

Service Learning Initiative Partnership Progress Report

Submitted by Jessica Dutille 12/4/13

As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding among Granite United Way, Plymouth State University, and Pemi Youth Center, the priorities of the partnership include:

1. sustainability for an important community resource, the Pemi Youth Center
2. offering an opportunity for more PSU students to become involved in comprehensive service learning experience
3. providing the non-profit community with a stronger system from support when working with PSU students within their agencies
4. strengthening our future community leaders by exposing students to intentional experiences that broaden their understanding of community issues, develop compassion, and build skills for evaluating and implementing complex solutions

Below are some highlights of the work to date the supports our progress in the priorities outlined above.

1. The Pemi Youth Center (PYC) was able to hire a part-time Site Director, Chris Mohan. Chris has been a staff member with PYC in the past, which made for a seamless transition into his new role. He is responsible for program planning and implementation. Chris meets the qualifications for "Site Director" status under the PYC State License, so that the program is not in jeopardy in the event that Executive Director, Jessica Dutille is not on site.

PYC is currently engaging 4 PSU Federal Work Study students, and 14 PSU service learning students and volunteers. This number of PSU students engaged at PYC is consistent with the 2012-13 academic year. PSU staff members meet on a weekly basis to reflect on their work and receive training. The PSU Art Collaborative, the Marketing Association of Plymouth State (MAPS), and the Plymouth State Social Work Club are also engaged in assisting with programming and events.

PYC is currently serving an average of 15-20 youth per day, which is slightly more than last year at this time. In the past three months, PYC welcomed 11 new youth participants to the program, 7 of which are coming from the Hunter School. The quality and integrity of the PYC after school program has not suffered, and Jessica continues to focus on ensuring that all youth who participate at PYC feel supported and loved.

2. In addition to the 18 PSU students engaging at PYC, Jessica has developed a draft framework that will support the many other PSU students engaging throughout the broader community. This work has included an audit of the current state of service learning at PSU, as well as the development of the Engaged Learning Flowchart. This flowchart is currently being developed as an online tool that will enable faculty members, students, and community partners to identify what type of engaged learning experiences they are offering and or participating in and will indicate which office on campus to contact for support.

Jessica has been working with Professor Maria Sanders of the History and Philosophy Department in regards to service learning opportunities for her students. Jessica connected Maria with Joyce Palmer from G UW and Lisa Ford from the UNH Cooperative Extension to discuss connections to the community gardens project. In addition, Jessica put Maria in contact with Amy Yeakel from the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center to explore possibilities there as well.

Jessica has collaborated with faculty members, community members, and students to develop more effective engaged learning opportunities at PSU, and to identify areas of growth and dreams for the future. This work will be ongoing and will lead to a service-learning database.

3. Jessica has developed draft service learning forms to be used across campus and with all community partners, with the goal of streamlining the process for partners, faculty, and students. In developing the framework for service learning, we are mindful of reducing the burden of multiple application and evaluation forms for partners, and simplifying the process. Jessica has also worked on putting together an Academic Service Learning Handbook to be used by faculty, students, and community partners that outlines the pedagogy of service learning and provides best practices and resources.

A Service Learning Initiative Team was developed to assist in guiding the work of the partnership. Members of this team: Joyce Palmer (G UW), Thad Guldbrandsen (PSU), Kathy Kearns (Circle Program, Community Partner), Chief Stephen Lefebvre (PYC Board, Community), Dan Moore (PSU faculty), Kendra Makos (PSU student), Monica McKeon (PSU student), and Jessica Dutille (PYC/PSU). The team met for the first time on November 14th.

4. In recognizing that our students need to be prepared to engage in the community, we are working on developing training for all service-learning students. Jessica has met with Jim Kuras, the PSU Career Services Manager about offering such training and what components should be included to build professionalism, develop leadership, and inspire cultural competence.