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*Recipes for Engagement through Service-Learning: Ingredients for a Healthy
Service-Learning Program*

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Mesa Community College's Center for Service-Learning has been in existence since 1992. At the Center for Service-Learning, "We promote excellence in teaching and learning through the integration of academic study and active service. We collaborate with the community, encourage civic engagement, promote personal growth, and foster social responsibility." Our vision is, "To educate and empower students to strengthen our community through service."

In addition to having the support of our administration, faculty, students, and community, we have also been fortunate to receive an Accent on Student Success: Engaged Together in Service (ASSETS) grant. We have enjoyed working through this grant to engage additional faculty members, staff, and community partners in service to the community.

This is our **RECIPE** for a healthy service-learning program:

REFLECTION connects the service with learning. It is an effective tool for engaging students before, during, and after their service. Faculty complete reflection activities with their classes and are welcome to have Center for Service-Learning staff facilitate reflection for their classes as well.

Reflection is an ongoing process that we are working to shift and transform to meet the communication preferences of students. Our staff is working to develop social networking sites on Facebook and Ning to aid reflection and give students a new platform to comment on their experiences. You can become a fan of MCC's Center for Service-Learning at www.facebook.com/mccservicelearning.

RECOGNITION shows support of the service and the person. You can never show enough recognition to volunteers and service-learners who work with your program, nor community partners, faculty, and college personnel who help keep your program up and running. The recognition we supply can be as small as a certificate and as big as a scholarship. People respond differently to different types of recognition, so it is good to vary the way that you say thanks.

EXPLAIN the purpose of your program and what you do for students, faculty, the college and the community.

The Center for Service-Learning serves as the coordinator of the campus service-learning programs by maintaining and developing partnerships between college, student, and community, and offers assistance to faculty in developing service-learning activities in their existing courses.

We provide students with educational opportunities in community service by placement in government agencies, educational entities, civic organizations, or citizen advocacy groups through enrollment in academically oriented service-learning classes. We also identify community needs, by maintaining and developing partnerships between college, student, and community, as well as provide assistance to faculty who are interested in developing service-learning components in their coursework.

Our work with ASSETS has been focused on serving at-risk youth in our community. We have approached this task by concentrating on large service events like Martin Luther King Day and Dr. Seuss' Birthday, by asking faculty to develop service-learning assignments, and by getting our students involved in a servant leadership program.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS are essential for everything that we do- they provide the off-campus classroom where our students learn and develop new skills. We keep an extensive database of partner agencies on our website at www.mccservicelearning.org. To become an agency partner, the non-profit and government organizations we work with must provide us with a certificate of insurance to cover

volunteer liability. We ask for annual updates from all partners to ensure that they would still like to be on our list of available sites and to offer them training on service-learning and volunteerism at MCC.

We utilize Facebook and the windows outside our office to advertise opportunities to serve with these partners as much as possible. And connect monthly at Service-Learning Advisory Board luncheons to collaborate and strategize on how we can best serve our community.

INCENTIVES keep our program relevant for the people we work with. Service-learning is a valuable asset for our community, an insightful teaching tool, and a skill-builder for students. It is essential for our department to keep these incentives at the forefront of our mind as we develop programs and talk about what we do. The incentives are also what keep our job interesting and motivate us to come to work every day.

Working with the ASSETS grant, we have been able to offer incentives to faculty to attend trainings and revise their curriculum to incorporate service-learning; we have given students positions of leadership that have helped them gain scholarships; and we have strengthened our abilities to serve community partners who work with at-risk youth.

PROGRAMS should fit the needs of participants and build off your mission and vision.

Independent service-learning classes at MCC are offered to students in thirty-five academic disciplines. Interested students select their placement options by their academic interest and receive a brief orientation. After the orientation has been given, the student is linked with a faculty advisor. It is the student's responsibility to arrange meetings with the faculty member, as well as the community site supervisor, to develop a complete outline for their class. The student can then register, in the service learning office only, for a 1, 2 or 3 credit hour, open entry/open exit class, based on 50 hours of service per credit hour.

In addition, there are many classes that incorporate a service-learning component into their regular coursework. The Center for Service-Learning assists faculty who are doing this by providing them with listings of appropriate sites for their discipline, as well as all the forms and paperwork necessary for the students in their classes. Students have an additional opportunity to serve in these classes if they

choose to act as a Service-Learning Assistant to help monitor paperwork and create certificates over the course of the semester.

Our newest program, the Mesa Community College, Community Strengthening Allies, empowers students to act as representatives for community agencies. In our first year with this model, six students served 500 hours and recruited 30 student volunteers to help them in their work. The work they did was a part of the ASSETS grant and focused on serving at-risk youth in our community.

The Center for Service-Learning also hosts a large AmeriCorps program. Students and community members serve part-time terms of service to gain educational dollars.

PAPERWORK is always a part of the process. Paperwork keeps our partners informed, students safe, gives faculty a basis to determine project grades, and proffers valuable statistics that keep our programs relevant. We try to keep our paperwork simple and offer orientations as needed so people feel comfortable and confident as they navigate our programs.

EVERYONE has a part. A well-functioning service-learning team is composed of many players. From community partners to students, faculty, staff, and administration, we all have to work together and keep one another's goals in focus. Service-learning is a win-win for all participants when you work together.

SUSTAINABILITY is our goal for maintaining a thriving college and community.

The commitment to service-learning at Mesa Community College is deeply rooted. More than thirty faculty members participate in service-learning options across both of the College's full service campuses each year. In the 2009-2010 academic year, 536 students participated in in-course module service-learning, 83 in independent, and over 350 students and community members participated in our AmeriCorps program.

Service-learning is a powerful method to engage and retain students. We offer Service Scholarships and Academics in Action awards through our office, host an AmeriCorps program, assist with the Phi Theta Kappa international honor society for 2-year colleges, and help students learn about the Individual Development Account savings program to help people pay for classes and materials.

Faculty members have been enticed to incorporate service-learning into their classes through our work with the ASSETS grant. Through ASSETS, we have been able to provide faculty members with something of an “undergraduate research topic” to focus their service-learning projects around. We have been able to offer them funding to spend time re-working their curriculum and train them in service-learning methods.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Community College National Center for Community Engagement for giving Mesa Community College’s Center for Service-Learning the opportunity to participate in work with the ASSETS grant. We are grateful for the growth we have seen in our students, the increased engagement of our faculty members, the additional support from our administrators, and the greater collaboration of our community partners.

We would also like to wish our fellow community colleges the best of luck in trying out their own recipes for success in service-learning and community engagement and hope to learn from our fellow chefs as we serve together.