

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Strategic Plan

2006-2010

Improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering



ENGAGING *students* in *Communities*



Student involvement in service and service-learning produces valuable benefits to local communities and enables young people to become proactive members of society, while also experiencing the mutual benefit gained from such involvement. Service and service-learning opportunities create avenues for our nation to develop the next generation of citizens who sustain or enhance their service commitments. Students develop an understanding about the importance and impact of service, strengthen their character and roles as engaged citizens, and improve their academic performance. Schools—both K-12 and postsecondary—as well as community-based and other service-learning programs provide useful places for engaging students in volunteer opportunities and in helping them start off on a solid path toward a lifetime of service and civic participation.

Engineering Serves the Community

Purdue's Engineering Projects in Community Service (EPICS) gives aspiring engineers a chance to enhance the quality of people's lives and the life of the community. EPICS is helping to draw more undergraduates into engineering careers by engaging them in a variety of ambitious projects, such as creating electromechanical toys for physically disabled children or building computer systems to track services to the homeless while maintaining privacy. By designing, deploying, and supporting engineered systems that make a difference in the real world, EPICS students gain a satisfying sense of contributing to the common good. They also emerge from the program with communication and teamwork skills, system design proficiency, customer orientation, and project management and leadership

Driving Greater Service on Campus

Virtually every American college articulates a dual mission—on the one hand supporting the pursuit of knowledge and skill development, and on the other hand building strong character for effective citizenship.

Many post-secondary institutions are making significant progress in supporting the civic engagement of their students; however, additional opportunities to energize meaningful service and volunteering on campus exist. Research indicates that high school students volunteer at a higher rate than college students. Although it is true that college students' participation in service is slightly higher than the adult average, it is also true that our efforts to engage college students could be far more robust.

Since its inception, the Corporation for National and Community Service has built a strong network of relationships with higher education.

- » Since 1994, AmeriCorps members have earned more than \$1 billion in AmeriCorps Education Awards to further their educational opportunities.
- » Roughly one quarter of all institutions of higher education have received support from Learn and Serve America funding.
- » In FY 2004 alone, the Corporation invested approximately \$180 million in higher education.

What Is Service-Learning?

Service-learning aims to build knowledge, character, and civic skills in young people by combining service to the community with academic learning. By directly linking service to the academic curriculum, service-learning creates a place for service that is integrated into a school's core mission: education.

Source: *Students in Service to America: A Guidebook for Engaging America's Students in a Lifelong Habit of Service.*

Yet, college investment in service and service-learning (a teaching method that combines service to the community with academic learning) has not kept pace

with demand. Over the next five years we will build upon our relationship with post-secondary institutions of higher education through our three major programs—Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America, encouraging higher education institutions to offer more service-learning courses as well as more co-curricular opportunities to serve. In addition, we will support colleges and universities in providing more service opportunities through the Federal Work-Study program. In particular, we will focus colleges on efforts designed to give youth in disadvantaged circumstances the skills and tools to be prepared for and attend college. The Corporation currently offers significant benefits, in the form of AmeriCorps education awards and stipends, to members who commit to full or part-time service. We will continue to promote these and other benefits of service in an effort to increase the number of students engaged in service by 40 percent over the next five years.

We will work to ensure that at least half of all higher education institutions provide, or stimulate the creation of resources to coordinate service, service-learning, and community partnerships. In order to make service and volunteering more a part of the college experience over the next five years, we will:

- » Strengthen and expand our network of intermediaries (Volunteer Centers, Campus Compact, State Service Commissions, national foundations and public service non-profits, faith-based and other community based organizations at the state, community, and campus level) that support service and service-learning;
- » Reduce barriers that inhibit students from engaging in service (such as transportation, information, relationships with community agencies, and lack of institutional support);
- » Ensure that students have opportunities to serve as part of their academic studies through high-quality service-learning;
- » Increase the number of college students serving as tutors and mentors to youth from disadvantaged circumstances, particularly to prepare them for high school completion and college attendance; and
- » Provide a national platform to promote the value and importance of service on campus.

By supporting those educational institutions that make service an integral part of their academic mission and connect education to the needs of the local community, we will help to promote an ethic of service among America's younger Americans.

Bringing Service to the Classroom

The Corporation's programs have been catalysts for the growth of service-learning in our nation's K-12 schools. In 1984, nine percent of schools offered service-learning opportunities. Today, service-learning reaches approximately 30 percent of all schools. The Corporation will work to build service-learning into the curriculum of half of all K-12 schools by 2010.

Since President George H.W. Bush signed the legislation authorizing grants to schools to support service-learning, we have worked to support

service for young people both during the school day and in after school programs. Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America have all provided support to student service. The U.S. Department of Education has made service-learning a key feature of many of the programs it supports as well. The Corporation will build on this existing infrastructure to disseminate effective practices and spread service-learning to new schools and districts. We will expand support for teacher education and professional development programs that provide training in community partnership development and service-learning. In addition, we plan to pilot a new "summer of service" program for young teens that will also support effective training for educators.

In order to incorporate service-learning in more K-12 schools, we will work toward the following goals over the next five years:

- » Identifying quality program models to highlight effective practices, increase visibility of service-learning, and evaluate the outcomes of service-learning;
- » Expanding the number of teachers, faculty, and school administrators using service-learning;
- » Strengthening the value of service-learning to educational institutions; and

Students who participate in service and service-learning gain valuable knowledge and skills that help improve their academic and social behavior while setting the stage for a lifetime of service.

- » Working with non-profit groups to help them recognize students as valuable resources and enable them to more effectively connect K-12 students with appropriate and effective service opportunities.

Taking Service-Learning Beyond the Classroom

The practice of engaging individuals in service-learning extends beyond engaging students in an academic setting. People other than students, including working or retired individuals, can also engage in service-learning, particularly through structured community-based projects and programs. Throughout their service-learning experience, individuals, either serving alone or in a group, increase the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively carry out projects, strengthen communities, serve as leaders, and expand their future opportunities. Service-learning in this context, as well as in the academic context, is a systematic, thoughtful, and programmed approach to learning that emphasizes the links between service, community, and civic responsibility.

Service-Learning Engages Students in Local Service Opportunities

Ross Meyer did more than get a bachelor's degree while a student at Miami University of Ohio. He also participated in alternative spring break programs, tutored GED classes, mentored young people, led housing construction crews, and coordinated after-school and summer youth programs. And he created a service-learning program, Over-the-Rhine Weekend Experience: an Introduction to Urban America. The two-day experience brought students to Cincinnati's most impoverished neighborhood where they worked in a homeless shelter, rehabilitated low-income housing, toured neighborhood and community agencies, and discussed issues with local activists and community leaders. A strong model of service-learning that emphasizes action and reflection, OTR attracted students and professors from many academic areas, with more than 300 students participating in the weekends. OTR served as the basis for the Empower Program at Miami University, a year-long credit course focused on social justice issues. Meyer's idea sparked interest at other college campuses in Ohio and within the Campus Compact Network. Meyer received the Howard R. Swearer Humanitarian Award, sponsored by the Sallie Mae Fund, from Campus Compact in honor of his efforts.

Source: Corporation for National and Community Service (see <http://www.nationalservice.gov/> for this and other stories of service)

NATIONAL TARGETS FOR 2010

- » Engage 5 million college students in service, up from 3.27 million in 2005¹¹
- » Ensure half of all higher education institutions provide at least one full-time person responsible for coordinating and supporting service on campus
- » Ensure 20 percent of Federal Work-Study funds are devoted to college students who engage in service, up from 15.9 percent in 2005
- » Ensure at least one-third of teenagers are exposed to service-learning in school
- » Ensure at least 50 percent of America's K-12 schools incorporate service-learning into their curricula, up from 32 percent in 1999

CORPORATION TARGETS FOR 2010

- » Engage 300,000 college students in service supported by Corporation-sponsored national service programs as participants and volunteers
- » Ensure 80 percent of Learn and Serve America higher education institutions have service-learning as part of their official core curriculum (in at least one discipline or school major)¹²
- » Ensure 65 percent of Learn and Serve America K-12 schools and school districts have service-learning as part of their official core curriculum (in at least one subject in at least one grade)
- » Double the number of higher education institutions matching the AmeriCorps Education Award or providing other incentives for volunteering

For data sources and updates on annual targets, see http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/strategic_plan.asp