



SAFE Models of Civic Engagement: Sustaining Service Learning

SAFE Models of Civic Engagement: Sustaining Service Learning, Year Three is published by the Community College National Center for Community Engagement (CCNCCE) through a grant for advancing service learning projects and programs related to homeland security and domestic and emergency preparedness. This publication is the result of the work of year three of the *Supporting Actions for Engagement (SAFE)* grant. CCNCCE is dedicated to service learning and civic engagement, and to helping community college faculty, staff, and administrators in their endeavors carry these concepts to the greater community. All of the ten teams of sub-grantees, and the national SAFE training team, have contributed a great deal to this publication. The individual and collective efforts each team member contributed to the SAFE project have resulted in three annual publications that will serve as models of what great service learning projects can do. On behalf of the Community College National Center for Community Engagement, I thank all of the SAFE sub-grantee teams and the national SAFE Training Team for making this final SAFE publication a necessary resource for anyone engaged in service learning and civic engagement.

**COMMUNITY COLLEGE NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
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STAFF:

Lyvier Conss, Executive Director
Beverly Perry, Program Administrator
Gloria Schoonover, Assistant Program Administrator

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:

Elizabeth Larson-Keagy, PhD

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Community College National Center for Community Engagement
Mesa Community College Downtown Center
145 N. Centennial Way, Suite 201
Mesa, AZ, 85201

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Lyvier Conss, Executive Director, Phone 480-461-6258, Fax: 480-461-6218,
Email: lyvier.conss@mccmail.maricopa.edu

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SAFE Models of Civic Engagement: Sustaining Service Learning

Foreword

Elizabeth Larson-Keagy, PhD, Executive Editor,
Community College National Center for Community Engagement (CCNCCE)

This year, 2006, marks the final year of the 3-year SAFE grant funded through CCNCCE. At the onset of the grant cycle, the ten teams of sub-grantees and national SAFE trainers were at various stages of implementing service learning at their institutions. Some had been involved with service learning and civic engagement for years and had developed stellar service learning projects and training programs. Others were relatively new to the field, and had to hit the ground running as they carried new ideas about service learning to their campuses and communities. And two sub-grantee teams were new to the field entirely, and were charged with developing and implementing service learning from scratch. In the final year of the grant, two tribal institutions were funded as well. The funding for the tribal institutes was to invigorate service programs on the campuses and in the communities.

It has been a pleasure to work with all of the team members of the SAFE grant. They have been an inspiring group of people, and their projects are truly noteworthy. In an age and place where we are often stretched to the limit in terms of work loads, changes in society, and often growing disillusionment and uncertainty about the future, these fine sub-grantees have helped to reinvigorate and reshape what service learning is all about.

How do we make ourselves, our homes, our communities safe? How do we take care of each other, be good neighbors, and prepare for other disasters that may strike our communities? Each time I attended a meeting with the sub-grantees, or read and edited their projects, I felt as if they really did hold a piece of the puzzle. It truly is small groups or associations of people who come together (in times of need or otherwise) to make a difference when, at first glance, a situation may seem overwhelming. Ordinary citizens like our sub-grantees were able to imagine, develop, and implement programs that will help mobilize others if the need arises. They're not politicians campaigning for the next election or highly paid CEOs of companies. They are teachers and service learning staff who are really dedicated to the concept of civic engagement. They have empowered segments of their own communities who might otherwise have been left alone to wade through the floodwaters.

After three years of programming for the SAFE grant, it is coming to a close. However, the work that the sub-grantees have done is not forgotten. The institutions that each team works in have become stronger as a result of the SAFE projects. Several institutions have altered their mission statements to reflect the importance of service learning and civic engagement on their campuses and in their communities. Some have gone on to write grants for future funding for additional service learning programs. Most importantly, they have all touched hundreds and hundreds of lives along the way, and I am honored to have been a part of it all.

Introduction

Supporting Actions for Engagement: Pressing Towards the Mark

Beverly Perry, Program Administrator,
Community College National Center for Community Engagement

Be the change you want to see in this world.”
—Gandhi

As we come to a close of the Learn and Serve Supporting Actions for Engagement (SAFE) grant, it is important to not only address the issues of sustainability and institutionalization of service and civic engagement in community colleges, but also to reflect on the events that have shaped and impacted the work that our SAFE sub-grantees have done in their communities.

From the tragedy of September 11, 2001, a vision that was unique to service learning was born. Would it be possible to combine service and civic engagement with homeland security and disaster preparedness, whether or not the disaster is human-caused or a natural phenomena? Through funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Learn and Serve, the Community College National Center for Community Engagement (CCNCCE) set on a course of discovery with twelve community colleges from across the United States and Puerto Rico.

Sitting in the room at the first SAFE sub-grantee training meeting in January 2004, I marveled as one by one each college's project lead described their proposal with such energy and enthusiasm albeit some trepidation. As the new program administrator at CCNCCE, I should have felt some anxiety at the enormity of what we were about to undertake. However, the warmth, sincerity, and dedication of the people surrounding that conference table was an electrifying charge to my heart. It remains that way three years later, as the grant closes. I wanted to know more about the various campuses' projects, their colleges' commitment to service, and the people, who with full-time responsibilities had committed to taking the lead in this extraordinary endeavor.

The twelve colleges came with a range of needs and varied experiences serving the community. All had administrative and community support. Not all of the projects were selected for their homeland security/domestic preparedness initiatives. Some were start-up service learning projects and others were expanding their service learning programs, and still others were considered experts in creating and expanding the dialogue on how to moderate community needs and address those needs through combining service learning and emergency services.

Two of the colleges, Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) in New Jersey, and Northampton Community College in Pennsylvania described the impact of the events of 9-11 on faculty and student on their campus. RVCC developed a collaborative effort with the police academy on its campus that, through service learning, closed the gap between the academic programs and the police recruits. Northampton developed a

cutting edge service learning initiative involving disaster preparedness for pets. Very few actually realized or appreciated the significance of this vision until after Hurricane Katrina, when many people refused to leave their homes without their pets. Across the country in ethnically diverse Riverside, California the community need for disaster preparedness projects was great due to disasters including fires, floods, and earthquakes. In Florida, at Hillsborough Community College, a tremendous influx of veterans spurred serious concerns about meeting the needs of returning soldiers within the Tampa community as well as meeting medical needs after hurricanes. It was evident that each college had effectively recognized and valued the input from their respective communities.

San Antonio College (SAC), in Texas, was committed to expanding its service learning program. With a new full-time service learning director and administrative support from SAC's President and Vice-President of Academic Affairs, service learning was expanded, and academic disciplines such as economics and mortuary science became involved in the projects. In addition, after Hurricane Katrina, San Antonio found that they could provide direct service to Katrina evacuees in their community. Nursing students and their nursing instructors dedicated service learning hours to make a difference in the lives of displaced people. SAC's collective work paid off as the only college or university in Texas to receive a CNCS 2006-2009 Learn and Serve grant award.

Kenai Peninsula College, Alaska, began as a new fresh face to service learning. Within two dedicated years, they became recognized as an exemplary service learning program by the University of Alaska-Anchorage, and a national award winner for their collaboration with social service agencies by the CCNCCE. Kenai Peninsula College not only caught the vision of service learning for its students and faculty, but it aggressively put effective strategies into place that promoted faculty and student buy-in, and set the college decisively on the path to sustainability and institutionalization.

The University of Puerto Rico at Cayey, the Tohono O'odham Community College (TOCC), Arizona, and Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC), North Dakota, were also new to service learning. They all have in common serving rural communities, with TOCC and TMCC also serving tribal communities. With the challenges they face of distance, transportation, introducing a new pedagogy, and all that comes with integrating service learning into the curriculum and into the community, they have done an outstanding job of working toward building sustainable programs on their campuses.

Finally, the three colleges selected for their expertise and model programs in dialogue and engaging faculty and community members about community needs - Gulf Coast Community College in Florida, Mesa Community College in Arizona and Monroe Community College in New York - served as our National Training Team on Service Learning/Civic Engagement, Homeland Security and Domestic Preparedness. The team traveled from California to Florida and Texas to New York to train community college

faculty and served as mentors to those wanting to start service learning/domestic preparedness projects on their campus.

Without hesitancy, CCNCCE wholeheartedly applauds all of these colleges for their commitment to service learning and civic engagement. They continue to actively press towards the mark of sustainable, institutionalized service learning programs. They clearly understand and advocate for the impact that service learning has on academic excellence, retention, student success, collegiality, and effective community collaboration. Margaret Mead's timeless quote captures the essence, the heart of this group of sub-grantees:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Please absorb and utilize the information that is presented in this publication. The primary focus of each article is on sustainability and institutionalization. However, one must be aware of the process that each college experienced as it intentionally and systematically set goals and objectives for its service learning and civic engagement initiatives. We hope you find something in these articles that makes sense in your college and community, and are able to incorporate these practices into your college's mission.