



## Humanities House Integrated Service Project

Committee members:

Brandon Patterson, ISP Leader, Service Learning Scholar

Liz Leckie, Assistant Dean, College of Humaniti

Meredith Larrabee, Assistant Residential Education Coordinator, Housing and Residential Education

Sally Tran, Residential Advisor, Bennion Service House

JaNae Lilly, Service-Learning Coordinator, Bennion Center

**Table of Contents**

**Abstract..... Pg. 3**  
**Literature Review..... Pg. 4**  
**Procedures..... Pg. 7**  
**Results..... Pg. 8**  
**Reflection..... Pg. 10**  
**Reference Page..... Pg. 12**

**Abstract**

This program thrives to integrate the humanities-centered campus community and mentor/alumni service-centered community through outreach and civic engagement. The program is structured around the Humanities House in Officer's Circle of Housing and Residential Education in partnership with the College of Humanities. One of the house programs of the Humanities House would include a service-component as an annual event inviting faculty and alumni of the college.

## **Literature Review**

College has always provided a rich environment for learning. Students are provided services in both academic and student affairs in order to ensure success. These systems in place for college students are not always utilized and students drop out of college because they do not find their place within the college. Some fairly consistent findings are that students leave college because they do not fit in socially, academically, or economically and they leave because the college was not a good match for their needs (Kelly et al. 2000. p. 1021). It is vital for student success to build program participation and group involvement because studies show that those involved in campus organizations, including volunteer programs, are more likely to stay in school and be more academically and socially successful (p. 1032). This review on the success of college students will look at three main topics: student transition and retention, community service influencing student success, and the role of a Service Day by looking at the Make a Difference Day model.

### **Student Transition and Retention**

The role of service plays an essential part in keeping students in a university setting and providing them with support. Entering college, students are preoccupied with questions about their essential character in much the same way that early-school age children are preoccupied with questions about their origins (Newman et al., 1978). Exposure to organizations on campus allows students to find their essential character while gaining the support of peers. Peer support is an important element in the retention of students. Students seemed to have a much greater effect on the attitudes of other students than did faculty members, and can be considered the primary agents for

socialization in larger institutions (Kelly et al. 2000). A day committed to service can provide students with peer-to-peer support. The idea of being immersed within an organization and having the contact with a student volunteer group in the first few weeks of college can enrich students' experiences and contribute to their success.

Where students live and what year they are in school have an effect on how well students perform in college. Students living on campus were more likely to do better in school while being involved with more student organizations. Where students lived had an effect on the amount of activities that they reported being involved in. Ninety-three percent of those students that lived on-campus reported being involved in one or more club activities, compared to 65% for those who lived off-campus, or 59% for those living in their parent's home (p. 1029). Students tended to be more involved in activities during their freshman year and then become progressively less involved. After the freshman year, it appears that the number of negative influences increased, as evidenced by the majority of sophomores, juniors, seniors and recent graduates reporting that they have experienced more than one negative influence while attending the University (p. 1030).

It is the goal of the Humanities House service component is to revitalize the loss in service engagement in a student's academic career. Designed as a team building program, students will be dependent on the contributions that their community offers. It is important that a student in the College of Humanities finds support within the larger Salt Lake City community so that they can enrich their college experience.

#### Community Service Influencing Student Success

Given that colleges are interested in continuously monitoring student persistence for retention purposes, student involvement with community service learning appears to play an active role and thus have an enduring influence (Caulfield. 2006. p. 18). Service brings about change in people and creates a community that is unlike any other community on a college campus. International service learning programs in particular facilitated "intercultural competence, language skills, appreciation of difference, tolerance of ambiguity, and experiential understanding of complex global problems related to their academic program of study" (p. 18). The learning that is created through service is unique and necessary for students to become liberal thinkers and active citizens.

Students explained in detail that through the community service learning experiences they had a better idea of “future commitments and goals” (p. 20). A goal of Humanities House service day is to provide that future perspective on service and personal growth. A day committed to service not only needs the service piece, but also a piece on reflection and growth. Reflection will work within the Humanities House service piece because it allows students to appreciate the work they have done in their community. Because of their work with the a partner and by gaining insight from staff and community members involved, they have had the opportunity to understand their role within society that can help empower them to devote more of themselves to their studies and what they are passionate about. Students who participate in community service began to more fully examine their values. A second outcome discovered within student interviews was that students participating in service learning experiences commented candidly about the importance of serving society as well as the connections made with the particular community (p. 20).

Of definite interest from a retention point of view were the students’ overall feelings regarding interacting more with college faculty and thus better understanding how they fit within their existing college community (p. 20). Service Day at the Humanities House will provide students will direct contact with faculty that have a passion for service. Their passion can transform student’s drive toward college success. Faculty also provides the role of mentor for students. A day with faculty and peers in doing community service will help students find security while being at a large university.

#### Make a Difference Day Model

The Make a Difference website was an important tool in evaluating the steps necessary to make a day committed to service successful. It provided a viewpoint to the amount of work and dedication that is needed to make an effective one-day service event. Organizing a successful one-day service event takes careful planning (www.makeadifferenceday.com. 2007). It is necessary to develop every step of the process in order to have a smooth day in which everyone can get the most out of the experience.

The Make a Difference Day model has five elements to a successful one-day service event. The first element is community voice. Before one identifies a community service project, one must listen to the voices around them, and voices of the community. Community members can best define what needs to be done since they live there and share a history. Listening to their ideas is essential if people are to build bridges, make changes, and solve problems ([www.makeadifferenceday.com](http://www.makeadifferenceday.com). 2007). Research and asking questions is necessary to identify community voice. For Humanities House service day, community voice is delivered through alumni-centered organizations around Salt Lake City. The second element is orientation and training. Information should be provided for volunteers about the community, the issue, and the agency or community group with whom they are to work. An introduction of the service organization would be necessary in order to learn more about the community in which they are helping.

The third critical element for success is meaningful action. Meaningful Action means that the service being done is necessary and valuable to the community itself. Meaningful Action also makes people feel like what they did make a difference in a measurable way and that their time was well used ([www.makeadifferenceday.com](http://www.makeadifferenceday.com). 2007). The fourth critical step is reflection and learning. After service work is done, it is necessary for volunteers to get together to share their reactions, personal stories, feelings, and facts about the experience. Discussing the day is an opportunity to dispel any stereotypes or ignorance about the group or cause served and get ideas about how to better serve the community in the future. Reflection also provides an opportunity to place the experience in a broader context ([www.makeadifferenceday.com](http://www.makeadifferenceday.com). 2007). Reflection is a piece that will be done at the end of service day through a group activity. The reflection piece will also bring about more student volunteering that often encourages continued community service and involvement within the community. The fifth and final critical element is evaluation. Evaluation measures the impact of the volunteer experience and how effective community service can be. Service participants should evaluate what they learned or experienced as a result of their work. It is also important for agencies to evaluate the results of the volunteers' contribution of time and effort ([www.makeadifferenceday.com](http://www.makeadifferenceday.com). 2007).

The Make A Difference Day model really provides support for the cause and purpose of the Humanities House centered Service Day. The target audience is taking the concept to a smaller scale, looking specifically at students within the Humanities House community. It is important that college students understand the importance of service, not only for the community but also for themselves as students.

### **Procedures**

There is a strong correlation between the amount of service being done throughout the University of Utah and Salt Lake community and that of the College of Humanities. This project encouraged me to find the links between these two entities and form a bond that can be sustained in order to help future generations of humanity-centered learning to focus on the benefits of service. This project also is a structured way to bring about communication among different fields within the College of Humanities, in which it brings people studying history, linguistics, language, communication, English, philosophy, and other programs together in order to discuss the power of civic engagement and the duty to serve the community at hand.

The procedures taken to ensure that this community is not lost among the students of the Humanities House were to do the project this year, to create a systematic guide in which the project could be sustained, and to communicate with partnerships.

### **Results**

#### **Implementing the Project this Year**

As the Humanities House RA, I was responsible for creating programming significant to the house members of the Humanities House community. As part of the mission of Housing and Residential Living (HRE) which states, “[HRE] serves the University community by encouraging, facilitating, and supporting the learning and development of all residents while creating an inclusive and safe living environment”, my role was to actively put into programming what the mission statement enacts. I decided to implement a community service component that would not be a one-time activity but instead act as an ongoing community partnership with the College of Humanities, Humanities House and community service.

As a cohort of house members we participated in a variety of community service activities including Officer's Hollow and Earth Day, both put on by the Service House in the Officer's Circle community. I felt it was important to enact upon the Humanities House community a separate project that would encompass our studies and our dedication to service. A date was planned in mid-April that brought the residents of the Humanities House to that of the outer Salt Lake community, creating a bridge among the two entities. With preparation help from staff in HRE and the College of Humanities, we worked for 2 hours at the Utah Food Bank and then reflected on our experiences. We discussed the social, economic and humanitarian reasons behind needing a food bank in a large city. This helped build relationships among house members and participating peers from the University of Utah. House members were also able to bring in their specific studies to better their arguments. This also created a dialogue among members of the community about their studies.

#### Creating a guide

In order to provide an easy transition among RAs in charge of the service project, a transition guide is provided. This will not only guide the RA in charge of the Humanities House into the project, but also the AREC in charge of the Officer's Circle and the Assistant Dean in the College of Humanities. This provides support for the RA and guidance for incoming positions in both the College of Humanities and Housing and Residential Education.

The Transition Guide was split up into 7 steps. These include the steps of setting up goals as a house, brainstorming ideas, developing a timeline, day of service, reflection, appreciation and acknowledgement and archiving and planning. Each step is important for the RA in order to sustain the project so that future Humanities House community members can experience the project. This guide is also made in hopes that the project will grow each year. Eventually, the project can include more faculty, alumni and College of Humanities involvement.

#### Communicating with partners

The largest part of this project is the communication aspect in building relationships among the College of Humanities community, Housing and Residential

Education community and the larger Salt Lake City community. Constant communication in the role of the RA is necessary in order to ensure the success of the program.

I took an active role in communicating with the different entities on campus. I build a committee that helped me develop the different entities of the project. Constant communication on the part of verbal and electronic was needed to clarify messages given to the partnerships. Another important communication aspect was organization. It was important to organize the vision of the project in order for the whole of the communities to understand what their role in the project was. The Salt Lake City community partner, who was the Utah Food Bank in my case, was able to go over their mission statement and purpose which acted as a reminder to the vision and how it affected our smaller community. In reflecting on the service, the Humanities House community better understood the reasoning behind service and also grew together as a house.

### **Reflection**

By doing this project, I have appreciated the importance that my studies in the College of Humanities have helped in fostering a greater awareness of the inner-workings of the community, how to communicate and work within different networks.

The communication in which is fostered among the groups of individuals associated with the process brings about great learning for both the undergraduate students and the community members. Through discussions of interdisciplinary subjects, the students and community members are able to expand upon their knowledge to broaden their educational capacity. This correlates that the University of Utah “encourages interdisciplinary work” as stated by the Teaching portion of the mission statement. In a sense, communication is what drives the project to be successful. It is through the understanding of the culture of the Humanities House environment and the outside alumni environment that create a source for discussion and change. Through the RA’s vital role, he or she is invited to take part in challenges presented by communication. Noise, failure, failure to plan early and other distractions are bound to get in the way of the RA’s goal of integrating service annually into the house, but if these

problems can be solved, the RA will ultimately gain a better understanding of the house community.

This project brings conscious awareness to the larger community that encompasses the Humanities House. It is the goal of this project to gain momentum every year and to include more alumni/faculty and student involvement. The interdisciplinary discussions will encourage the house to foster more learning and community engagement. The interworking idea behind the service project is ultimately to get members of the Humanities House to gain access into the larger network of the College of Humanities and the community. This will create outreach that can expand upon the borders of the college and thrive to be a campus-wide initiative for the goal of gaining community access through service.

I see this project as growing immensely and was hopeful to make it bigger this year as the initial year for the program to begin. Due to setbacks and trials, I was unable to make it to what the vision implies, but my hope is that within the transition information, future community members can build upon the idea to make a significant change within the community of the Humanities House. My biggest hurdle this year was the inability to encompass a Service Day on campus without taking away from the Bennion Center's annual Lowell Bennion Day of Service. The ideas were too similar. I instead tried to focus on a smaller community, first trying to encompass the Union but then found that task too difficult to handle for one individual. I then approached Liz Leckie in the College of Humanities and decided to incorporate the Humanities House community with the project. Time was an issue that made it difficult to instill the original vision into the project. I instead focused on the smaller picture that fit within the vision in hopes to see the program grow.

The University of Utah has a great network of community partners who create change among the Salt Lake Community and beyond in spectrums around the world. University of Utah undergraduate students, specifically those in the College of Humanities, have a great amount of resource available to them to network and better understand their studies through the use of integrated service and discussion. It is through the integrated service component of the residential education community that this fostering community begins to grow. In developing a network among partnerships, connections are made that bridge a community that may otherwise be forgotten.

## References

- Caulfield, T. (2006, April). Community Service: Influencing Retention and Social Responsibility. Community College Journal 76. 18-20
- Evelyn, Jamilah. (2004, December 3). Community Colleges Struggle to Foster 'Engagement,' Survey Finds. The Chronicle of Higher Education.
- Kelly et al. (2007). Strategies for Student Transition to College: A Proactive Approach. College Student Journal 41. 1021-1035.
- "Make a Difference Day." Make a Difference Day. 2007. USA Weekend. 19 Feb 2008  
<<http://www.usaweekend.com/diffday/index.html>>.
- Newman, P.R., Newman, B.M., & Sage, R. (1978). Identity formation and the college experience. Adolescence 13. 311-326