MISSION: The mission of the Center for Civic Engagement is to enhance higher education and contribute to the public good through community-based teaching and learning initiatives that enrich student education, promote civic engagement, and improve the community while capitalizing on the region’s and UTEP’s social and intellectual capital.

GOALS:
1. Increase the number of students with community-based engagement learning experiences.
2. Support faculty community engagement research and scholarship.
3. Positively impact the community through academic-based and outreach partnerships.
4. Support the UTEP’s community engaged mission and efforts.

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM

SERVICE LEARNING connects the concepts of disciplinary study to the realities of human need. By applying your classroom lessons toward activities in the community, your students can advance higher grades, a greater sense of social responsibility, increase in critical thinking and writing skills, leadership skills, and more.

Service Learning is significantly different from other forms of experiential education in that:
1. Offers a balance between service and learning objectives.
2. Places an emphasis on reciprocal learning.
3. Increases an understanding of the content in which clinical and/or service work occurs.
4. Focuses on the development of civic skills.
5. Addresses community identified concerns.
6. Involves community in the Service Learning design and implementation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students are able to do the following as a result of their service-learning experience:
1. Articulate what service-learning is.
2. Identify 2 to 3 things they learned about themselves.
3. Identifies at least one new skill acquired and improvement in at least 1 other skill.
4. Demonstrates an increased level of commitment to community, and service.
5. Identify a connection between what they learned in class and what they did in the community.

REFLECTION SESSIONS

PURPOSE: To help students recognize that learning happens throughout their experience. Learning happens when you think, write, and talk about your experience. Learning can be relative and exploratory.

When making comparisons & when asking questions:

METHODOLOGY

Reflection sessions include THREE open-ended questions:
1. Describe an incident/experience that you considered to be significant because it challenged you to identify your own assumptions, evaluate your beliefs and/or change your behaviors. What happened? (Include details.
2. What were your emotions? How did you feel during this incident?
3. What did you learn or realize? Due to this incident, what changed?
4. What do you do differently now because of what you learned from this experience?

We evaluate each answer through two main approaches: Transformative Learning and Civic Mindfulness.

INNOVATION

Neepod is used to collect data through these reflection sessions. This online platform allows real-time generation and assessment in the classroom. Students can access Neepod through any device with internet access and is available to students through a code. This system allows for presentation, collaboration, quizzes, polls, open-ended questions, videos, and real-time assessment.

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FINDINGS

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

STUDENT 1: I assumed that not that many want to help the food pantry. However, after distributing food to so many people I realized that that is not the case. I was made aware that many people, young and old, single and families utilize the food pantry. It made me realize how wasteful the food pantry are for our community and how more involvement in them could benefit the community as whole.

STUDENT 2: This experience made me stop and think about people. I would've normally dismissed it was an eye opening experience to see the amount of need that is present in our community. The gratitude that people expressed was humbling and incredibly fulfilling. I was really moved by how grateful some of the people were when we handed them their food. It made me become aware of the need that is present in our community. There was a very satisfying sense of fulfillment that came with helping.

STUDENT 3: It inspired me in a way. Knowing that people are there to help out others and are willing to give a hand in order to make an impact in someone’s life. Plus you see the impact on those individuals when the words they speak motivate you. I started seeing it differently.

STUDENT 4: There was a group of refugees who had come from Mexico, and there was an incident where that day, I had bought Ice Cream for the kids and the extras I had left over I decided to give to the children of the refugees. I spoke to the adults of the group of refugees and they had told me that the children had never had ice cream before. These thoughts that went through my head were "Wow! They had never had ice cream before! Maybe in a place where simple popsicle could be something amazing to some other people.

REFERENCES


PLAN OF ACTION

By analyzing student response the CCE is able to identify student learning and obtain a better understanding of the activities that students are participating in at their placements. The CCE plans to communicate and share this data with community partners so that they gain an idea of the impact of service learning on students. We hope that by sharing this data, community partners will feel more encouraged to engage more with UTEP and maintain their roles as co-researchers.

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TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: A learning process that leads participants to experience significant change in the ways they understand their identity, culture, and beliefs. The process is typically initiated by a disorienting dilemma, a critical incident or event that makes the student realize change previously taken-for-granted assumptions, values, beliefs, and lifestyle habits. This transformation needs both the experience and also reflection, engagement/motivation, and openness to change.

CIVIC MINDFULNESS: Characteristics of Civic-Minded skills:

COMMUNICATION AND LISTENING: ability to communicate with others and listen to divergent points of view.

DIVERSITY: understanding the importance of and the ability to work with others from diverse backgrounds, appreciation of and sensitivity to diversity in a pluralistic society.

CONSENSUS-BUILDING: ability to work with others, including those with diverse opinions.

DIVERSITY

COMMUNICATION AND LISTENING:

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING:

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