Community Driven Student Leadership: The DOCE Approach

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Abstract:
Universities and the communities in which they reside must maintain an interdependence to thrive. The USM LAC Druker Office of Community Engagement (DOCE) follows a unique model of student-faculty collaborative leadership to model how public universities can partner with their communities. Developing long-lasting community-university relationships holds mutual benefits. DOCE connects students, faculty and staff with over 90 community partners. As a synergetic cooperative team, we believe community engagement is essential in the growth and learning of the whole student, faculty and staff of USM.

Our recent Community-Based Participatory Research (CPBR) works in integrating the classes and curriculum of the Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) with the everyday issues of our surrounding community and the development of creative ways to meet various needs. Keeping the students' interests and professors’ syllabi in mind, we link students to appropriate partners and help ease the stress of making that new connection.

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What we do:
Here at the University of Southern Maine in Lewiston, we understand that increasing relationships is crucial in establishing one’s self in a community. We take pride in connecting students and faculty to community partners. Our professors know that coursework can be coordinated with the partners. The Druker Office of Community Engagement has developed relationships and continuity across the Social Behavioral Studies, co and curricular content.

Why we do it:
- Driven by a vision for the community need
- To gain deeper access to our community, including within the University of Southern Maine
- Connecting policy to the larger picture
- Focused on Community capacity building. We strive to make it better.
- We understand that wealth and power are not the most effective ways to bring a community closer
- Faculty needs the students’ voice

Our goals:
- Integrative Knowledge
- Engaged Relationships
- Student Success
- Sustainability
- Individual Development

Our partners:
- Trinity Jubilee Center
- LearningWorks
- Advocate for Children
- Tree Street Youth
- Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine
- Public Gardens
- Local organizations

Acknowledgements/Resources:
DOCE would like to thank the Faculty, Staff, and Students at USM for allowing us to experience the benefits of true collaborative community engagement. Our time spent at the DOCE has given all of us a new perspective on the benefits of tactile learning and working in diverse teams.

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