SERVICE LEARNING IN FORENSIC SCIENCE: A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

A MODELING PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2011) defines service learning as 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. Service learning represents a potentially powerful form of pedagogy because it provides a means of linking the academic with the practical. There is growing evidence that having students apply theoretical material learned in the traditional classroom in a "real world" setting has a positive effect on student learning and interest in the subject matter (Astin et. al., 2000). Service Learning projects also benefit the community by providing new perspectives into the work of the University and strengthening community relationships with faculty and students.

This presentation will provide a framework for incorporating service learning into course curricula. Service learning projects completed by University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) Forensic Science Institute students that integrate forensic science discipline knowledge with practical applications in the community will be used to emphasize the efficacy of this model as a tool for transformative education. Projects that will be discussed include the application of digital forensics to assist Oklahoma tornado victims, electronic recycling, participation in the Oklahoma Innocence Project, cold case reviews, and active involvement in the federal outreach program GEAR-UP.

Service learning at the Forensic Science Institute offers a transformative learning experience to students by developing "beyond-disciplinary skills," broadening students' perspectives in relation to themselves and their community, integrating meaningful community service, and placing students at the "center of their own active and reflective learning experience" (CETTL, 2015).

Participants in this modeling session will be introduced to the concept of service learning as a transformative learning tool. They will be provided with examples of how this concept has been successfully implemented at the Forensic Science Institute and will also have the opportunity to listen to student and community reflections on how service learning at the Forensic Science Institute was transformational for them.

SELECT REFERENCES

Astin, A.W., Vogelgesan, L.J., Ikeda, E.K. & Yee, J.A. (2000). *How Service Learning Affects Students*. Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

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