11-29-2017

Service Learning Project

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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 Chirag 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 pedagogic 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 case as well as working with students in higher education to 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 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 solution to the issue. But, why it is 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 experience what I did. Watching and working towards the potential of how the same issue is ever theoretically "solved" would be a community that can come together, it was a great experience. My interactions with those who worked every organization was also a great educated experience, learning life lessons along the way.

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 Blood, I worked in keeping track of those signing up and also provided food for those after they were finished with their blood transfusion. To 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 was asked or needed to return 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 ethics 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 site service learning 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 definitely changed my experience at the service learning site. If I had to choose a con, I believe that there were moments which 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 to fond of the idea being "required" to volunteer in order to complete my grade for my class and was not fond of volunteering with 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 gained 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 that which 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 being the most meaningful, I believe this type of change in society would occur as this type has more of direct correlation with the social issue at hand.