

THE CONCEPT OF STUDENT volunteerism encompasses a wide array of concerns and activities. To my knowledge it is a phenomenon that is only vaguely familiar to the average American. But it is a distinct phenomenon with a solid philosophical underpinning, and its coherence and capacity make it worthy of study in a higher educational institution.

This article will attempt to suggest a variety of ways to use student volunteerism itself as subject matter in a college level course. I will not try to offer guidelines for the "best student volunteer training program" or the "best student volunteer evaluation program" or all the components of the "best student volunteer program" in a particular type of college or university. I will propose a variety of different approaches, some from traditional academic perspectives, others from more interdisciplinary or non-traditional perspectives that can shed light upon the rise, growth, and excitement of the student volunteer phenomenon.

Course or Class Goals

Very often the goal for a course will be a companion to a student volunteer experience, i.e., one that is credit-bearing. Coupling of the course experiences of reading, lectures, discussion, and intellectual exploration with the actual field experience of a student volunteer program tends to make the learning experience and the contribution to the client or target population richer. Actions are enriched by ideas, and ideas are enriched by action.

One goal of a student volunteerism course might be to bring together the subject matter components of several more traditional courses or disciplines.

Once goals are established for the "why" of the course, the "how" must be considered. Is there latitude for individual or group student goal formulation and establishment of evaluation criteria? Often the students for which such a course is designed will be actively involved or interested in becoming involved in campus volunteer programs. If that is the case, the technique of "contracts" with "negotiation" sessions for recasting those contracts as the course develops may be well worth considering. This would be especially likely if the course were offered in an "experiential college", or in some interdisciplinary component not connected with a traditional academic structure.

In whatever way the "how" of the course is developed, it must be clearly outlined to the students at the outset of the experience. That does not exclude renegotiation but does imply an objective that the student may achieve with reasonable application of effort and interest.

Basic Course Components

Any course treating the subject of student volunteerism should include the following fundamental components. The instructor should attempt to deal with the

Developing a for a credit volunteerism

philosophical underpinnings, the description of the phenomenon and its validity; the *raison d'être* of student volunteerism. In my course outline I have posed this issue in the form of questions: "Volunteerism as an ethic? A social phenomenon? An individual personal need?" Those questions indicate how complex, but real and holistic the student volunteer movement is. I am sure that the reason for its existence has to do with human beings' needs, desires, capacities, strengths, and perceptions.

In constructing any course on the subject the curriculum designer should attempt to state some truth or value that is at the heart of student volunteerism. This statement may deal with such concerns as the need for recognition of social responsibility, the human quality of helping a less fortunate fellow, or the need for some meaning in a highly complex world that sometimes shields us from basic human relationships. Whatever it is, the instructor should accompany his statement with some exposition and perhaps some examples.

A definition of the term itself is often a good place to start a course on student volunteerism.

Regardless of how many years I have spent in higher education, I know that when I am called upon to lecture, design a course, or speak to some public group on a topic with which I am not thoroughly familiar, I go first to the dictionary or to a book of synonyms.

CURRICULUM COURSE ON

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You can apply this technique to the process of designing an instructional package around the concept of student volunteerism. A good dictionary will give the roots of words that can often suggest when they first came into usage. This, in turn, gives clues to the historical origins of the concept, the context in which it was used, and ways of analyzing it. Another way that the words themselves can be used to help build course material is to brainstorm around them, putting ideas into all the contexts in which the words or phrases might be used. This exercise will sometimes lead to interesting dilemmas or contradictions that can be useful as instructional devices for stimulating student creativity or dialogue.

When using such an approach in the classroom, a student might challenge you, saying that this kind of analysis is all "head stuff" and has no relevance to the reality of student volunteerism. It is helpful for the instructor to have had some first hand experience so that he or she might respond that the ideas that go along with experiences and feelings often are meaningful. If a particular course is inadequate, student suggestions for change should be welcomed.

Some component or portion of any course in student volunteerism should come to grips with the motivations and relationships that are inherent in any student volunteer group experience. Even though the course

may be approached from the perspective of business or history, it should embody some analysis and consideration of the relationships between volunteers, volunteers and clients or members of the target population, leaders and online volunteers, and members of the client group themselves. All are important considerations. This sort of analysis is essential in terms of the vitality of a student volunteer phenomenon.

A Secondary Analysis

An analysis of the relationships between the social institutions that are involved in almost any student volunteer setting is almost as important. Unfortunately it is often overlooked in courses relating to student volunteer training or student programs themselves.

Obviously, a student volunteer program deals with the institutions of the parent college or university. Varying kinds of support and strategies to garner that support can be studied in the context of a particular educational institution. As most readers will be well aware, the modern American college or university is a highly complex institution dealing simultaneously with a thousand years of academic tradition, the knowledge explosion, and a growing web of relationships with Federal, state, and local agencies, boards of trustees, faculty, and the general public. If any student volunteer program or course about student volunteerism is going to succeed, it must certainly examine the institution in which it operates.

Moreover, the student volunteer will inevitably come into contact with many other social institutions; social service agencies, specialized welfare agencies for handicapped or elderly, and law enforcement establishments. Public schools are also involved, and have begun to spawn their own student volunteer programs. Insurance companies and other institutions can occasionally be involved. To my knowledge, no definitive work has been done on the agency and interagency aspect of the student volunteer phenomenon as related to curriculum development.

DISCIPLINARY STARTING POINTS

Business and Management

As an academic discipline, business may seem to be most remote from the heart of the student volunteerism. But some student volunteer situations offer legitimate, challenging case study material for business or management course work. Does student volunteerism actually have a "market place" impact? Are student volunteers performing services that might be rendered by private purveyors or those that would be needed or eventually demanded of a governmental agency? The development of personnel standards is another aspect of business and management that fits into a study of student volunteerism, partly because a growing number of para-

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professional activities are evolving from the student volunteer movement.

Although it may seem anomalous, "cost effectiveness" is perhaps more important in student volunteer program administration than in other organizations. The very fact that it is thought of as a "volunteer" program makes its supporting agency or constituency more critical of the use to which its money is put. Student volunteer programs can often benefit from a cost effectiveness analysis.

Economics

The study of economics can help students place volunteer activity or service in a value context. If coupled with a priority structure and good data—the volume and effectiveness of volunteer activity—one

could establish a definite influence on the distribution of resources.

Student volunteerism might also be approached from the perspective of its ethical or attitudinal influence on the economic character of a society. That is, the act of volunteering implies, almost by definition, that the "more the better" economic approach is *not* valued. If the philosophy of many of these student volunteer programs were to be carried over into the larger society, then the "more the better" approach might be altered and produce a very interesting study subject.

History

Student volunteerism could be approached historically with a great deal of benefit. One could give the student a richer feel for his or her own contribution

STUDENT COURSE OUTLINE

TITLE: VOLUNTEERISM: AN ETHIC, A SOCIAL PHENOMENON, A PERSONAL NEED?

DESCRIPTION: Volunteerism and the use of volunteer personnel to fulfill social needs is not a new part of the American scene, but it seems to be taking some new, interesting directions that cause it to blend into many other social and governmental institutions. The concept or philosophy of volunteerism can be viewed from several vantage points. This will be done in a one-unit course offered by the California State University Chico Extension Program taught by Dr. Abraham Baily, Dean for Student Affairs and associate professor, aided by Jane Dolan, Director of CAVE (Community Action Volunteers in Education) and former student body president.

The course will follow this basic outline:

I. Definition of Volunteer

A. Semantics

1. What does the word volunteer mean?
2. What are its roots?
3. What experiences in the distant past prompted the use of the word?

B. Relationships

1. In what context is the volunteer experience usually found?
2. What is it compared to?
3. What sort of roles, historically, have been usually assigned to the volunteer individual?
4. How have the "volunteer" priorities changed in relationship to society's

needs; under what forces—that of the volunteer, the economy, national need as determined by threat?

C. Religious Perspective—In what sense have Judeo-Christian teachings spurred or hindered the concept of volunteerism?

II. Emerging Patterns of a Volunteer Ethic

A. The paradoxes of "militant volunteerism" or "volunteerism for a price" (the "price" not often money, but political or institutional concession on issues and ethics deemed to be crucial).

III. What is the "payoff" for the individual volunteer?

A. Is a volunteer experience the fulfillment of an individual need on the part of the person participating in it?

B. What compels individuals to become active in a volunteer movement?

IV. Factors contributory to *effective* action on the part of volunteers

A. As individuals

1. Training
2. Commitment

B. As a group

1. Discipline
2. Communication

V. Bibliography

The Lonely Crowd, David Riesman et al
Yale University Press, 1953 (Anchor A-16)
Death at an Early Age, Jonathan Kozol,
Houghton Mifflin, 1967
Future Shock, Alvin Toffler
Art of Loving, A Sane Society, Eric Fromm

by outlining the history of volunteerism or analyzing the movement itself. The programs seem to have attached themselves very early to university and college campuses. The historical treatment of these programs, ranging from tutorials and landlord-tenant advice to anti-housing discrimination programs and free legal and medical clinics, educational recruitment, and remedial training centers would be highly relevant.

A third way that volunteerism might be treated historically is to show the influence of the phenomenon on a larger historical ethic or era.

Industrial Arts or Technology

Industrial arts or technology courses can be used as instructional vehicles. Often student volunteer programs have a construction or repairing component. At my own university (CHIP—Chico Housing Improvement Program), the instructional unit of industry and technology, combined with a student volunteer program and funded by the University Year for Action and the city of Chico, is repairing homes for low-income elderly people in the area. This model is catching on throughout the country and could well be tried by student volunteer programs and local departments of industrial arts or industry and technology.

Political Science

One of the most fascinating aspects of student volunteerism is the apparent paradox of “payment” asked in return for services. This kind of “price” is not money paid directly to the volunteer. It is often a concession on political issues or a decision on the part of public officials who represent an entire community. Basically, a course in this area would involve examination of student volunteer techniques used to influence administrators and various functionaries to act favorably toward service-oriented groups and their goals.

A companion to volunteer activism in the area of governmental decision-making is the real assumption or absorption of student volunteer program efforts by traditional governmental or educational agencies.

The process is not unusual, and usually follows this pattern: Someone identifies legitimate needs and concerns. A volunteer group develops methods to deal with them. It soon becomes apparent that the society can deal with those needs in a more appropriate way through an assignment of responsibility to some government component. The volunteer group’s activities are then absorbed by a governmental agency. A study of this might well be an interesting one for a political science or public administration curriculum.

Psychology

Student volunteer programs are rich in psychological subject matter. Analysis of individual volunteer motivation would be interesting for the clinically-oriented

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ADMINISTRATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

DESCRIPTION: Requirements include a minimum of two hours’ volunteer service per week in a community agency, plus one hour per week of classroom work with the volunteer supervisors. Class meetings will be used for volunteer training, guidance, and discussion of problems encountered in the student’s volunteer activities.

Course objectives include:

1. Providing student with an opportunity for practical application of course work.
2. Acquainting students with the problems and needs of the community.
3. Providing students with the opportunity to participate in some of the solutions to the problems and needs of the community.
4. Acquainting the students with the administrative functions of community agencies.
5. Providing students with an opportunity for personal growth through practical community service experience.
6. Providing the community with needed services through volunteer manpower.

FIRST WEEK: The volunteers are oriented to their sponsoring agency. Agency manuals and orientation materials are assigned.

SECOND WEEK: The volunteer chooses his specific volunteer assignment, and begins to orient himself through appropriate personal contacts and readings. Thereafter, he will maintain two hours per week of actual agency service.

THIRD AND FOURTH WEEKS: The volunteer formulates his own goals and objectives for the experience and informs the volunteer supervisor of specific training needs, questions or problems. A contract is established between the student and instructor for this experience.

FIFTH THROUGH THIRTEENTH WEEK: During this period the weekly one-hour class meeting is used for:

1. Discussion
2. Problem Solving
3. Specific Training
4. Films and Tapes
5. Guest Speakers
6. Continuing Evaluation

The volunteer supervisor is responsible for arranging workshops and guest speakers.

FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH WEEKS: Class time is used in evaluation of the community service program and agency and in evaluation of the student volunteer’s goal attainment.

student. The meaning and development that the volunteer associates with his activities, the service recipient's reaction, and an analysis of the influences that spur those reactions and how they might be altered all are rich areas for study.

In the areas of social psychology, student volunteerism could be studied in terms of a healthy generational reaction to alienation, disappointment, and hypocrisy as perceived and constructively combatted by young people in our society. One can also posit that participation in the volunteer experience may indicate that an individual has developed to the point of committing himself to values and working toward them.

Religious Studies

It is likely that the volunteer concept or ethic finds a high place within the philosophical underpinnings of the world's major religions. Most of them place a high value on the ethic, suggesting that when man turns to thoughts of ultimate meanings, he eventually arrives at the concept of freely helping his fellow man without coercion or hope of reward. This is a statement of one of the more fundamental qualities of humanness and could also be treated in a purely philosophical context.

Sociology

What is the group dynamic among student volunteers that gives them vitality in a specific, favorable environment? What factor or factors will do just the opposite? These are pregnant questions for sociologists, and their discipline has received too little attention from student volunteer program planners. Student volunteer programs may deal with the school district, officials, university administrators, and faculty in various departments, but social scientists rarely undertake a comprehensive and sequential analysis of all the agencies within a student volunteer program's universe. If a volunteer could be more thoroughly prepared before he actually encounters an agency, he would be more understanding and less frustrated. A course offering such wisdom would be fruitful for all concerned.

The "Studies"

Student volunteer programs affect our interaction with various groups within our society and could be legitimate components in course material in such areas as black, Chicano, and women's studies. The same approach might be used with the more traditional "area" studies, i.e., Latin American, African, Far Eastern, American, etc. Many of these study areas are not developed enough to have relevant student volunteer programs. Still it might be worth asking if specialized student volunteerism is a valid course component.

Case studies of effective student volunteer programs might be an essential part of any course on student volunteerism. These case studies could also be used as field experience guidelines. An analysis of a course's

institutional and community setting is a profitable part of a course experience. It can be highly beneficial to a student volunteer program that is already in operation and will be invaluable to the individual in understanding the motivations and experiences involved. An approach that I still use that is one that I outlined in the very first issue of *Synergist*. I call it DICEM, a mnemonic device that stands for a developmental series of thoughts looking toward the components of vital and effective student volunteer programs. The "D" stands for "definition" which is where we start; what the program is going to be about. What are the needs? What are the resources to meet those needs? Those must be defined precisely.

The "I" is for "identification," and stands for a further refinement of the earlier "definition," and for the identification of specific resources and methodologies for delivering them to specific clientele in specific situations. It also represents the development of a thrust, campaign, or atmosphere in which the volunteer can identify personally with the program and gain identity and meaning from the association. It also implies an understanding of that identification by every volunteer. When volunteers identify with the program, they know their motivations; they know their limitations and their talents; they are willing to take calculated risks, and they know what their rewards are. "I" also stands for an identification of the program with the institution. What is the positive mutual reinforcement of the institution and program? What are the clear expectations? Identification of the goals and the positive relationships must also be clear.

The "C" stands for communication. This does not carry a deep philosophical significance; it just means that no one likes surprises and that the more the program participants can communicate with the people and agencies with whom they must deal, the better. Constant communication of definitions, identifications, needs, and actions is desirable.

The "E" stands for events. It could be an "A" for action. In essence, it means what happens. What actually takes place? Everyone involved in a student volunteer program should have a clear idea of what the program does and what he does in it. Otherwise, it is indeed all "head stuff."

Finally, the "M" is for "maturation." The element that signals when the larger community or more established agency has seen the wisdom of student perceptions and efforts. Often student in student volunteer programs are loathe to give up their programs. They feel co-opted or used. To me, there is no better sign of success than community support for something students have started. This is the truest sign of influence on the human environment.

I believe that the foregoing analysis or some analysis like it should be applied to any action component of a student volunteer curriculum.