency this year. The Thayne Center provides this information to students in three main ways: 1) class presentations; 2) one-on-one services for walk-in students; and 3) weekly e-mails to students on our newsletter list.

Thayne Center Projects:

3,623 contacts were recorded of students participating in Thayne Center projects this year. These include large-scale events such as Martin Luther King Day, the Children's Book Festival, and the Utah Service Symposium, as well as on-going Peer Leadership Council activities, club meetings, and projects organized by student volunteer leaders and service-learning scholars.

Other Data:

Even though it was not part of this particular assessment plan, we also collected data on how many contacts we had with community agencies and schools (738) and how many service-learning contacts we had (1,306). Service-learning contacts include any interactions with faculty, service-learning courses, service-learning scholars, and statewide colleagues through Utah Campus Compact.

Use of Results: We are providing information about volunteer opportunities to a relatively high number of students. However, at this time we have absolutely no follow-up with these students once they leave our office. We don't know if they actually volunteer with agencies and projects we've suggested. We also don't know if walk-in students we've given information to are later coming to Thayne Center projects. Though we don't have data to back it up at this time, our hunch is that we lose a lot of students after their first initial contact with the Thayne Center. To address this, we are developing a procedure where students in the Peer Leadership Council follow up with students who've come to the Thayne Center and filled out a volunteer interest form.

Also, the number of students who participated in Thayne Center projects is a little misleading. This total includes the number of students who came to each activity or event, not the total number of all students who participated, so it's not a truly accurate picture of how many different students we involved. This means, for example, that PLC students were counted each time they came to a meeting, stopped by the Thayne Center to work on a project, or actually attended a project. For next year's assessment, we are breaking our tracking into more specific categories so we can accurately show how many students attend service projects as opposed to students who are

attending on-going meetings (such as SOS Club meetings) or working behind the scenes to organize projects.

B. Qualitative:

Goal: To determine student expectations vs. satisfaction with information & referral services and Thayne Center service projects.

Results: This year, no qualitative evaluations were given to students participating in Thayne Center one-time service projects. The only exit polls that were given were administered to students in the Peer Leadership Council, a Thayne Center program, at the end of fall and spring semesters.

For fall semester, PLC participants rated their experience as “very good,” or 5.07 out of 6. At the end of spring semester, participants rated their experience with the PLC as “good,” an average of 4.7 out of 6, which was a slight drop from the first semester. On the whole, the peers seemed happy with the program, since no one rated their overall experience a 2 (“fair”) or 1 (“poor”).

According to the evaluations, the peers clearly liked working in teams. They said they learned skills such as collaboration, motivation, tolerance, and time management. Several students mentioned that they would like to have even more teamwork, including more large-scale projects that all the teams could plan. A few peers expressed frustration about their teams not working well together but they still liked the model. One student who was working on a different project and didn’t have much of a team acutely missed the collaboration of a team. The peers also liked the service component included this year as part of the PLC. About half of the projects they rated as most memorable were ones that involved the community.

From the evaluations we also learned that the peers want the PLC program to be better organized, with better communication, more specific projects, and more involvement from campus partners. They also want the Monday meetings to be a productive use of time. Several peers expressed their stress about meeting the 75-hour/semester commitment.

Use of Results: We are in the process of planning the PLC program for next year and will use this feedback to make sure that we create a stronger program, especially in terms of organization. We also need to fine-tune a project evaluation form and make sure that this is consistently administered for all service projects.

C. Outcome Assessment:

Goal: To compare numbers of students who signed up to participate in projects vs. number of students who actually participated in projects.

Results: We did not complete this assessment, because as the year progressed, this method did not prove particularly useful for what we really wanted to gauge (i.e., how many students came back to participate in a project after their initial contact with the Thayne Center). For example, several of our service projects didn't require students to sign up prior to the event, so there was no accurate way of determining which students were new participants. In addition, a student might have found out about a project via other means than direct contact with the Thayne Center (friend, MyPage, flier, The Globe, etc.).

Use of Results: Clearly, this assessment was not a useful way of tracking student volunteer retention. We are in the process of creating a new way of following up with students.

D. Intended Learning Outcomes:

Goal: To determine if students a) acquire knowledge of local non-profits and community needs through Thayne Center information & referral services; and b) learn civic responsibility through Thayne Center service projects.

Results: Unlike past years, the Thayne Center coordinated very few large-scale volunteer projects this year. Due to our new and sizeable grant, five new staff members came on board and a great deal of time was devoted to getting them up to speed as well as planning and organizing for the grant. This affected the number of our projects and thus our evaluation of these projects. We also did not do follow up evaluations with students who had received our information and referral services. However, we were able to evaluate two of our expanding programs: the Peer Leadership Council and the service-learning scholars program. The evaluations of these two different areas show a continuum of civic engagement for our students.

Peer Leadership Council

The PLC program is a year-long opportunity for a select group of students to engage other SLCC students both on and off-campus. We administered exit evaluations at the end of fall and spring semesters. Since there was a service component built in, participants interacted with community partners and non-profits in more depth than a one-time project such as Martin Luther King Day of Service.

At the end of fall semester, PLC participants rated their experience as “very good,” or 5.07 out of 6. On a question asking about each student’s favorite project of the semester, 57% of the responses referred to community projects. However, these PLC projects still tended to fall under one-time events with an emphasis on fun, such as the Fall Leaf Haul (raking leaves for senior citizens) and the Winter Carnival (hosting a carnival for 75 local children). Their comments, though sincere, reflected only a superficial understanding of service and engagement and focused mostly on the “warm and fuzzy” aspects:

- PLC is not just for hours, it is how much good you can do for your community.
- The fall leaf haul allowed me to see the needs of the elderly.
- [I could] Interact with people in the community and make them happy and enrich their lives.
- The winter festival was [my favorite activity] because it was so much fun getting together.
- We got to make the room look and feel like Christmas and work with kids, it was really fun.
- All of the projects the PLC did this year were service-oriented but also built relationships between students.

At the end of spring semester, participants rated their experience with the PLC as “good,” an average of 4.7 out of 6, which was a slight drop from the first semester. Once again, 57% of responses about memorable activities involved a service project or some sort. Several comments were still generic, but there was also movement towards trying to truly engage with and learn from the people served:

- It makes me feel good to serve people and I really enjoyed it
- I enjoyed the food drive. I thought it all turned out really well. And after that, knowing that I was really helping.
- They were good causes and they really helped people out.
- I was helping out the DRC students do things that they were not capable of doing by themselves.
- I believe in raising awareness and I had fun while doing it.
- The Golden Living Center, to interact with those elderly and see them happy to have some one to talk to them, made me feel good inside.
- [My most memorable project was] working with [a blind DRC student] because she is so kind and I learned a lot from her.
- I learned other people’s point of view on different health and wellness issues.
- I met people with substance abuse. For the most part, they are just like you and me.

The service component was clearly a valuable aspect of the PLC program. The students involved were, for the most part, right out of high school and their level of engagement reflects a basic understanding of community, unlike students who are engaged in the service-learning scholars program.

Service-Learning Scholar Reflections:

The service-learning scholars were given monthly prompts from the Thayne Center service-learning coordinator as a way to have them reflect on their service and what they were learning from it. These reflections show a high degree of civic engagement. Because these students have chosen to be in this program, they combine academic learning with service and are able to make deeper connections than the average Thayne Center student. Here are some excerpts:

- As I read articles and really looked at many of the social needs of downtown Salt Lake, I also found motivation. The more I knew about the cause the more motivated I was to make something happen. Until I really looked into what the community was asking for, I didn't feel any need to devote my time to it. As I continued looking for a new project to take on that would reflect the needs of the community, I also noticed that there are some needs that are taken care of a lot more than others, and although those are still very worthy needs, I don't feel like it is the best place for me to spend the majority of my time.
- I view people a lot differently now. I have a friend who won't serve at a homeless shelter because he believes that those people got there by their own mistakes and that they should get back on their feet by themselves. When he told me this, I was shocked to say the least and I worked for the next couple of days to change his mind. But a couple nights later I realized that his point of view is exactly the same one I used to harbor. Now that I have seen them, worked with them, helped their families, and just gotten to know the lives that some people have to lead just to put food on the table instead of thinking that most deserve it and maybe a few are there by circumstance, I truly believe that they all are doing what they can and that all of them are grateful for a helping hand.
- I feel that this last year has been a landmark year for me. I have been able to find a permanent position volunteering for a cause I really enjoy that is benefiting the community in numerous ways. I have also learned how to balance my service with my current career, my future career choices and my social life. ... This year I finally settled on a career and that is social

work. I will have so many opportunities to help the community and help others help the community in my career.

- While designing and trying to implement my final project I found that through inept communication that the expectations and vision I had for the project were different than the elementary school's expectation and vision. This required some mediation and discussion. Both sides were able to meet and adjust their expectation so that we were all satisfied. Although it wasn't as I had exactly planned it, it still served its purpose and was very functional. Through that and other battles I truly learned the importance of flexibility and of having a vision. Such battles have helped me to refine my service techniques and leadership.
- The previous years at the community college I remained uninvolved and just went to classes and home. I have always felt a need and enjoyed service, but was hesitant about making a commitment to the service-learning program. Obviously recognizing that it was a good opportunity and that it would be good for me, I just decided to put my reservations behind me and dive in. I was scared and nervous, but it all worked out amazingly well. ... Everybody takes leaps of faith through service, no matter how small. Sometimes even service itself can be considered a leap of faith because you never know if you will be able to achieve the objective of any service. One thing is for sure in my mind though—it is a good thing to take a step into the unknown. It is good to stretch yourself outside of your limits. It is good to think outside the box and to get out of your comfort zone. This is how great leaders and great humanitarians are made.
- I realized that my level of civic engagement is close to non-existent. I'm registered to vote but I didn't bother registering until two years after the legal age requirement. I have heard the names of the senators. I know the 1st Amendment only from my interest in history. I am not one that would go to a town meeting and speak out for a cause. It is not my personality type, it makes me uncomfortable. I don't like confrontation. I realize that some people enjoy debates and "political discussions." Personally, they make me tense. My way of showing my civic engagement is the more quiet approach. I am more comfortable being involved in community service. I am still reaching out and involved in a good cause. I am not completely against voicing my opinion, I will if I am adamant enough about an issue. But it is not comfortable to me.
- I used to just be annoyed by the problems and passively complain but not do anything. I think apathy is the chronic

problem of too many people in our society today. People get angry at problems, but never do anything about it. Unfortunately, I think that I fell into that category myself in the past. Making the change from taking notice to action is really important. As I have become more involved in serving and trying to make a difference over the last year, it has changed my attitude and my desire to make a difference. I have learned that one person can make a difference and that just one person can instigate change if they channel their energy properly.

- I thought for the first time in my life that I could be an activist. ...I think about myself sitting and watching society go wild. I haven't thought about it in the perspective of my children. I would do anything for children, particularly my own (when I have them). So why am I not standing up for the society that they will someday live in?
- I chose to read the report that was a snapshot summary of poverty in Utah. I couldn't believe what I read. First of all, I was shocked at the sheer numbers of those below the poverty level in our state. I am glad that we are lower than the national average, but it still saddens me to think of the large portion of Utahns who are still below that level. In addition to those statistics, I was especially impacted by the numbers of children who are living in poverty. Over 71,000 children are below the poverty level in our state. Dealing with children in poverty is kind of the focus of my project, so I took a special note of the portions of the report that discussed it. There is a significant correlation between the quality of education that a student gets and their economic upbringing. Those living below the poverty level unfortunately get a lower quality of education. The statistics in the report I read showed that high poverty incidence accompanies low test scores. Working at an elementary school. I see that this is true. I also see that it doesn't necessarily have to be true.
- I have never really been hugely aware of where my clothes came from and who makes them. ... I was shocked to see how many of my clothes were made overseas and came from typical sweatshop countries. It made me kind of sad that so many of my clothes are potentially produced in sweat shop circumstances. I think this is just another issue that people aren't as educated about it as they should be. I think that is always the first step, for people to be educated and aware of the issues. ...There is no question that people need to take action to curb all of the atrocities that are involved with sweatshop labor. Simply buying clothes that aren't made in sweatshop conditions is one of the best ways an individual can help stop sweatshops.

Use of Results:

Based on the PLC evaluations, it's clear that there needs to be more organization for this program. In addition, there also needs to be more of an educational component to help PLC students gain a deeper understanding of community issues and how to address them, so that their service can take on deeper meaning.

We were pleased with the service-learning scholar reflections and the high level of students' critical thinking in terms of civic engagement. The scholars are required to write a short essay when they enter the program but we haven't done any assessment comparing their first reflection to their final ones. For next year we would like to analyze in more detail the growth and learning taking place between entering and exiting the program.

For next year we are also implementing a plan where PLC students placed at the Thayne Center will make follow-up phone calls to walk-in students who have filled out volunteer interest forms and been referred to projects. This way we can assess whether students are acting upon the information and referrals we give them.