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Recruiting and Retaining Faculty for Service-Learning at Technical Colleges

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In preparing students for the workforce, faculty at technical colleges must teach effectively and efficiently so that students are prepared to succeed on "day one" in the workforce. Given that studies have found that "students learn material more quickly and more thoroughly when they actively experience how the academic concepts apply in settings beyond the college classroom" (Prentice, 2011), service-learning is a valuable tool available to faculty. This is particularly needed by nontraditional-age students, who need opportunities to apply course material and make connections between their learning and real experiences (Largent, 2013). Service-learning can be used in almost any course to help students "discover the connection between the academics of the class and the political and community issues related to that academic discipline" (Prentice, 2011, p. 844).

The purpose of this brief is to aggregate methods and advice for recruiting and retaining technical college faculty to implement service-learning. It explores strategies for recruitment, methods for retention, common barriers for faculty, and additional considerations for technical colleges.

Methods for Recruiting

In order for faculty to adopt a new pedagogy in their classrooms, they must believe that the innovation's benefits outweigh the costs (McKay & Rozee, 2004). Staff promoting service-learning must strive to highlight the benefits to stakeholders and support faculty through implementation.

The most common reasons faculty use service-learning are to teach content better and improve learning outcomes (O'Meara, 2008). As such, staff and faculty who work on campus to spread service-learning practice must share data on the value and relevance of service-learning and appeal to individual faculty needs and goals in a variety of departments. Because faculty motivations vary by individual goals, years of experience, and courses (O'Meara, 2004), on the next page is a list of perceived benefits to cater to different faculty members.

The most common hesitation for faculty who have not yet implemented service-learning is the time and logistical factors (Abes et al, 2002; Jones, 2013;

McKay and Rozee, 2004). Faculty who are balancing competing priorities are apprehensive about the intensive work of developing partnerships, ensuring that students are having valuable experiences, creating knowledge and experience-appropriate projects, and determining the best method of evaluation. To address this, colleges may consider providing support structures like professional development programs, teaching institutes, and mentoring relationships (Dee, 2004). If campuses do not have the resources to have a staff supporting service-learning, consider leveraging existing volunteer management resources in the community, such as Volunteer Centers, to help coordinate logistics and track volunteer work.

Some faculty are not convinced that service-learning benefits students or that it is relevant to their subject areas (McKay & Rozee, 2004; O'Meara, 2008). To address this, institutions might consider having existing service-learning faculty help facilitate training or promote service-learning at department meetings.

Abes and colleagues (2002) developed these first steps institutions can take for recruitment which are still relevant:
- Involve community members and students in recruiting service-learning faculty, capitalizing on their

Faculty-Perceived Benefits of Using service-learning

Benefits to Faculty	Benefits to Students	Benefits to the Community
effective teaching	increased understanding of course material	the opportunity for those served by nonprofits to teach the students something
the value of learning new teaching strategies (professional development)	connecting course content to real-life application	developing reports that may help with grant writing and funding
the opportunity to work with community partners	the value of community as a resource for learning	receiving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the students
making a difference related to community issues	learning to accept responsibility for one's own learning	making connections between people and organizations
the potential for combining teaching, research, and service	learning more about the world beyond school	breaking the "ivory tower" perception
	learning the value of diversity	
	exploring careers	
	reevaluating values and beliefs	
	learning communication, critical thinking, and writing skills	
	developing self-efficacy and civic responsibility	

Sources: Abes et al, 2002; Largent, 2013; McKay and Rozee, 2004; O'Meara, 2008.

advocacy strength.

• Identify, organize, and make visible service-learning faculty and create opportunities for these faculty to promote service-learning ... within their academic departments or disciplines, and throughout the institution.

• Assess academic learning outcomes for service-learning courses and disseminate results within academic departments and disciplines.

• Develop an infrastructure within the institution to support a centralized service-learning office to connect potential community partners with the university, provide funding, create incentives to try new approaches, assist faculty with logistical support, and provide developmental instruction to new or potential service-learning faculty (p. 9).

Methods for Retention and Development

Ongoing support and professional development is critical for faculty already engaged in service-learning. The biggest deterrents for continuing using service-learning are limited time and dealing with logistical concerns (Abes et al, 2002). To address this and other issues, faculty development should be available in a range of forms including mentoring, workshops, learning communities, resource libraries, professional organizations, professional conferences, and fellowships (Welch, 2016; Abes et al, 2002).

The school can arrange mentoring relationships between instructors who are in their first few years of utilizing service-learning with those seasoned in the pedagogy. These relationships should be last a few years to keep mentees supported in service-learning beyond their initial semester or two with the strategy.

Workshops can take a variety of forms. Informal workshops can include events like brown bag lunches and meet-and-greets with community agencies while formal workshops focus on achieving specific outcomes. Other trainings are often available through professional associations, conferences, and fellowships.

Strategies for Retention
- mentoring
- workshops
- learning communities
- resource libraries
- professional organizations
- professional conferences
- fellowships

Learning communities can be organized within a school or across institutions, like Wisconsin Campus Compact's Technical College Community of Practice (Minnesota Campus Compact also hosts communities of practice). Members can exchange ideas, troubleshoot common problems, develop plans, and share resources. Learning communities can be formal or informal. Institutions can organize service-learning committees or cohort-based programs that bring together both current service-learning faculty and other community-engagement-minded people on campus to discuss their projects, strategize for how to institutionalize community engagement, and

troubleshoot common issues. These groups could also organize book clubs, article study groups, or facilitated discussions.

Considerations for Technical Colleges

There are a number of obstacles to service-learning that are specific to or particularly problematic for technical colleges. The chart below isolates a few common problems for faculty and solutions.

Faculty may envision a unique service-learning opportunity that cannot be done without funding. There are a number of possibilities for securing funding. Depending on the size and scope of the project, faculty may find writing grants to be the best chance to receive funding for the project. When available, requests for proposals are listed on the websites of the Corporation for National and Community Service, EPIC-N, and Campus Compact. Faculty can also seek funding or in-kind support from local businesses or their local or national unions.

Another concern for technical colleges is onboarding and then losing faculty who may teach for a limited number of years. Based on the value added for instructors who use service-learning, staff should consider service-learning a strategy for professional development and faculty retention.

For example, newer faculty may be surprised by the repetitive nature of the work, teaching the same few courses every year. New instructors "often fail to realize that they will have little time to pursue more specialized academic interests, and this can lead to a kind of intellectual estrangement from the discipline" (Murray, 2007, 61). Technical college staff can introduce service-learning as a way to re-engage with the field or experiment with new teaching strategies that directly connect learning with real-world problem-solving. Because nonprofits are continually overcoming challenges and refining their programs, they offer consistently evolving programs and fresh problems.

In Dee's (2004) study on retention in urban community colleges, he found that a school's support for innovation had the strongest effect on faculty turnover intent, suggesting that colleges should "target innovation as a vehicle for enhancing institutional faculty retention rates" (603).

Staff promoting service-learning can bring this retention value to campus decision-makers in order to propose funding for programs or incentives for service-learning. O'Meara (2013) found that lack of inclusion in the reward system is often a determent for faculty engagement, and improving retention can become part of the pitch for formalizing recognition for using service-learning. Recognition could take the form of tenure and promotion reform, campus awards, fellowships, or one-time financial incentives.

Technical College Barrier	Suggestions	Source
A dichotomy between the liberal arts programs and career and technical training programs	Create shared spaces and develop trainings that pull faculty from both groups.	Jones (2016)
Faculty coming with expertise in a specific content area and little to no background in pedagogy and curriculum design	Have designated service-learning staff or faculty available to answer questions, develop resources, and organize trainings.	Smith (2007)
Concern that students often have jobs and families competing for their out-of class time and resources	Show faculty how to fully integrate SL for maximum value for students and offer solutions like scheduling SL during class time, choosing agencies that are easily accessible, and providing transportation to projects.	Mangan (2015)
Faculty not recognizing the value or relevance of service-learning to their courses.	Expose faculty to success stories from a variety of stakeholders, including students, community partners, and outside experts.	Robinson (2000)
Little or no staff to support service-learning	Membership in learning communities and professional organizations may supplement training. Faculty mentoring or advisory boards can also share best practices. Work with local Volunteer Center or United Way.	Welch (2016)

Conclusion

There are many ways for technical colleges to support the implementation of service-learning in their programs and provide continued support for engaged faculty. Some methodologies are appropriate across higher education while others spring from technical colleges' particular circumstances and considerations. Through the methods described in the paper, staff should be empowered to cultivate service-learning on their campuses, giving students rich, hands-on learning experiences.

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