

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CROSS-DISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to share our experience implementing civic engagement program in our university. Our study describes the ongoing collaborations with community partners that allow students to work directly on a social cause. Civic engagement courses integrate marketing theory and practice with real hands-on experiences, in order to prepare a student for their role as an ethical and responsible citizen. The objective of this paper is to give insight on best practices when developing courses, choosing company partnerships, and creating channels to communicate your programs to the university and local community. Enhanced knowledge in this area may increase participation in civic engagement courses, and follow the requirements of high-impact educational practices in universities.

Introduction

Over the past few years marketing educators have realized the importance in preparing our students to become socially responsible, and civically engaged citizens. Moreover, it has become increasingly more important to highlight and publicize this engagement to current and prospective consumers. There has been increased interest among marketing researchers to study the benefits in offering opportunities for students to participate in service projects for organizations (Petkus, 2000; Klink and Athaide, 2004; Metcalf, 2010; Cadwallader et al, 2013; Emad and von Buren 2014).

The majority of this prior research has focused on service learning, which provides students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experience (AACU, 2008). Civic engagement expands on the idea of service learning and is implemented within a learning environment that is focused on "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes" (AACU Value Rubric, 2000).

We believe that civic engagement should be more focused on in marketing curriculum as the concept of Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) is now more prevalent than ever. Organizations and businesses have become increasingly aware of the importance of acting ethically and socially responsible and the promotion of such deeds have proven to have a major impact for the success or lack of success for many organizations. For-profit businesses such as "Tom's Shoes" demonstrate the fiscal sense of community giving and have proven to resonate well with cause conscience audiences. Other local non-profits have expanded their missions via civic engagement advocacy on policy matters, or embark on engaging directly with a local constituency.

Civic engagement encompasses actions wherein individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community (AAC&U 2014). Providing these civic engagement opportunities to students within the setting of higher education is no longer a novelty or activities that are limited to a niche group of individuals. It has now become a mainstream expectation and desire of students and college instructors, alike.

Developing a curriculum that is able to cleverly weave in foundational and even advanced level civic engagement curricula is a process and should consistently be evaluated and re-evaluated.

All activities within a course should add value to our students' education and is an essential part of fostering the development of the "whole student." Many programs recognize that civically engaged students are not all created equal and thus course design should be strategically developed in a way that will meet the objectives for the course as well as allow for students to explore individual interests. The projects allow students and community organizations to work together to meet both an organization's need and students' academic requirements (Rhee 2014).

Many prior studies have discussed the significance of high-impact educational practices in universities (Albertine & McNair 2011; Brownell & Swaner 2010; Kuh 2008). Research has shown that campuses that engage in such practices have increased student retention and student engagement. One example of an essential high-impact practice is community-based learning activities, such as civic engagement programs. Such programs provide students an opportunity to work directly with community partners in order to analyze and solve real problems in our society. Civic engagement courses embrace the idea that "giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life" (Kuh 2008).

Our civic engagement presentation will demonstrate best practices in the following areas: course development, assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes, the art of picking the right client, and organizing a civic engagement symposium for your university.

References Available upon Request