

INSPIRE

**Implementing Novel
Service Projects in
Responsible Engagement**

A Mini-Grant Program at Heartland Community College

PURPOSE: The INSPIRE Mini-Grant program is a faculty development initiative designed to emphasize the value of service learning and civic and community engagement at Heartland Community College. This grant program was established to encourage individuals who have an interest and commitment to enhance service learning or civic/community/political engagement efforts within a course through projects or initiatives that may be either inside or outside the classroom.

HCC Students Studying Children's Literature
+ Young Readers at Hammitt School
= Rewarding Outcomes for Students & Teachers

OUTCOMES

For HCC Students

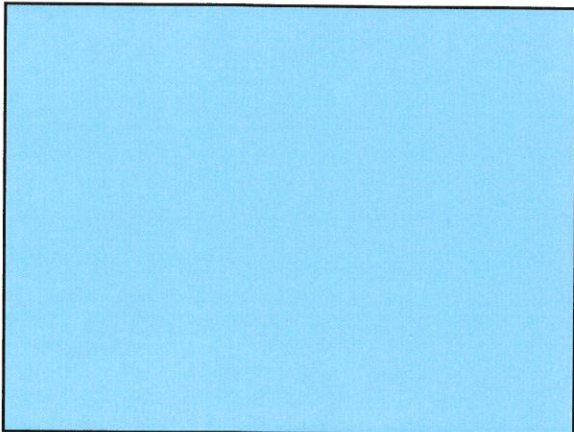
- ❖ Real world connection to classroom concepts and theories
- ❖ Familiarity with community organizations and interest in future service
- ❖ Experience working with children with special needs

For Students and Teachers at Hammitt School

- ❖ Teachers at the school noted excitement of Hammitt kids to receive and read books
- ❖ Children get needed one-on-one attention that is positive with safe adults

For HCC Instructor

- ❖ Renewed passion for teaching and working with students
- ❖ Feeling a real sense of community in the classroom, working as a team with students rather than just "instructing" them
- ❖ 100% retention; all initial enrollees completed the course



HCC Students Studying Biology

+ **American Red Cross Blood Drive**

= **Meaningful Outcomes for Students, Instructor, American Red Cross, & Patients**

OUTCOMES

For HCC Students

- ❖ Increased understanding of and ability to inform others about heart structure and blood flow, cardiovascular diseases, components of blood, and the importance of blood donation.
- ❖ Provided service for people that they would never meet. The students either volunteered at the blood drive, or they gave blood. In either capacity, they never met the persons who would receive the blood, but the students knew that their contributions would not go to waste.

For American Red Cross and Recipients of Collected Blood

- ❖ New and continuing donors of blood
- ❖ New supply of blood
- ❖ Enhanced survival during necessary surgeries and medical procedures.

For HCC Instructor

- ❖ At least three students in the class donated blood for the first time because of this service project. Their taking initiative to donate and overcome their anxiety and fear meant a lot to each of them. It is a source of pride to have instilled a spirit for service beyond one's own anxiety.



HCC Students Studying Speech Communication

+ **Youth Participants at UNITY Center, Normal**

= **Great Outcomes for Students, Instructor, & UNITY Participants**

OUTCOMES

For HCC Students

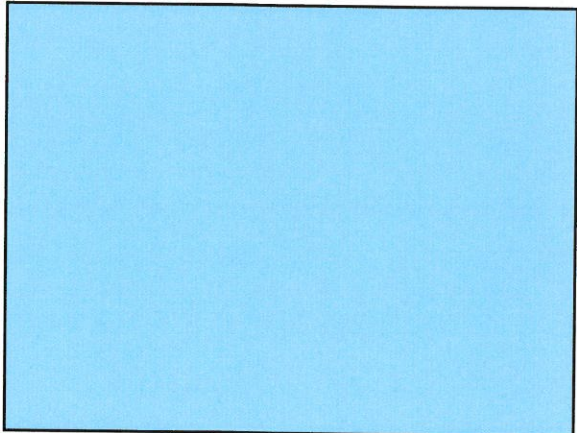
- ❖ Opportunity to give a "real" speech. Giving a speech outside the classroom environment gave students an opportunity to prepare and to experience giving a speech with realistic wild card factors.
- ❖ Better understanding of the course material in order to reformat it and present it to an audience of young learners.

For UNITY Center Youth and Staff

- ❖ Gained confidence by giving a speech in a supportive environment, and to an audience that included their proud family members.
- ❖ Getting to know and work with college students who served as role models.
- ❖ Fulfillment of Center goal to expose youths to different career paths and educational opportunities.

For HCC Instructor

- ❖ Excitement with trying a new teaching-learning strategy.
- ❖ Increased satisfaction with teaching and personal community outreach.



HCC Students Studying Practical Nursing

+ **Easter Seals Timber Pointe Summer Camp**

= **Insightful Outcomes for Students, Instructor, Summer Camp Participants**

OUTCOMES

For HCC Students

- ✧ Professional and social communication with special needs population.
- ✧ Accountability to a need within the community.
- ✧ Satisfaction and reward in facilitating a positive camp experience.

For Timber Pointe Summer Camp staff and youth participants

- ✧ Additional help and support for the mission and goals of the camp.
- ✧ Observing college-age role models.

For HCC Instructor

- ✧ Added insight about concerns and problem-solving for children with various communication styles.
- ✧ Enhanced relationship with Easter Seals and with Autism Society of McLean County.
- ✧ Gratification in observing nursing students' and camp participants' mutual growth and development.
- ✧ Increased understanding of college students' motivations to participate in such an experience.



**HCC Students Enrolled in Art Course
(Social/Political Dialog through Art)**

+ **Community Members**

= **Insightful Outcomes for Students, Instructor, and Community Members**

OUTCOMES

For HCC Students

- ✧ Increased commitment to and engagement with course content.
- ✧ Practice in understanding and appreciating a given audience.
- ✧ Personal values became personal expression.
- ✧ Opportunity to gain practice writing proposals for public art work.

For Community Members

- ✧ Issues vital to many community members were communicated in creative, innovative, and thought-provoking ways.

For HCC Instructor

- ✧ Further learning about service learning best practices.
- ✧ Realization that flexibility is helpful quality to display in service learning situations.
- ✧ Satisfaction in facilitating students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.



Student Engagement in Experiential Learning:

Issues and Best Practices

1. Purpose, goals, objectives
 - a. Must match with those of institution and course
 - b. Must be consistent with needs of community partners/collaborators
 - c. Should not compromise academic rigor
 - d. Must be articulated to and understood by all involved (faculty, students, partners)
 - e. Optimally, the design of instruction encourages continued engagement after the course is over/completed
2. Institutional connections with community partners/collaborators
 - a. Must be positive, strong, and stable
 - b. Should be reciprocal/mutual and respectful
 - c. Must be well planned and coordinated
 - d. Should be conducted with institution's good image in mind
3. Roles, responsibilities, and expectations (faculty, students, community leaders, etc.)
 - a. Must be articulated well and mutually agreed upon
 - b. Students should be alerted to experiential component to course before course start-up or soon after
 - c. An opt out alternative should be available to students express a legitimate concern in carrying out such experiential learning
4. Incentives, rewards, and recognitions: Credit/non-credit, awards, publicity, etc.
 - a. Academic credit is for the learning, not the "service". (Some paid internships exist, however.)
 - b. Promote intrinsic rewards is wise approach.
 - c. Seek ways to reward community partners, too.
 - d. Facilitating high quality, meaningful experiential learning within one's courses should be recognized in promotion and tenure processes and documents.
 - e. Securing internal and external grant monies is a helpful incentive.

(over)

5. Number of partners/sites, number of students, and processes for distributing students among the sites/partners.
 - a. A ratio that is most conducive to learning and to community partner needs is best.
 - b. Carefully weigh the benefits and challenges associated with choice vs. assignment.
 - c. A means to opt-out without penalty should be provided.
 - d. Avoid overloading certain popular sites.
 - e. Creating, maintaining, and using a database with information about community partners and their needs; feedback about quality of experiences students have at various sites; and notations concerning problems and successes that have been experienced is a vital undertaking.

6. Liability/safety issues and transportation needs
 - a. Must be addressed by all involved (academic institution, faculty, students, partners/sites)
 - b. Common forms that should be used and kept on file include liability releases, permission slips, field trip notifications, etc.

7. Assignments (tasks, written work, reflections....)
 - a. Must be authentic/meaningful and of manageable number.
 - b. Must connect course content to "engagement" experiences.
 - c. Must connect course learning outcomes to "engagement" activities.

8. Training, supervision, monitoring, and support/assistance
 - a. Expectations must be clear and shared.
 - b. Ensure adequate resources are available and used well.
 - c. Workshops and seminars should be offered on a regular basis.

9. Assessment and evaluation (of student performance, faculty performance, & partner performance)
 - a. Wise to conduct both formative and summative means of assessment.
 - b. Tools and devices should be clear and concise.
 - c. Criteria for evaluation should be known and discussed in advance.
 - d. Significant outcomes should be shared with various publics via presentations, reports, and other publications.