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Service as *E-ducare*
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The word "education" originated from the Latin word *e-ducare*, meaning "To bring out from within" ("Welcome to the Educare Institute"). This ancient educational philosophy of "bringing out from within," practiced by teachers such as Socrates, carries through to modern times. Professors and other faculty now practice this philosophy at most colleges and universities. One way modern colleges and universities, including Roger Williams University, apply this philosophy to modern day education is by offering and implementing service opportunities, encouraging students to bring out their underlying skills to help others. But how can universities best draw out from within the talents and gifts of individual students in service projects? How can students realize how their abilities can best contribute to a specific service opportunity? If it is important that students' skills and talents are drawn on in service projects, then projects created by students' own initiatives or with student involvement are more likely to be successful, because the service will bring out students' underlying talents—their own unique, individual gifts.

The quality of a service project can be increased if students have direct influence on the direction of the project itself, bringing to the project each student's own skills and talents. Team service projects serve as examples of how the quality of a project can be improved because of the active participation of all involved parties. As a longtime 4-H Envirothon Team member, and now a coach, I have participated in yearly service projects devised by the five-member team. The Envirothon program is a high-school competition designed to educate students in many aspects of natural resources, including soils, water, forestry, wildlife, and current issues. Many teams plan and carry out research and community service projects related to a current issue as an additional part of the team's yearly experience. After thorough consideration of aspects of the current issue, my 4-H Envirothon team participated in community service projects each year. For example, a recent current issue was "Strengthening Our Local Food Systems." For this issue, the team researched local farms and sustainable agricultural methods and then planned, prepared and implemented a four-week educational program at a local farm to educate the public about sustainable farming methods, economic stresses of small farms, and interactions between farms and the surrounding environment.

The five team-members, including myself, all participated in at least one education session. Because I was very actively involved in the planning process and had done most of the activities before, I was able to assist with organization on the days of the actual project and led many of the activities with which I had become familiar. My underlying skill of organization was drawn out by participation in the project. Another team member, Brittney, who was very interested in computer graphics and publicity, made posters, put together a newspaper article, and spread the word about the program in the community. She was able to use her skills to contribute to an important part of this service project. Paul, another team member who loves art, led an activity using flower petals to paint. This activity taught about alternative uses of flowering plants, including art, medicinal purposes, and food. Paul is very shy about sharing his art skills, so this project allowed him to draw out those skills to share with others.

However, two other team members, Kelly and Jesse, were not able to participate much in the research and planning. Though Kelly and Jesse attended the education programs, the program did not effectively draw out their unique skills. If Kelly and Jesse had been involved in the planning from the beginning, and if the rest of the team had continued to value their input, then the overall quality of the program could have been improved with the additions of Kelly and Jesse's skills. For example, Kelly is a wonderful conversationalist. However, this project did not include opportunities for her to speak with the public in a way that would enhance the quality of the program. Jesse has an interest in engineering, but again, this interest was not brought out in the program. A topic such as farm machinery may have drawn upon his knowledge. As in the example of Kelly's and Jesse's involvement in our education project, if students are involved in the initial stages of planning projects at Roger Williams University, and if the students and faculty value each other's input, then the quality of service projects could also be improved.

When an individual feels as though he or she has a voice in the planning of a project, he or she is more

12

likely to be sympathetic and have a more positive attitude towards the project itself. This logic can be applied to some projects that may not be considered "service." Recently I attended a workshop about wind power at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and the speaker, Melissa Ray Elkinton, noted that members of a community, when considering whether or not to favor a wind turbine in their town, often feel that the turbines are "more beautiful" or "have a positive attitude" towards the turbines if they play an active part in the "planning process from the beginning." The attitude of members of the community is analogous to the participation and attitude of college students to service projects.

Consider the hypothetical project of the organization and implementation of an educational, action-oriented day of sharing knowledge and raising awareness about alternative energy. Students from departments such as engineering, architecture, and natural science may have active participation in the project from the beginning and contribute a wide range of input on technical and scientific aspects of alternative energy because the topic is of direct relevance to their area of interest. Conversely, students from departments such as theater, creative writing, or education may not feel as interested and excited about the project because they don't know much about the technical aspects of alternative energy and feel that they have nothing to offer. But if an active effort is made to include students who have an ambivalent or even negative attitude towards the project from the beginning, these students may find ways that they can contribute. For example, the theater students could put on a skit related to the topic to add a different dimension to the day, or creative writing students could put together writings about the cultural and aesthetic impacts of alternative energy sources. Education students could display an exhibit illustrating the connection of alternative energy to environmental science in the classroom. If these students are included from the beginning, they could have an overall more positive attitude towards the service and hence increase the service's quality.

Active discussion about service is currently a large emphasis of the Roger Williams University community, concurring with the University's mission of "commitment to community service" ("Mission Statement"). As this discussion continues, in light of the above-mentioned situations, the success and quality of the discussions and service opportunities themselves can be greatly improved with active participation of students. Students have much to offer and service that brings out from within each student's underlying skills is the service that will truly make a lasting impact on students and the community.

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13