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Service Learning Project

Joel Molina

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, molinj6@unlv.nevada.edu

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I. Social Problem/Issue Research

a. Social Issue

The social issue is the lack of collaborative work from the community, or only provided in dire times. A statement of this issue, but in terms of students is made by Chavan Shah. "Collaborative work among students, while an important topic of inquiry, needs further treatment as we still lack the knowledge regarding obstacles that students face, the strategies they apply, and the relations among political and group aspects." (Shah, 2015) Research from Robert L. Dunbar on student social self-efficacy, leadership status, and academic performance in collaborative learning environments of higher education, states, "Research confirms the positive effect of collaborative learning environments when students are considered as one homogenous group...as a means to increase academic success and content understanding." (Dunbar, 2016) With this research, it was scientifically proven that students in higher education performed better when working in a collaborative environment. Research from Jenna Mittelmeier also supports this as well as working with students in higher education that differ in cultural aspects. Mittelmeier states, "After all, a key takeaway from this present study is that social relationships are a desired component of the academic experience by all students, and thus an important consideration for the universities that serve them." (Mittelmeier, 2017) Overall, the research found that working in collaborative environments can come together, and supportive social relationships positively impacted the student’s work performance.

b. Current and Ideal state of issue.

The current state of this issue is not major, but could be worked upon. With the events of the Las Vegas shooting happening so recently, that was the last time I saw the community come together as a whole in order to bring effort to the issue. But, why is it that it takes such a tragic event such as to bring the community together? The ideal state of the world, if this issue is ever theoretically "solved" would be a community that is continuously collaborative, to which positivity and social production would be increased.

c. Service site approach to issue

The Service site that I volunteered for approached the issue by working with multiple organizations every week as opposed to just one, uniting the community in depth interactions with the organizations I volunteered with. This was a great experience, learning life lessons along the way.

d. My approach to the issue

I would like to take a similar approach to the way that inspired by the events of the Las Vegas shooting and seeing how the community came together, I would continuously work with multiple organizations in order to get the same collaborative work that was provided during the period of time after the shooting. I believe that it is just takes effort in order to reach the ideal state.

II. Service Learning Experience

a. Service to community

During my time with the service learning organization, I was able to serve my community through volunteering with multiple foundations and organizations, as mentioned earlier, such as United Blood Services, Girl/Boy Scout, Toys for Tots, Salvation Army, etc. With each organization, I basically just helped however I could in activities that did not require any training, such as with the United Blood Bank, I worked in keeping track of those signing up and also provided food for those after they were finished with their blood transfusion. Or with the Salvation Army, we worked with many homeless shelters where I served food to the homeless and also cleaned dishes. Overall, I just did whatever I was asked or needed to whenever working with whichever organization we had been in that week.

b. Semester Reflection

Working in the same service learning site with the same volunteers, it made the experience much easier and much more enjoyable as well. The volunteers I worked with were younger than me, but they were all very nice and all had great work ethic that made the work load during volunteering very little-to-none. This repetition allowed me to make great relationships with my site coordinator and fellow volunteers. I was also interacting with the same individuals that worked with their specific organizations.

c. Pros and cons

In my experience over this service learning project, I believe that there was an extensive amount more pros than that of cons. In terms of work with multiple organizations, yes my service at this service learning site did change extensively throughout these three months. In terms of the experience itself, the workload, the relationships with my peers, there was no change at my service learning site and I’m glad about that as it made the experience as a whole a greater one. On the other hand, there were no notable cons that definitively changed my experience at the service learning site. If I had to choose a con, I believe that there were moments when some of the volunteers, being that they were a younger age than I, were disrespectful at moments, especially during our work in the homeless shelters, however they quickly fixed themselves and that con was quickly terminated.

d. Expectations

To be honest, when initially going into this service learning site, I was not fond of the idea being "required" to volunteer in order to complete my grade for my class and was not fond of volunteering at my church, where I do not particularly interact with anybody. But after these three months, my mind on that has definitely changed and my expectations were certainly exceeded, and I’m ultimately glad that I was able to experience what I did. Watching and working towards the potential of how the community can come together, it was a great experience. My interactions with those that worked with every organization was also a great educated experience, learning life lessons along the way.

III. Difference making and future

a. Differences in my own views

My service at this service learning site has definitely made a difference in the way I view service learning, the social issue my site was addressing, my future career, and my personal life. I also enjoy opportunities to learn about service learning in general, I’ve had previous experience in volunteering in high school, I serve in Key Club and my previous volunteering with Valley Hospital, however this service learning was different, with extensive work with the same site for three months, with multiple foundations and had more in depth interactions with the organizations I volunteered with that provided great lessons on life that I could only learn from experience. Previously I believed that the community only comes together when they feel such as with sporting events or concerts and etc., however working with this service learning site, I believe this social issue can be changed and our community can come together and work collaboratively anytime we need, and should be constantly. My future career, however, has not changed due to this service learning as I’m going into the medical field, and while some issues that related to the medical field were slightly discussed, my view on my future career remains the same. My perspective on the world, has slightly changed, but slightlyly has not. In terms of the social issue, seeing the possibility of how greatly the community can collaboratively work together, the world can be such a different place if that action was just done by every community one-hundred percent of the time.

b. Differences made for the site

My service learning site is the ministry in my church that I attend every Sunday. I believe that my service has not made a difference at the site at all. Not saying that I didn’t do work that affected the site at all, but I believe that the work that the ministry was doing previously probably has not changed even when I got there. I believe that the work that the site has previously and always done has had the same effect towards solving the social issue at hand whether I was present to volunteer or not.

c. Personal/Professional Learning

I learned a lot from this experience personally and professionally. I learned a new view on the world, seeing a possibility of how much change can occur just helping out in the community. Professionally, I learned a lot on how to act when interacting with people in general, learning how to empathize and how to be respectful when dealing with everybody, which is important to my future career in the medical field.

d. Future change, effort, and outcome

The most meaningful type of service, to me, is those that work in directly interacting with society and directly helping them rather than just donating time and money to an organization as it conveys care and passion for the work being done. With this type of service learning, I believe a quicker change in society would occur as this type has more of direct correlation with the social issue at hand.