University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Innovations in Undergraduate Research and Honors Education: Proceedings of the Second Schreyer National Conference 2001

National Collegiate Honors Council

1-1-2001

ISSUE REACTION: INTEGRATING SERVICE LEARNING INTO ACADEMIC COURSES

M. A. Dupont-Morales
Pennsylvania State University, Capital College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nchcschreyer2

Part of the Higher Education Administration Commons

Dupont-Morales, M. A., "ISSUE REACTION: INTEGRATING SERVICE LEARNING INTO ACADEMIC COURSES" (2001). *Innovations in Undergraduate Research and Honors Education: Proceedings of the Second Schreyer National Conference 2001*. Paper 8.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nchcschreyer2/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the National Collegiate Honors Council at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Innovations in Undergraduate Research and Honors Education: Proceedings of the Second Schreyer National Conference 2001 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

ISSUE REACTION: INTEGRATING SERVICE LEARNING INTO ACADEMIC COURSES

M. A. DUPONT-MORALES
THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CAPITAL COLLEGE

Service learning is the collaboration between academia, the community, the student, and a discipline. Such collaboration is a powerful introduction to the complexities of problems and the impact of those problems on the community. Students return to the classroom after completion of service learning for critical discussion of social issues, contemplation about policy, collaborative planning of alternative solutions, awareness of cultural impact, and perceptiveness about the complexities of service efforts and accomplishments. A distinction between service learning and academic learning is the concrete interaction with the community. The goals of the curriculum need to mesh with the mission of the community agency, the processes used to meet objectives, and the potential role that service learning may play in the educational and career interests of the students.

The service-learning Issue Reaction addressed concerns about the importance of service learning and the need to comprehend its integration into the curriculum. While participants were quick to address the academic side of service learning, the service aspect posed a challenge to creativity.

Participants were seeking paths to initiate the service component into classes. Social justice and service to marginalized populations or populations experiencing personal challenges provided a framework. The adaptation of the classes was one aspect for consideration as the preparation of the students for community interaction was introduced. Students may need to be prepared for the experience or research the planned activities before they move into the community. Agency sites may need to collaborate on what the preparation should consist of and how best to introduce the particular service and the population receiving the services.

Concern was expressed that service learning might be seen as volunteering and that a service-learning class might need validation concerning its academic rigor. The old adage that "honors classes are supposed to be harder" was met with "honors classes need to be different." Scholarly learning can be initiated collaboratively in the community, outside the classroom, and with interactive learning opportunities. It was noted that all students might benefit from engaging in service-learning activities. This activity needs to be chronicled by the students as a foundation for later academic research related to the class. The chronicles may be completed in a number of ways and should stimulate creativity in the students. Some students may keep journals while others may use photography or WEB pages to document their experiences. Interaction between the student, the community, the service receivers, and scholarly activity reflects innovative learning. The instructor needs to see documentation that students comprehend the impact and importance of this commitment. The students need to share their experiences with their colleagues and department as a means of encouraging the activity. These activities are documentation of university community outreach and service.

The Issue Reaction team concluded that service learning could be introduced across the curriculum in different capacities. It is dependent upon the creativity of the faculty, the commitment of the institution to service learning, and the participation of the community. Leadership for embracing service learning as an institutionalized activity needs to come from the administration. Workshops for faculty run by faculty and students who have participated in service learning may prove useful. Some aspect of service learning may be integrated into any curriculum--it only takes commitment.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

M. A. DuPont-Morales is an associate tenured professor in the School of Public Affairs at Capital College, Penn State Harrisburg. Her students have presented at Honors conferences and

participated in Learning Abroad educational experiences. She has been the Director of the Honors Program for three years and requires service learning as part of the curriculum.