



2004-2005 ASSESSMENT SUMMARY: COMMUNITY WORK-STUDY AND STUDENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

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PART I: ASSESSMENT OF THE AMERICA READS COMMUNITY WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

Quantitative: 28 students were placed as America Reads tutors during 2004-2005, working a total of 4,864 hours and earning \$42,354 in work-study funds or 10.5% of all federal work-study allocated to the college. Last year, 25 community work-study students worked a total of 4,752 hours, so we were able to increase both student numbers and hours this year.

Qualitative Assessment: To determine student satisfaction with the America Reads program, two moderators (Dr. Frank Cooney and Rod Romboy) facilitated focus group discussions with America Reads tutors on March 4, 2005. The discussion focused on the following areas: effectiveness of initial training; effectiveness of on-going training; direction given by on-site personnel; and Thayne Center administration of the program. Based on these focus groups, the Thayne Center has done a much better job of training tutors but it can still be improved to make it more applicable. In addition, based on feedback about one partner site, the Thayne Center ended its partnership at this school.

Outcomes: To examine the retention of America Reads work-study students, the Thayne Center looked at the number of students who worked at least 125 hours per semester and the number who continued for a second semester. This year the Thayne Center had a solid group of tutors who worked both fall and spring semesters. We placed 28 tutors before fall semester started and provided them with intense initial training and monthly training after that. For spring semester, we had 16 tutors, a 57% retention rate.

In addition to retention, we looked at how involved tutors were in the program each semester. Just 32% of America Reads tutors completed 125 hours or more of tutoring fall semester. An additional 21% completed 100-124 hours. For spring semester, 56% completed 125 hours or more. It appears that this year we had students who, on the whole, tutored for fewer hours a semester than the previous year, but they did this consistently over two semesters, not just one.

Learning Outcomes: Monthly journal prompts and reflection-based discussion groups were used to assess students' understanding of literacy issues in our community. These prompts and discussion groups

were designed to get the tutors thinking about their work in the context of larger community issues, such as illiteracy and poverty. In addition, the Thayne Center provided the tutors with numerous other opportunities to advance their understanding of literacy issues and civic engagement in general. The tutors seemed to appreciate the journal prompts, reflection sessions, and other opportunities that give them a chance to discuss how the work they are doing is connected to larger community issues. Here are some comments from tutors:

- [I've learned] that literacy affects every social issue, i.e., education, employment, poverty, homelessness, etc. Through service to our children that are at risk, I influence a change in their lives. The one-on-one relationship based on trust and respect does make a difference in their education and literacy skills.
- As a literacy tutor I have gained a more insightful knowledge that reading is the soul foundation to everything; it affects every facet of your life. If the children I work with do not get that early in life with parents, grandparents, siblings and/or mentors and teachers, they will struggle the rest of their life and their life chances will be very limited.

PART II: ASSESSMENT OF THAYNE CENTER STUDENT PROGRAMS:

Quantitative: 66 students participated in four programs (Redwood Peer Leadership Council; South Peer Leadership Council; student volunteer leaders; and service-learning scholars).

Qualitative: Evaluations from one of these programs (Redwood PLC) showed that 45% of participants ranked their satisfaction with the program as good and 40% ranked it as excellent. An additional 15% were neutral, with no one ranking their experience as fair or poor. Students said they especially liked working in groups, meeting new people, organizing projects, and learning new leadership skills. In terms of challenges, they felt that there needed to be better structure to the PLC program, as well as better communication between teams and between students and advisors. A focus group with another program (student volunteer leaders) showed participants enjoying the program but feeling overwhelmed with trying to fit everything in with school and work.

Outcomes: The Thayne Center documented 14 student-led projects involving 1,024 people and 2,054 hours over the course of the year. However, this is not an accurate reflection of all the activities organized by Thayne Center students. These ones were primarily organized by the Redwood and South Peer Leadership Councils. It was more difficult to collect sign-in sheets from student volunteer leaders

and service-learning scholars because these tended to be much smaller in scope and more independently-organized.

Learning Outcomes: To determine whether students learn about community needs and civic responsibility through participation in Thayne Center programs, monthly reflection sessions and journal prompts were used with three of the programs. Based on the reflection sessions and email reflection prompts, it appears that Thayne Center students did deepen their understanding of community needs. More than anything, what came out of these reflections was that the students started seeing their actions as a way to make a difference in the community. For example, students in the South PLC group became involved with issues of hate crimes and intolerance when a billboard promoting a white supremacy group went up across the street from their campus. In reflection sessions, they said that they now realized how close community issues like this were to their lives. Other students also reflected on how individual actions could make a difference, whether it was in voting, political activism, or future choices. Here are some quotes from the reflections illustrating these points:

- This was the first year I voted. It was cool to go out and exercise that right. Anything that has to do with politics has always frightened me.
- By participating in service I'm able to get to know the people around me and to grow as an active citizen.
- Finding your voice takes practice and determination.
- When I was growing up my parents never really got me to participate in politics. I don't think most parents do. Maybe they thought the crappy history class we got would let us know what voting really meant, but it didn't, nobody did! What drives me nuts is that the whole time I had a choice and my decision was ignorant and arrogant! I should have done more about it, but now I am.