

## **Retention and Personal Growth through Service Learning**

### **Session Presenters:**

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### ***Retention through Service Learning***

After measuring student, faculty and community partner impact and finding positive results or indicators of student success, we examined institutional data such as grade performance, percent hours attempted versus percent hours completed, and retention/persistence rates to demonstrate that service learning courses and the service learning experience have a positive impact on students. We are basing our hypotheses on initial ongoing assessments of student, faculty and community partner surveys that confirm positive indicators by the students, faculty and community agencies. We have begun looking at this data to identify positive student and programmatic outcomes. The results suggest that service learning can be viewed as a tool for student retention, persistence and performance.

The program is delivered as a power-point presentation. Institutional data which compare student retention, persistence and grade performance of service learning students to other students will be presented. Also included is an interactive activity designed to explore refining the evaluation process. In general the program participants should walk away with a new appreciation of institutional data as a source for evaluation and assessment.

### ***Personal Growth through Service Learning***

Every year the Service Learning Center conducts assessments on various issues. This year I thought it would be interesting to see if students who participate in curricular

service learning activities will achieve a higher degree of personal growth and responsibility than students who do not participate in service learning activities.

The assessment tool that I chose to create and distribute was a rubric. The rubric looked at five different key indicators under personal growth and responsibility: personal identity and moral values, respect and cooperativeness, leadership skills, civic responsibility and diversity.

I decided to distribute the rubric to three classes that offered service learning as an option. I explained to the students that this rubric was not created to pass judgment but rather to look at how students perceived themselves. I also explained to the students that this was an Enrollment and Student Services initiative because I did not want students to think that if they did not participate in service learning that this assessment did not apply to them. Service learning is housed under Enrollment and Student Services, so this was not an untruth. I further explained that the rubric would be administered twice during the semester, once at the beginning and once at the end in order to judge any growth that occurred over the course of the semester.

I then distributed the rubric at the beginning of the semester during the first week of class to every student in the class. Then I came back at the end of the semester and distributed the same rubric during the week of finals. After the second rubric was administered to students I went back to the service learning database to look at the students who participated in service learning and to see if those students did indeed experience a higher level of personal growth and responsibility than the students who did not participate.

This has been a very interesting process. I intend to share the assessment tools and findings with the group through the use of PowerPoint and various handouts.