Service-Learning Veterans (Website) Project
Developed by Prof. Walt Ellis, H.C.C. Dale Mabry

Description: Service-Learning courses couple meaningful community service with classroom instruction. Given the controversies of the Iraq war, the professor sought to create a service-learning activity that would help students find common ground through awareness of veterans’ issues. A multi-semester Service-Learning project was developed in which sociology students contacted both college and community veterans’ organizations and interviewed veterans to determine what services could be improved. Many veterans expressed difficulty in accessing medical and educational benefits. In response, the students created a “Veterans” webpage within the college website to address these needs. This multi-page site contains detailed information, including numerous links to government websites for educational/medical benefit forms and information. This project greatly enhanced HCC’s ability to serve veterans, while also helping sociology students increase civic participation, improve interpersonal skills, and gain “real-life” understanding of sociological issues discussed in the textbook and the classroom.

Criteria – meets the following six criteria.

Quality: quantitative data analysis from student surveys during this multi-semester Service-Learning project indicated strong support for an increase in educational effectiveness, i.e., helped students integrate classroom material into real life behavior; Service-Learning Directors Dr. Bill Day and Dr. Cynthia Hawkins have provided strong letters of support and recommendation; 2008 Graham-Frey Civic Award acknowledges this project; Vice-President of Student services, Dr. Ken Ray and campus Deans of Students acknowledged contribution of website to Student Services and Veterans Advisors (Representatives) in college-wide Deans’ meeting, Summer, 2007; various HCC student veterans acknowledge usefulness of website and in addition, through an announcement on the website, an HCC Veterans’ Club has now been formed and will assist veterans at the college, as well as keep the website up to date.

Efficiency: objective student surveys and subjective reflection papers indicated this Service-Learning project helps with learning course material; college Deans and Assistant Deans indicate the website definitely helps with Veteran advising; website approved by State Veterans Advisor.

Cost Effectiveness: HCC Veteran Advisors/Representatives had been over-whelmed by requests for advising and website helps reduce workloads and “wait-time” for veteran students, thereby allowing Vet Advisors/Representatives to be more effective.

Replication: Other colleges are welcome to utilize and adapt the website without restriction.

Creativity: students researched other community colleges in the state and found that very few had a Veterans webpage listing educational benefit information, much less medical benefit information. Rocky McPherson, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs, personally stated to Prof. Ellis that the webpage was a major need at community colleges and most did not have it. HCC Veterans’ webpage has more than just education benefits information and forms. It also has more than 75 links to various veteran health care sites and other service organization sites, as well as an “events” page and other pertinent information.

Timeliness: project began investigating veterans’ needs in Spring 2004; website up and running by the end of Fall, 2005; revised and completed in Spring 2006 (project completion = 2 years); website under current revision by HCC Veterans’ Club.