Creating a Scale for Service:
The Volunteer UCF Continuum

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a model that is based on Eyler and Giles’ Five Elements of Citizenship, where students learn about Volunteer UCF through marketing strategies, participate in one-time service or educational events, and then pursue continuous involvement based on their positive experiences. Students transition to leadership roles by serving on a social topic committee and move up to social topic director managing their own committee. Some students aspire to be an administrative student leader and incorporate large-scale institutional projects and events. The final stage for students is committing to lifelong community engagement opportunities post-graduation. The results will inform where the touch points are at the higher education institution, so administrators can apprise bureaucracy and cultural barriers to help students progress through the scale for service within the continuum.

KEYWORDS

Community Engagement, Service-Learning, Student Development, Student Involvement

INTRODUCTION

Research projects focusing on student development are mostly psychologically based and provide information for faculty and student affairs practitioners. Typology theorists (Astin, Holland, & Myers-Briggs) focus on characteristics of the individual and the environment and the interaction between the two constructs, such as whether the student is more of an academic or social type. Researchers using these frameworks use physical, sociological, or perceptual measures of the campus environment (Sage, 2003).

This article examines several theories including Astin’s Involvement Theory, Eyler and Giles’ Five Elements of Citizenship, and Break Away’s Active Citizenship Continuum to inform the Volunteer UCF Continuum. The paper shifts to the demonstration of these theories into practice at the University of Central Florida (UCF) and illustrates how the Volunteer UCF (VUCF) operates from the perspective of these theories. These theories parallel the structure of the Volunteer UCF Continuum and align with each of the components. Elements from the VUCF Continuum are not unique to UCF and can be replicated across institutions of higher learning. This paper highlights the theories that are used in...
the continuum, discusses the Volunteer UCF agency and the features of the SGA-funded agency, and examines the VUCF Continuum in depth – corresponding to the community engagement literature and the Eyler and Giles’ Five Elements of Citizenship theory.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this article is to justify the various service-learning programs at UCF, based on existing literature. The Volunteer UCF Continuum analysis illustrates the features of the continuum for simulation within various co-curricular student involvement and student affairs units – offices, centers, or agencies that are at different colleges and universities – thus creating a scale for service.

Theoretical Perspectives

Involvement Theory

Two measures of college experience include the amount of time and energy students put into their coursework and other on-campus educational opportunities, and an institution’s use of resources to create opportunities for student learning and involvement (Truitt, 2013). According to Astin (1999), student involvement is defined as the quality and quantity of the psychological and physical energy students invest in their college experience. Student involvement examples include being absorbed in one’s academic work, extracurricular activity participation, as well as interaction with faculty and institutional leaders.

There are five main pillars that stem from the student involvement foundation. First, involvement is a dedication of time and resources in various objects – it may be generalized as the student experience, or specifically identified, such as preparing for a statistics exam. Second, regardless of objective, involvement can occur a continuum. Students reveal various degrees of involvement in any given object while the same student exhibits different degrees in different objects at different times of involvement. Astin explains that involvement has both qualitative and quantitative structures that are measurable in pillar three. Pillar four states that the quantity of personal development and student learning that is associated with educational programming is proportional to that quantity and quality of that student’s involvement in the program. The final pillar states that the effectiveness of educational practice and/or policy is related to the capacity of said practice and policy. Astin’s pillars provide educators a design tool for operative learning environments both in and outside of the classroom and elucidate concepts from decades of research on student development. Development Theory states that the greater students are involved in college, the greater the amount of personal development and student learning that occurs (Astin, 1999).

One such involvement includes community engagement. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), approximately seventy-five percent of students who participate in curricular and co-curricular service-learning experiences in high school are more likely to participate in community service and service-learning activities when they reach college. These experiences produce a wide array of civic competencies such as diversity, social justice, democracy, and transformative learning (Cox, Murray, & Plante, 2014; Murray, Plante, Cox, & Owens, 2015). Involved students continue serving community and community engagement after graduating from college.

Five Elements of Citizenship Model

Eyler and Giles (1999) utilized findings from their studies of service-learning students to develop *The Five Elements of Citizenship*. This student development model described the steps students’ progress through as they gain civic competence and stated, “The personal, interpersonal, and intellectual development outcomes prepare students for active participatory citizenship. Service-learning provides an ideal environment for connecting these disparate elements of student development into effective citizenship development” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 157).
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