

Title III Mini-grant
Report
for the spring 2007 semester

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Title III Mini-grant Report

Introduction

The Title III mini-grant provided an opportunity for two faculty members, Cathy Robinson and Julie Franks Gill, to attend the Gulf-South SUMMIT on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement through Higher Education. The conference was held in New Orleans, March 14-16, 2007. This conference was a wonderful tool to further the discussion of service learning and civic engagement with other professionals across the state and within the southern region of the United States. The SUMMIT enabled us to ask questions regarding the components of an effective program.

Objectives

The objectives outlined in the mini-grant proposal were met in the following manner:

1. Participants will develop techniques necessary to incorporate service learning into a course taught during the fall 2007 semester.

Answers to our questions were provided through sessions, speakers, and other SUMMIT participants regarding the necessary foundation for such a program. Our basic understanding of university program ideas, a service learning mission statement, goals and objectives for both programs and courses, and reflection requirements for courses was broadened. These initial thoughts on program ideas, a mission statement, goals, and objectives were provided to both the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs and the Service Learning Ad Hoc Committee during the spring 2007 semester. The service learning mission statement and outcomes have been further revised after continued discussions during the summer and fall 2007 semesters.

2. Participants will provide a Faculty Forum in April 2007 to assist with clarification regarding the integration of service learning into courses.

Upon return from the conference, a faculty forum was scheduled to relay the conference materials to our co-workers. *Service Learning and Civic Engagement* was offered on May 2, 2007 for approximately 20 faculty members from across the disciplines. After the presentation, faculty were encouraged to collaborate on potential projects and share ideas and concerns for growth. A survey was given to gain a better understanding of the current perceptions of, the knowledge of, and the willingness of faculty to consider and implement components of service learning into courses. Results from the survey are provided in Appendix A.

Implications

Further training for faculty is needed prior to the consideration of incorporating service learning into courses. Faculty should be encouraged to incorporate service learning components to ensure that reflection is a vital component that bridges service and academics. However, course modifications within any discipline should occur after proper training to avoid confusion and a lack of academic integrity and rigor.

Conclusion

This mini-grant provided an excellent opportunity to discuss the role of service and academia on our campus and in the community. In my opinion, this is a fine example of the benefits that these Title III mini-grants provide beyond the monetary factor. Students, faculty, Louisiana State University at Alexandria, and the community have all benefitted as a result of the discussions and preparations that have been made thus far. Thank you for considering me as a recipient of this grant.

Appendix A

Results for the *Service Learning and Civic Engagement* Survey

1. What is your vision for our campus regarding service learning?

Hopefully, a significant percentage of student body participating.

I am currently creating/or helping create a service learning course for the BSS Dept.

Build internships in every discipline.

Excellent opportunity to be provided for students, staff, & faculty.

A well organized & coordinated program.

- SL would add another dimension to the way LSUA prepares its students for “real life.”

LSUA has a great potential to engage in service learning.

A staffed office coordinating service learning projects would be helpful.

Much more engaged w/community. Instilling the value of this in larger numbers of students.

Having each college incorporate service learning projects into the different disciplines.

2. Do you have concerns?, suggestions?

Should not be given academic credit unless activity is directly related to a specific course.

FUNDING (at least for my specific ideas).

Building a list of resources & disciplines involved.

Need to make sure complete any project started - not leave agency/participants high and dry.

Make sure program is coordinated from a central location/office on campus.

Concern - a “director” or coordinator might be needed to oversee program & monitor some uniform elements of the variety of SL opportunities.

Problems w/evaluation & course credit; how will the work be graded? Rigorous standards?

Maybe it would be helpful to survey different organizations to see which ones are interested in partnering.

3. Are you willing to learn more about service learning?

15 YES 0 NO

4. Would you consider the addition of service learning hours to a course?

13 YES 0 NO 1 N/A

5. Would additional training be helpful to integrate service learning into courses?

15 YES 0 NO

Re: goals/objectives; what to say when approaching business=or maybe a packet for them

6. Would you be more comfortable with an established support system for service learning on campus?

15 YES 0 NO

7. Did this forum provide useful information regarding service learning and civic engagement?

15 YES 0 NO

Why or why not?

How all disciplines can become involved - with emphasis on the service learning.

Saw opportunities I hadn't considered. Understood the importance of reflective activity.

Was not as aware of the broad scope of activities possible through service learning.

More familiar with the terminology.

Gave me a better idea of what service learning is.

Sharing of ideas was useful.

8. Would you like additional forums on various topics relating to service learning?

15

YES

0 NO

Suggestions for future forum topics?

By getting faculty/staff together in small groups - and even students - some major “stuff” could come out of brainstorming sessions.

More details from successful programs.

When campus-wide program developed, a forum to educate and enlist participants.

Effectively communicating with organizations; university willingness to fund such endeavors.

Building a list of resources & disciplines involved.