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Community Driven Student Leadership: The DOCE Approach

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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.

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



We are a team. We work collaboratively. We are equals.

Our goals:



Some of our partners:



Who we are:



Process to Success:

- The key to diversity is the ability to feel safe and to trust one another, inside and out of the work environment
- Monolithic team model is outdated and suboptimal, especially within a diverse community where race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, socio-economic, age, and ability are key client demographics
- Our diverse team had to understand their own agendas, biases and perspectives before assisting clients
- DOCE quickly learned that our differences is what made us a strong and knowledgeable team
- DOCE utilized a non-hierarchical, team-focused leadership style which maximized collaboration

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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