

Community Colleges Broadening Horizons through Service Learning, 2009-2012

BY GAIL ROBINSON

The goals of *Community Colleges Broadening Horizons through Service Learning*, supported by Learn and Serve America and administered by the American Association of Community Colleges, are to build on established foundations to integrate service learning into the institutional climate of community colleges and to increase the number, quality, and sustainability of service learning programs in colleges nationwide.

Service learning combines community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility. Service learning programs involve students in activities that address local needs while developing their academic skills and commitment to their communities. AACCC's *Horizons* project promotes the value of service learning not only to students and faculty, but also to college administrators and community members.

The *Horizons* project features model programs and national data collection and dissemination. In addition, *Horizons* provides professional development opportunities and technical assistance through regional workshops on service learning and civic engagement, chief academic officer summits, mentoring, presentations, publications, web-based resources, and a consultant referral service.

Eight colleges were selected in 2009 to become *Horizons* mentor colleges. They represent rural, suburban, and urban areas, and have student populations as small as 3,000 and as large as 24,000. The *Horizons*

mentor colleges are expanding their existing service learning programs by focusing on social media and environmental education.

Over the course of three years, each mentor college partners with up to four community-based organizations or K-12 schools. Besides providing meaningful service learning opportunities for college students, these partnerships strengthen the capacity of the organizations to meet their clients' needs by building deeper, long-term reciprocal faculty/partner relationships.

Experienced practitioners from the eight mentor colleges provide hands-on assistance, advice, and training to 16 *Horizons* mentee colleges from 2010 through 2012. The mentor colleges also participate in a longitudinal study evaluating the impact of service learning on student retention and persistence and on community partner outcomes.

Horizons Mentor Colleges

Anne Arundel Community College, MD
Brookhaven College, TX
Community College of Vermont, VT
Glendale Community College, CA
Lorain County Community College, OH
Queensborough Community College, NY
Salt Lake Community College, UT
Western Piedmont Community College, NC

Horizons Mentor Colleges: No Child Left Inside

No Child Left Inside (NCLI) is a national movement supporting environmental education, environmental literacy, conservation, outdoor recreation, public health, and a green economy.

The NCLI coalition of 1,600 local, state, and national organizations supports hands-on learning—particularly in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields—to advance education and address attention deficit disorder and childhood obesity.

NCLI Projects

AACC's No Child Left Inside college programs assist with after-school and weekend programs for children and families; provide outdoor programs for children with disabilities; plant community gardens to feed low-income residents; and focus on environmental education, alternative energy, and green programs that benefit local economies.

Some NCLI college students work with children from low-income families who are unable to afford health care or child care, or who need instruction in making healthy meals on limited finances.

NCLI Participants

Key NCLI local partner organizations include food banks, parks, county agriculture extension offices, local Audubon societies, YWCAs, Head Start programs, and K-12 schools, including early-college high schools.

Service learners include students from agriculture, early childhood education, engineering, health, horticulture, nursing, nutrition, physical education, science, social science, and therapeutic recreation courses.

The NCLI mentor colleges are paired with four mentee colleges for the 2010-2011 academic year, and four additional mentee colleges for the 2011-2012 academic year.



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Horizons Mentor Colleges: New Media Leaders



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New Media Leaders (NML) colleges assist community-based organizations with volunteer recruitment, retention, and resource sharing to address economic downturn issues affecting individuals in their communities.

NML projects help these organizations network and share scarce resources to address the economic crisis and more efficiently serve their clients.

NML Projects

Students selected as New Media Leaders conduct needs assessments and create Web 2.0 strategies (e.g., blogs, podcasts, wikis, and social networking) to help non-profit organizations maximize human resources and respond to community needs. They also serve as on-site leaders for other service learners from their colleges and train agency staff in using new media.

By developing innovative web-based projects and reducing reliance on printed materials and face-to-face meetings, service learners help save the nonprofits money, contribute to a greener environment, and build career skills.

NML Participants

Key NML community partners include centers for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities, youth services centers, food banks, homeless shelters, career development agencies, community gardens, food co-ops, elementary schools, and a wellness center for patients with cancer and their families.

Service learners include students from business, communication, community development, computer technologies, English, environmental technology, history, human services, and political science courses, as well as co-curricular student leadership programs.

The NML mentor colleges are paired with four mentee colleges for the 2010-2011 academic year, and four additional mentee colleges for the 2011-2012 academic year.

WEB RESOURCES

American Association of Community Colleges
www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning

Campus Compact
www.compact.org

Center for Information and Research on
Civic Learning and Engagement
www.civicyouth.org

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health
www.ccph.info

Community College National Center for
Community Engagement
www.mesacc.edu/engagement

Corporation for National and Community Service
www.nationalservice.gov

Effective Practices Information Center
www.nationalserviceresources.org

International Association for Research on
Service-Learning and Community Engagement
www.researchslce.org

International Partnership for
Service-Learning and Leadership
www.ipsl.org

Learn and Serve America
www.learnandserve.gov

National Service Inclusion Project
www.serviceandinclusion.org

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
www.servicelearning.org

President's Higher Education
Community Service Honor Roll
www.learnandserve.gov/honorroll

United We Serve
www.serve.gov and www.servir.gov

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