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Student Service Corps

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Proposal

The Honors Project that I am proposing is the creation of the Student Service Corps, a service organization on Bowling Green State University's campus, working towards social justice in the surrounding area, with components of sustainability and community relationships. Social Justice is being defined here as empowering others who may not be able to get ahead on their own. The focus in sustainability will be dedicated to maintaining the limited resources that we value for the next generation. Finally, building lasting relationships with the community is going to be the third pillar. There are groups such as Civic Action Now and the Environmental Service Club that focus on one or two of these components already, but not these three specifically. While the Office of Service-Learning does a great job of connecting students to service opportunities, the Student Service Corps is looking to supplement the volunteer connections they have already established for students. I have noticed a gap in service opportunities that students have knowledge and access to, and I would like to start an organization that provides these opportunities in all three subjects, as well as the reflections that encourage development in involved students. By students being asked questions about what they value, they gain an understanding about themselves and start to realize why they really do service.

The aim of the Student Service Corps is not only volunteering in the community, but also personally, professionally, and psychologically developing students through the Active Citizenship Continuum. This model, developed by Break Away, is a path for students to grow from Members to Volunteers to Conscientious Citizens to Active Citizens ("The Active Citizen Continuum"). In the Member role, students are just existent in society, and are not really concerned with their role in social problems. From this stage, they move on to well-intentioned Volunteers, but still do not have a grasp on the effect of social issues. The next stage is the Conscientious Citizen, where the student starts to ask "why", and wants to learn more about what they can do. Finally, they move on to become an Active Citizen, where they are very aware of their role in society, and is dedicated to their community. The target members for the Student Service Corps are going to be first-year students. By students getting involved from the beginning, they are more likely to build relationships, develop their individual role, and stay active members throughout their college experience (Pozzi 39). More specifically, they will be more committed to remain with the Student Service Corps. "Volunteer identity is the best predictor of intention to maintain the commitment for an extended time (Pozzi 39)." First-year students are fresh from high school, still learning what they value, and many have not yet had the experiences that shape them as a person. While I am looking for a mix of students to be members, first-year students are the ones that need the most development to find their identity and will allow the organization to remain sustainable since they have the ability to be involved longer.

The structure of the Student Service Corps will be based on developing relationships, with placements focused in areas including social justice, sustainability, and the community of the surrounding Bowling Green and Northwest Ohio area. Placements are essentially spots that students volunteer at, weekly or bi-weekly, through the Student Service Corps. By finding what students are interested in, we will develop volunteer placements tailored specifically for them. We also encourage members to step outside of their comfort zone, and do service in a subject that they would not typically choose. By doing repeat service, this is encouraging the volunteers to develop strong relationships with the people that the student is serving. This is what really sets

the Student Service Corps apart. Instead of doing one time service for organizations, we will be forming bonds with the people we will be working for and with.

The working mission statement of the Student Service Corps is to empower others to be the change they want to see. The Students Service Corps promotes social justice by working with the community and other organizations to educate and serve Northwest Ohio while making long-lasting relationships. This is our duty and next year will be the pilot test of this brand new organization.

My goal for next year is to develop the Student Service Corps' organizational and leadership framework, building relationships and connections in the community, and having a plan in place to pass down to future leaders of the organization. I will be studying abroad in Hong Kong during fall of my senior year, so I will not be able to be a part of this organization two years from now. This means that I have to not only find people who I think will be committed and productive members, but who I think will be great leaders. These leaders will have to have a real passion for service, while having the organizational competency to run a student group

The idea that I am most excited about for this Honors Project is that it is something that will hopefully live on after I have left Bowling Green. I have been looking for ways that I could leave my mark here, and this is how I would like to do that. I have already found five other committed members, who are interested in leadership positions next year. We have already gotten a start on all of the background work that a student organization needs, such as drafting a constitution and establishing the basic organizational framework. The real recruitment will begin during CampusFest this Fall semester, where we will be able to reach out to potential members.

Some of the places that I am excited to work with include Second Chance in Toledo, All About the Kids in Bowling Green, and with Nick Hennessy with Sustainability issues around campus and Bowling Green. The Student Service Corps has begun looking at places such as these to volunteer at, which I will begin finalizing over the summer. There are still numerous places that I have not looked into that would make amazing service opportunities, and I hope to find and contact these places in the coming months.

While school may be taking a break over the summer, I hope to get a huge head start for next year during this time. Almost all of the places that are potential volunteer sights are still open through the summer, so I will be able to set up placements there and hopefully even volunteer there myself. I will still be fairly busy, but I am sure that I will have a lot more time than I do right now. I will actually be in Nicaragua for a month completing an internship, but I am sure that this experience will teach me an infinite amount of how to organize service opportunities, as well as what it truly means to do service. The type of work that I will be doing this summer is what is developmentally right for me at this time in my life. I am hoping that the Student Service Corps will be able to provide for the developmental needs of college students, on a much smaller scale than an international service trip. However, we want to prepare students for these types of opportunities, including post-grad service.

Next semester will consist of finalizing all of the documents, such as the constitution and SBC budget proposal, that are required for a student organization, registering with the university, obtaining funding, and working out the kinks of a first-year organization. These challenges include anything from gaining committed members to developing efficient meetings. I will finish up the second half of my Honors Project Fall semester of 2012.

Works Cited

- Pozzi, Marta, Elena, and Maura. "Young People and Volunteerism: A Model of Sustained Volunteerism During the Transition to Adulthood." *Journal of Adult Development* 15.1 (2008): 35-46. Academic Search Complete. Web. 20 Mar. 2012.
- "The Active Citizen Continuum." *AlternativeBreaks2012.org*. Break Away. Web. 20 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.alternativebreaks2012.org/philosophy/>>.