



Spring 4-6-2010

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Recommended Citation

Aschenbrener, Crystal S. MSW (2010) "Can Establishing Partnerships between College Campuses and Nonprofit Organizations Be Mutually Beneficial?," *Contemporary Rural Social Work Journal*: Vol. 2 : No. 1 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/crsw/vol2/iss1/9>

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Can Establishing Partnerships between College Campuses and Nonprofit Organizations Be Mutually Beneficial?

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Abstract: *More than ever nonprofit organizations need to find creative ways to be resourceful and cost effective in achieving their mission. Partnerships between college campuses and nonprofit organizations can be a mutually beneficial way of meeting nonprofit's program goals while empowering college students, who are the next generation of volunteers, donors, and professionals. With these partnerships, nonprofits gain new ideas and extra working hands through established projects while students gain field experiences and the opportunity to apply their course knowledge. With this article, readers will understand the benefits of building as well as a step-by-step model to develop such partnerships.*

Keywords: *volunteerism, nonprofit organizations, students, civic engagement, community partner*

Introduction

Nationally, nonprofit organizations are facing intensive pressures to be more financially accountable, be more creative with achieving their mission, and be more resourceful with serving client needs. With current regional, state, and federal budgetary crises have forced all aspects of human service delivery to figure out how to do more with less. Successfully, universities are further expanding their value of civic engagement and promoting the importance of a well-rounded student who is balancing academics, co-curricular activities, and field experiences. Bringing nonprofit organizations and universities together can be beneficial to both partners.

Nonprofit organizations have utilized volunteers in many different ways. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor, "About 61.8 million people, or 26.4 percent of the population, volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2007 and September 2008" (United States Department of Labor, 2008, p. 1). "People who are more trusting and/or endorse helping others as an important goal in their lives are more likely to start volunteering, are less likely to quit, and are more likely to have charitable confidence" (Bekkers and Bowman, 2008, p. 891). Volunteerism is something that we have learned, particularly from family and friends (Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker, & Wells, 2008). It also can be something we learn from repeated volunteerism. For example, once a person volunteers and finds value in their contributions, they are more likely to value volunteerism. It is something we learned from governmental leadership when addressing economic recovery. President Obama stated "I'm calling on all Americans to make volunteering and community service part of your daily life and the life of this nation" (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2009).

Utilizing volunteers from a college campus is not new. But, the number of ways that nonprofit organizations and college campuses can partner is evolving. The research of successful partners has been increasing. For example, one way of advancing the relationship between college campuses and nonprofit organizations is to partner with a corporation. ExxonMobil offers a Community Summer Jobs Program (CSJP) which helps unite college students with nonprofit organization. "The eight-week paid internship program, now in its 38th year nationally, offers nonprofits much-needed help during the busy summer months and encourages college

students to pursue careers in the nonprofit sector and to be active members of their communities” (Anonymous, 2009, p. 37).

In addition, the concept of volunteerism is taking on the terminology of “renewable resources” in their article called *It Ain't Natural Toward a New (Natural) Resource Conceptualization for Volunteer Management* (Brudney & Meijs, 2009). This source further explains that we need to engage in partnerships that are mutually meaningful, so volunteers find value in the experience and then want to engage in more volunteering in their future.

“Results of a 1998 national survey of 1,030 Americans demonstrate that two out of five volunteers have stopped volunteering at some point because of one or more shortcomings in the way organizations manage (or fail to manage) volunteers, such as not making good use of volunteers’ time or good use of their talents, or not defining volunteer tasks clearly” (Brudney and Meijs, 2009).

This concept of “renewable resources” further emphasizes the importance of keeping volunteers so they will continue to engage in other volunteer activities within the particular nonprofit organization.

Current and former Presidents of the United States are placing value on and promoting volunteerism. October 2009, President Bush was awarded at the Point of Light 20th Anniversary for his volunteerism effort (Obama, 2009). “In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President Bush (2008) called on all Americans to dedicate at least 4,000 hours of their lives to volunteer service; he repeated that call in a September 8, 2008 speech at the White House” (Brudney & Meijs, 2009, p. 568). Then President Obama has directly addressed the need for colleges to promote the “spirit” and “willingness” of volunteering (Sarkisian & Taylor, 2009). In addition, the Obama administration has implemented the “United We Serve” initiative and created a user-friendly website for citizens to find, create, and reflect on volunteer opportunities. The Corporation for National and Community Service states “America’s foundation will be built one community at a time— and it starts with you” (2009).

According to Tomkovick et al., (2008) they “found that past volunteerism behavior was the most powerful determinant of future volunteerism behavior” (p. 14). Tomkovick et al., (2008) further “furnished evidence to back the belief that volunteers expect to achieve personal outcomes through their volunteerism” (p. 15). In conclusion, volunteers that value their experiences were more likely to volunteer again (Tomkovick et al., 2008). From this author’s experiences, she found these points to be true as well.

This article will further explore the benefits for college students and nonprofit organizations. It will also address some possible obstacles that nonprofit organizations should consider. The later portion of the article will process a step-by-step model of how nonprofit organizations can engage in such partnerships.

Student Roles in Nonprofit Organizations

Historically, university students have volunteered at nonprofit organizations. These partnerships continue to move in the direction of being more functional and beneficial for both nonprofit organizations and college students.

“Volunteers of both sexes spend a median of 52 hours on volunteer activities during the period from September 2007 to September 2008. Median annual hours spent on volunteer activities ranged from a high of 96 hours for volunteers age 65 and over to a low of 40 hours for those 16 to 19 or 25 to 34 years old. The 20 to 24-year-old group showed the largest over-the-year change in median hours volunteered, increasing by 7 hours to a median of 48 hours” (United States Department of Labor, 2008, p. 2).

College students have many opportunities to volunteer at nonprofit organizations. For example, students have individually volunteered at nonprofit organizations or maybe they volunteered as a group with their student club, their fraternities or sororities. Historically, students have also provided beneficial labor in the form of internships. Many internships offer free or inexpensive labor to the nonprofit organization while the student gains marketable, professional experiences.

Students can also participate in class projects that are assigned by individual professors. These opportunities can serve a purpose for nonprofit organizations. Such partnership would be more beneficial for a nonprofit organization that has a list of short term needs to be met. Because a “class project” is most likely time sensitive, it is important that the nonprofit organization needs or projects fit the “class project” requirement. Other factors to consider with “class projects” are the number of students that would be involved, their number of required volunteer hours, and their assignment requirements. Many “class projects” are excellent ways to engage a large number of students in nonprofit organizations. A successful example is a rural nonprofit community foundation that wanted to update their downtown business district and so they contacted a professor that teaches a landscaping course. The students then tour, research, and created possible design proposals to provide to the community foundation as possible, cost effective ways to spruce up their main street. Yet, sometimes these “class project” can also be viewed as “mandatory” volunteering meaning that the student is only committed to the nonprofit project because they “have to” meet a course requirement which could possibly yield less than beneficial outcomes.

A newer type of partnership between universities and nonprofit organizations is Service-Learning. Service-Learning has been developing on campus communities across the country. Service-Learning takes those traditional “class projects” a step further. While staying true to the academic requirements and goals, it further seeks to meet a “community need” of a nonprofit organization. “Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (RMC Research Corporation, p. 1). The focus has moved from achieving a certain number of volunteer hours to meeting a need of a community partner.

Another way to further unite universities and nonprofit organizations is through Financial Aid work-study programs. According to Jay Larson, at a Midwest University, students that are awarded work-study funds can use these funds at a nonprofit organization (J. Larson, personal communication, May 12, 2010). Mr. Larson further reported that there are several key required parts. For example, he noted that the placement site needs to be a recognized nonprofit organization; either public or private is approvable (J. Larson, personal communication, May 12, 2010). He also noted that there needs to be a written agreement between the university and the nonprofit organization (J. Larson, personal communication, May 12, 2010). It should be noted that this type of partnership would be an excellent opportunity for nonprofit organizations to gain part-time, hourly worker(s) at a small fraction of the cost. This opportunity would be an excellent way for a nonprofit organization to gain additional support with the ever growing number of projects while serving a professional development opportunity for the student.

With the various ways that students can share their time with nonprofit organizations, it is important to note that students can gain from more than just volunteer service; they can also donate money towards their chosen nonprofit organization(s). It is important that this concept be viewed as a valuable component of civic engagement as well. Educating students on ways that they can donate has value. For example, students can donate individually, via their student group/club or their fraternities/sororities. These donations can be accrued in a number of ways. For example, donations from club banking accounts to the fraternity hosting a fundraiser with the proceeds going towards their chosen nonprofit organization.

“Nonprofit managers need to ensure that Service-Learning (S-L) volunteers get the chance to enhance their interpersonal, leadership, and communication skills in the work they do” (Tomkovick et al., 2008, p. 16). Tomkovick et al., (2008) found that “this growth in personal development may lead to an increase in volunteerism” (p. 16). Students need to find value in their volunteer activities and they need to feel that their time is valued as well.

Benefits for Students

Established partnerships between universities and nonprofit organizations can have many benefits for all involved. These partnerships can teach field experiences and promote professional values to those students entering helping professions. They can educate nonprofit organizations to value those students who are not pursuing careers in nonprofit environments yet will be our future neighbors and potential donors. These partnerships can help nonprofit organizations inform the next generation on their mission and needs while emphasizing the value of making a difference through volunteering. Such partnerships can encourage student volunteers to network with other volunteers which will further their professional growth. With each partnership, the hope would be that such experiences would make for a more well-rounded student. Maria Boever, student athlete says she “likes to volunteer with her basketball team because it is a good way to be part of the community and to give back to a community that supports them throughout the basketball season” (M. Boever, personal communication, December 1, 2009).

Just as the nonprofit organizations seek the need of such partnerships, students are finding that such partnerships help build on their academics, promote professional development, and strengthen their resumes. Missouri State Service-Learning Advisory Council (2003) states “students gain new skills and leadership experience that will prepare students for future careers” (p. 5). They also add “increase understanding of social issues and create alternative solutions” (Missouri State Service-Learning Advisory Council, 2003, p. 5). Tomkovick et al., (2008) says “Students benefit from enriched skill development, improved learning, better understanding of community needs, and increased sensitivity to community responsibility; nonprofits benefit from the fresh insights and output received” (p. 6). Such successful volunteerism and partnerships can have many personal and professional gains for college students.

Benefits for Nonprofit Organizations

Partnerships between universities and nonprofit organizations have many benefits to the nonprofit organizations as well. When a partnership is successful, the organization gains free labor on those projects that linger due to time constraints on their current system. In addition, they gain professional input from the students who have course work knowledge as well as an indirect resource of the advisor from the related club/fraternity/sorority or the professor of the class. Missouri State Service-Learning Advisory Council (2003) says “Students can offer a new perspective on projects and provide alternative solutions” (p. 5).

Such partnerships allow nonprofit organizations the power to influence the next generation of helping professional. Nonprofit organizations can emphasize desired strengths as well as confront undesired weaknesses of students entering the world of work.

In addition, such partnerships provide nonprofit organizations a pool of possible future applicants for employment. These partnerships can give nonprofit organizations an advantage as they are able to see possible future employees in action. Equally important is that these volunteer opportunities allow students the chance to experience first-hand what it would be like to work in such an environment which will ensure a more educated decision on accepting and staying at such a position. Hopefully such processes would create a healthier work environment as well as positively impact turn-over rates for the nonprofit organization. Jan Stange, a coordinator of an

after-school program, has repeatedly emphasize that “Service-Learning students placed at her organization have been a positive way for her to network and seek future employees” and she “strongly feels that Service-Learning partnerships encourages students to want to seek employment and/or volunteer opportunities at her organization and/or at other places that serve children” (J. Stange, personal communication, December 21, 2009). Ms. Stange finds this part of the partnership very rewarding as she knows that she is positively impacting her clientele and the next generation of helping professionals.

Whether the volunteer experience was positive or negative, students will most likely share their experiences with their friends and classmates. If the experience can be positive, this type of partnership can lead to more student volunteers. While employed as an executive director at a rural nonprofit organization, this author saw the successful growth in volunteers just from the spread of word-of-mouth. This verbal spread of our mission helped encourage more people to want to get involved. Missouri State Service-Learning Advisory Council (2003) says “Students involved in Service-Learning projects become life-long activist for the organization” (p. 5).

Another benefit, college students can be positive role models for nonprofit organizations’ clientele who lack positive parental guidance. Also student volunteers can be positive energy needed to motivate a tired team of employees. Another example, a group of college Service Learning students that were placed at a rural school to be positive role models to the children; also ended up being positive role models to several staff members who were working towards their General Educational Development (GED).

In addition, the student volunteer has access to current and prior professors that would be potentially knowledgeable of solutions. During volunteer experiences, nonprofit organizations can instill their mission, needs, and values with the student volunteers. This volunteerism can have positive long-term results. If this experience is positive for the student today, they are more likely to volunteer again (Tomkovick et al., 2008) as well as donate to the organization (Tidwell, 2005). In conclusion, benefits for nonprofit organizations include achieving agency objectives, goals, and ultimately their mission.

Universities have expectations that their teaching faculty dedicate a portion of time towards research and service. Both of these expectations can be beneficial to nonprofit organizations. If the nonprofit organization can seek a professor with similar research objectives then such research partnerships can possibly develop into advantages related to evidence based research/practice, funding, and awareness exposure. In addition, the concept of professional service can be viewed similarly. According to a Midwest University’s Sociology Department Standards document, service is giving back to the university, to the community, to the profession. “General Service has been defined as work that draws upon professional expertise and is an outgrowth of our academic discipline” (Rural Sociology Department, 2008, p. 13). If such a faculty member and nonprofit organization have mutual service goals, then this faculty member will be useful in sharing his or her knowledge, connections, and students with the nonprofit organization. This partnership will benefit the faculty member by helping him or her achieve university performance expectations. In addition, nonprofit organizations will gain the expertise of the faculty member. For nonprofit organizations, such partnership can also allow them the opportunity to network with other faculty members and students. For example, the partnership could allow the nonprofit organizations to speak to a larger audience about their mission and needs via speaking during a class lecture. Getting in front of a class of students is an opportunity to shape the next generation of professionals and promote the nonprofit organization’s mission while also recruiting volunteers.

Possible Obstacles to Overcome

As listed above, there are many ways to engage in university and nonprofit organization partnerships and many benefits for both the students, professors and clients of the organizations. To maximize the successes, it is important to explore and eliminate possible obstacles.

Student's availability is the first obstacle. This obstacle further notes that students are only able to volunteer for such periods of time as fall, spring, or summer semesters. Students may only be able to volunteer during the academic year, because they have other summer plans. They might only be available at the beginning of the semester or a portion of the semester. They may only be available for one project. In addition, if they are volunteering individually and are a junior or senior, they might only be available to volunteer for two or less years. The community project will need to be able to work around class schedules and other student driven scheduling conflicts. If the nonprofit organization needs fit with the students' availability then it could be a good fit and will increase the project's success.

The second obstacle is students' knowledge and skills. Depending on how many years the student has been in their college program will determine how much knowledge they have about certain related subjects. In many ways, their knowledge can be very beneficial. For example, if they have taken one or more courses related to the nonprofit organization and their clientele, they are likely to have knowledge that is current and beneficial. When the student does lack knowledge, it is possible to explore his or her networking outlet. For example, the student may have access to a professor with expertise in the area or a club advisor maybe helpful in bring the related project the needed knowledge. For example, while a second year Spanish major volunteers to translate a nonprofit organization's marketing materials to Spanish, they find themselves struggling with terminology unique to the organization. This student could solicit support from such experts as a related course professor, their academic advisor, or possibly the Spanish Club advisor.

In addition, this generation of students has much more technology knowledge. They can better understand computer capabilities, social media sites, and databases. Some obstacles of this technology knowledge are that many of our nonprofit organizations do not have the most updated computers and software. Will the organization's computer(s) be able to handle the current technology? In addition, if the student implements a social media program, like Facebook or website, to meet a community need, will the organization's employees have the time and skill to monitor and update such programs. It is important that developing a plan related to monitoring and updating be part of the partnership agreement. This type of management does not mean that the student needs to continue on with the nonprofit organization after their course requirements are met. This simply means that the organization needs to have systems in place to further manage the project. This management could come in the form of recruiting the next class of students, training a nonprofit organization employee, creating a how-to handbook for the organization, seeking volunteers from the community, and so on.

A third possible obstacle is a student's knowledge and level of skills. Many students may be volunteering for the first time. For many students this experience is their first encounter with the "real world". It is important that nonprofit organizations realize initially some students will take more of their time and attention than others. It is important for the nonprofit organizations to assess these types of obstacles to determine a student's capabilities with working or even choosing not to work with such students. "Nonprofit managers must first identify tasks that college students are capable of performing that add value to both parties" (Tomkovick et al., 2008, p. 16). Such assessments would be beneficial for all partners.

The fourth obstacle is the student's course or club requirements. If the student is seeking volunteer opportunities with a nonprofit organization, it is important to assess their motivation for

such volunteering. Is it to fulfill a social club expectation? Is it for a college course? If it is related to such examples, it is important to assess what their guidelines are. Do they just want to volunteer once? Do they need to volunteer for a set number of hours? When it comes to clubs, it is important to realize that even though the student group might only volunteer once, it is important to understand that with proper networking, once can turn into once a semester or once a year. For nonprofit organizations like Habitat for Humanity, if a student group agrees to volunteer once a semester on the construction site or volunteer to complete a fundraiser event once a year, this partnership would be valuable. When a nonprofit organization is developing a needs list, it is important to keep this obstacle in mind.

A fifth obstacle is concerned with “mandatory volunteering” when a student is required to volunteer for course credit or because of membership requirements. When some students are required to volunteer at nonprofit organizations as a course assignment, they excel. This opportunity then encourages and motivates some students to continue to volunteer at the assigned community partner or possibly at other nonprofit organizations. This opportunity empowers students to seek more experiences and then influences them to be more engaged in the classroom shaping a more well-rounded student and future professional. It is philosophies like this one that motivates professors to assign such “mandatory volunteerism” assignments. It is important to understand that not all students see “mandatory volunteerism” as a positive thing. Some students view it as another assignment that takes up their time. Many students have very busy schedules and to fit in such a time sensitive assignment is taxing on them. In conclusion, it is important that an organization understands if they have a negative experience with one student that it is not the reflection of all students.

The final obstacle for nonprofit organizations is to ensure that the experience is worthwhile for the student as to encourage them to volunteer again. “One way in which this attachment may manifest itself is when volunteers believe that the nonprofits they served have truly benefited from the work they provided” (Tomkovick et al., 2008, p. 6). Additionally, this source notes that when the students feel that they are valued, they are more likely to volunteer again. Tomkovick et al., (2008) research finding also “suggests that if a Service-Learning project is designed in a way that clearly leads the participant to believe that he or she will either personally develop or provide value to the community organization, it is likely that the participant will end up perceiving benefits for both self and community” (p. 13-14). Even though nonprofit organizations need their shelves dusted or need the grounds cleaned up after an event, it might not be viewed as mutually beneficial to both partners. These tasks do occur and do need volunteers time. These responsibilities may be more challenging to market to the students but it is possible. One way to seek an understanding of the student’s value of such projects is to ask them for feedback during a brief reflection session at the conclusion of the volunteer experience. Brudney and Meijs (2009) says “...volunteer energy can be understood as a human-made, renewable resource that can be grown and recycled...” (p. 564). The organization can further emphasize how partnerships are tied into the success of the organization and its mission.

To overcome these obstacles, communication should be emphasized. As helping professionals understand, prevention can go a long way in avoiding problems and crises while intervention has a much higher chance of involving conflict. Another common phrase that applies here, is “knowledge is power”. This “knowledge” is important for both the benefit of the nonprofit organization and the student.

Some “Conversation Starters” created by Missouri State Service-Learning Advisory Council (2003) is to ask questions: “What experiences have you had in community service or volunteering? What impact have those experiences had on you? What do you think is the most important reason for involving youth in Service-Learning? How could Service-Learning help you address major challenges you face in educating students? If

you could make one dream come true through Service Learning, what would it be? What is the one thing you hope your students would learn about our community and society?" (p. 7).

These questions can motivate nonprofit organizations to develop their own list of questions related to their needs and their relationships with their student volunteers.

Some ways that nonprofit organizations can prepare themselves for such partnerships is to explore questions that professors or students might ask them.

According to Missouri State Service-Learning Advisory Council (2003) some questions faculty ask nonprofit organizations are: "What have been your organization's experiences in working with school? What have been your experiences in working with children and teenagers in your agency? What do you think is the most important reason for involving youth in Service-Learning through your organization? What is the one thing you hope Service-Learning will accomplish in our community and society?" (p. 7).

It is to the nonprofit organization's benefit to engage students in meaningful activities.

To Get Started

This model will consist of six steps for nonprofit organizations to use "to get started" with building a partnership with students and their universities. The first step is to define your needs; the second step is student involvement; the third is plan of action; the fourth step is implementing the plan; the fifth step is marketing while the final step is evaluation.

Step One: Define Your Needs

Step one encourages nonprofit organizations to process or brainstorm a list of their needs. These needs can be related to day-to-day operational tasks/projects, long-term goals, tasks/projects that lack resources to be accomplished, or it can be those projects that the nonprofit organization staff members and/or volunteers lack knowledge and skills achieve. The project can be an educational, awareness, and/or a fundraising event. Some specific example projects could be converting the nonprofit organizations' brochures from English to Spanish to best serve their target audience or creating a power point presentation to educate and recruit. Projects could be creating landscaping plans that are user-friendly and cost effective for low-income homeowners or it could be creating a bully awareness program for an afterschool program.

When establishing a needs list, the nonprofit organization also has to explore goals and objectives related to these needs. They have to further define related details of the "needs". The nonprofit organization has to consider the when, what, where, and the how. They have to consider the cost to achieve the need. It is very appropriate to explore these development thoughts with the students and their university when making contact with the university student(s). With some projects, the student club or fraternity/ sororities might have funds to use to cover the cost of the project. Some universities have service learning budgets established to fund such related costs. Examples of possible costs can include required background checks, equipment, printing costs, and supplies.

Step Two: Student Involvement

This step is important because it assists the nonprofit organization in determining if students can achieve the needs. When defining the need, it is also important to explore the number of students that will be needed and the anticipated number of hours considered necessary. Some other points to consider: What type of student is necessary to achieve your particular projects? What strengths/skills do they need to complete the project? For example, do they need to be able to speak Spanish? If the nonprofit organization needs their material translated to Spanish, then

they should find students who can speak, read, and write Spanish. How many students would be needed to complete the project? How will the organization go about contacting this/these student(s)? What is the timeframe for the project? “This information could include the name and description of each volunteer activity to be performed and a list of benefits that are gained by the community members who are directly associated with each volunteer activity” (Tomkovick et al., 2008, p. 16).

Before networking with any student or student-led group, it is important to have an understanding of the answers to the questions provided above. Being prepared can limit the number of questions later and limit the need to intervene on a project that is failing. In addition, the higher the success of the project for both partners, the more likely both partners will want to collaborate again.

Step Three: Plan of Action

After achieving step two, it is only appropriate that step three would be to make contact with the student(s). Establishing such contacts can be overwhelming. This section will attempt to break down this process. Fully defining your needs as outlined in step one and then fully determining the type of student(s) that can achieve your needs in step two will make this third step more successful.

How to establish such partnerships can be done in several ways. If the organization knows that their need can only be achieved by student(s) that speak Spanish, then attempting to make contact with the Spanish department or Modern Language department or the Spanish Club directly would be appropriate. If the nonprofit organization is hopeful to gain staff support by hiring a work-study student, then directly contacting the Financial Aid Office would be the most appropriate. With some needs, it will be more difficult to determine who/what student/group/department/Greek life/club can best meet the need. In times like these situations, a nonprofit organization may want to contact the Service Learning department, the Information Desk/Help Desk/General Assistance of the campus, or the office for Greek life/fraternities/sororities. Nonprofit organizations can many times find such phone numbers through on-line websites of the university. In addition, making a visit to the University Union Center could be beneficial. Student unions often have several informational style offices where a nonprofit organization can find assistance.

Once successful with one group, then the nonprofit organization can consider networking with them on other projects or networking with them about other possible partners to seek out within the campus community. It is important to cultivate positive relationships with these students as to have long-term success on and with the campus community.

There will be times when a contact leads to a dead-end. It is important to be creative, flexible, and patient with this step. “Surveys of managers of volunteer services document that the chief problem they perceive in volunteer-based programs is recruitment” (Brudney & Meijs, 2009, p. 568). Advancing an organization’s network skills would be beneficial with this step.

Step Four: Implementing the Plan

Step four is bringing the students on board. It is important to acknowledge that students have many wonderful talents and skills to bring to your organization yet they are still learning professionalism and work ethics. This step needs to emphasize the importance of communication. It is best to be clear with expectations and objectives from the start. It has taken much time and energy to get to this point, continue to move forward by providing this step the effort it requires. It is important to provide a verbal and many times a written list of expectations. Also consider using an (informal) contract. Service Learning sources can provide excellent tools to create an informal contract.

While it is important that the student(s) understand the goals, needs, and expectations of the nonprofit organization, it is mutually important that the nonprofit organization(s) understand the student(s) goals, needs, and expectations. What do they hope to gain from achieving this project? Many times it is as simple as feeling that they have made a difference. So, if the nonprofit organization feels that they “need” a student group to completely dust their inventory shelves, then the nonprofit organization will have to fully communicate why this is making a difference for the organization. Even though it is sometimes elementary reasons for the assigned project it can be beneficial to use this opportunity to explore a reflective discussion that can lead to other motivating and empowering components of the organization’s mission.

Step Five: Marketing

This step is focused on marketing the partnership. When the goals and objectives have been achieved, it is important to “market” the success. For example, with a Habitat for Humanity affiliate, it could be inviting the student(s) to the upcoming dedication or special ceremony. Other examples would be to invite the campus newspaper staff, the University Public Relations department representative, and/or a local newspaper reporter to market the event. If these media sources are not able to attend the event, then consider taking photos and submitting them to the listed sources. Another example would be to market the experience on the nonprofit organization’s website, Facebook, or other social media outlets.

Marketing initiatives can spread the word of the nonprofit organization to other student groups and those students can achieve their desired goals with this nonprofit organization. Marketing could have a ripple effect of increase invites to speak to social clubs, professors’ classrooms, and service learning related advisory committees which could lead to more partnerships in the future.

In addition, if a nonprofit organization needs volunteers it is appropriate to ask to speak in front of a class for five minutes or so. If seeking volunteers from a class, it is recommended that the organization pass around a sign-up sheet and then follow up with these students about their interest via phone, email, or Facebook.

When a nonprofit organization believes that sending a “thank you” card is not enough, the nonprofit organization could search out a recognition-type award to nominate their outstanding student or student-led group. Many college campuses have such award processes in place. This type of recognition would be an excellent way to express gratitude to a student or student-led group and indirectly market the success of the partnership and the nonprofit organization’s mission.

Step Six: Evaluation

Step six concludes the process. Such partnership should be mutually beneficial to the nonprofit organizations and the students. As the nonprofit organizations gain more and more partnerships, they will be more successful at following these steps in a timely manner and a more productive fashion. In order to continue to be more efficient and productive, it is important to take some time to evaluate the completed goals, objectives, and the desired needs.

When developing an evaluation process, some questions to consider are: What worked? What should be done again? What did not work? What could have been done differently? Was this partnership successful for the nonprofit organization? Was this partnership successful for the student(s)? What is next?

This process does not need to be intense, just a learning tool for the future. This process would be particularly helpful with those groups that volunteer once a year. This type of evaluation could make it easier to recall details of the project that happened a year or so ago.

Then for those organizations that have an on-going list, this process can increase the success of future partnerships and further their organization's mission.

Conclusion

Partnerships between college campuses and nonprofit organizations can be mutually beneficial, if properly established. Allowing students to take ownership of the nonprofit organization's mission will further influence them to provide support with other projects including but not limited to: completing more projects, networking with their friends/fellow college students, making an individual or club/group financial donation. In addition, such partnerships can professionally shape students' professional careers while simply motivating them to be engaged citizens in their community. Such partnerships can also be beneficial to nonprofit organization with completing both long-term and short-term goals and projects. Such resourceful partnerships can help nonprofit organization be more creative and cost-effective in achieving their mission and effectively serving their clientele.

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