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## Do 2 with VCU: A Community Engagement Initiative


Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University

Ashlyn Anderson  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Kimberly Brown  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University; Ashlyn Anderson; Kimberly Brown; Harinder Dhindsa; Ronnie Evans; and Mary Slade

## TEAM LEADING EDGE

### Do 2 With VCU: A Community Engagement Expo

#### TEAM MEMBERS

Ashlyn H. Anderson, Director of Discovery Advising

Kimberly N. Brown, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

Harinder S. Dhindsa, Associate Professor, Chief of Emergency Services Operations

Ronald K. Evans, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Health and Human Performance

Mary L. Slade, Executive Director of VCU Aspire

*Project Sponsor: Lynn Pelco, Associate Vice Provost of Community Engagement*

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Do 2 with VCU** will be a day-long Expo highlighting volunteer activities and opportunities with up to 100 community partners. VCU faculty and staff will be encouraged to collaborate with these community partners by using their 16 hours of community service leave provided by VCU. The Expo will culminate with a Keynote Speaker for this inaugural event. This year we have selected author and activist, Elaine Brown; she will deliver an address on the importance of community activism and service which will be marketed to the greater Richmond area. This project was designed around Theme IV of the VCU Quest for Distinction: "Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact."

#### PROJECT GOALS

1. Sponsor a Community Engagement Expo with 80 community partners.
2. Host an Inaugural Event Keynote Speaker, Elaine Brown, who will speak on community activism and service.
3. Increase the number of VCU Faculty and staff utilizing their community service leave hours, developing service learning courses, and participating in community-engaged research activities.

We hope that by fulfilling these goals, **Do 2 With VCU** will positively contribute to the VCU Quest for Distinction and the on-going efforts of VCU and our community partners in focus areas including education, access to healthcare, and economic development.

#### STRATEGIES

Our approach consisted of analyzing the current university efforts with respect to the Sweet 16 program, extant service learning programs and other community engagement activities. We then contacted Human Resources on both the Monroe Park and Health System campuses to determine which employees would be eligible for the annual 16 hours of community service leave. With this information, we then brainstormed the best way to raise awareness of the program and how to connect faculty and staff with interested community partners.

## **ACTION STEPS**

- Plan a day-long Expo, highlighting the activities and volunteer opportunities of community partners
- Obtain initial lists of potential community partners for the Expo from ASPiRE and the Division of Community Engagement
- Identify approximately 100 community partners
- Send invitations to designated community partners accepting the first 80 to reply affirmatively.
- Strategically market to VCU 12-month faculty, full-time staff, and instructors of service learning courses
- Identify a keynote speaker
- Plan culminating keynote address and market to VCU and the surrounding community

## **TIMELINE**

- May 2013 – Date set and room reserved
- May – September 2013 – Complete event planning
- October – February 2014 – Fundraising for speaker fee
- November 2013 – Send “save the date” to community partners
- January 2014 – Send invitations to community partners
- March 5, 2014 – Host Expo and Inaugural Keynote Speaker

## **OUTCOMES**

Our team has designed a project that will positively impact VCU and the surrounding communities by increasing participation with service-focused groups. Our team will accomplish our goal of developing and planning an event that will contribute to the utilization of the community service leave hours by VCU faculty and staff. Additionally, we will increase awareness of service learning opportunities for interested faculty as well as possible partners for community-engaged research opportunities.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

After the inaugural launch of the exposition, it is envisioned that the project will be most suited to reside with the Division of Community Engagement, given the nature and scope of the project. It is the opinion of our Team that the required resources will be minimal compared to the potential benefits for VCU and the surrounding community. Additionally, VCU Human Resources has agreed to contribute personnel to the inaugural event to provide interested faculty with information related to the use of community service leave hours. We are hopeful that all VCU units involved will see the importance of this event and continue to contribute additional resources in subsequent years.

## **RESOURCES**

This project will require resources to include use of exhibit space at the University Commons for the Expo, and catering for the community partners that will be highlighting their organizations. Additionally, funding will be required for AV and computer support to be used during the Expo for three laptop computers. For the inaugural speaker, Elaine Brown, funding will be required for her travel, lodging and speaker’s fee.

Budget estimate:

Food for Exhibitors	\$400
Promoting the event	\$300
Equipment Rental (Laptops)	\$200
Video Development	\$100
Keynote Speaker	\$10,000 (variable based on speaker)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$11,000</b>

Several academic and administrative units at VCU are being approached to contribute resources for this event. It is thought that this proposed cost-sharing model is a unique and positive feature that will increase the likelihood that the project will continue to exist and thrive. Pooling the resources of several VCU units has the potential to provide the greatest amount of benefit with a more manageable investment from those involved.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Team Leading Edge would like to see this project result in a significant increase in both the number of faculty and staff participating in community engaged activities and the total number of community engagement hours that VCU provides to the surrounding communities. Next steps for the project after this inaugural launch will include continuous marketing and awareness of the opportunities through the Office of Community Engagement so that the initiative continues to gain momentum in the years ahead. In 2012, of the 4772 eligible VCU employees, 1327 (27.8%) utilized their 16 hours of community service leave and completed 13,964 volunteer hours. At this same rate, with 100% participation, VCU faculty and staff have the potential to contribute over 50,000 hours of service each year to the local community. Team Leading Edge hopes that these efforts will translate into a 15% increase in the number of faculty and staff utilizing their community service leave hours and a 15% increase in the total number of community service hours logged. This initial goal would result in an additional 200 participants and 2000 additional community service hours.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This project was chosen as a way to contribute to the specific goals of VCU's Quest for Distinction as well as to strengthen partnerships with groups in the community that are improving the lives of others. We are very excited about the impact of increasing the engagement of VCU Faculty and staff with our community partners. The Expo will highlight the many opportunities available and the Keynote Speaker will help provide awareness of these efforts throughout the greater Richmond community. We are confident that this project is sustainable and will continue to grow in the years ahead.



### **PROCESS OBSERVATIONS**

The VCU Leadership Development Program and the process that our team undertook to develop the proposed project was a valuable learning experience for each of us. First and foremost, we dealt with all of the satisfying, and at times frustrating, aspects of being part of a team. We were fortunate to have a team that was made up of five independent, passionate thinkers each with great ideas to contribute to the tasks at hand. Upon reflection on this process, our team offers the following six lessons learned:

1. Be flexible, Be Patient, Be Real – The reason that most of us are in the VCU Leadership Development Program is because we are at a point in our careers where we are taking on

more administrative responsibilities for our units. As such, we were all very busy with our “day jobs” over the past 8 months while participating in the Institute. We had to be flexible with meeting times, patient with one another when our primary jobs limited how much time and effort could be put toward our team project, and not be afraid to speak our minds if there was an issue.


2. Step Out of Your Comfort Zone – Whether it was during our brainstorming sessions for our project or during one of the many GEHLI activities (e.g., the ropes course), we all quickly realized that “stepping out of your comfort zone” was a requirement of the program. I think this translated well into our project as the topic that we ultimately chose was not within the area of expertise for most of our team members.
3. Listen and Process – While we each had our own opinions of how a certain aspects of our project should be planned, we feel that the variety of opinions that we offered was a strength of our team. Listening to and processing ideas, no matter how off the mark they may initially seem, is crucial for a team to develop a successful project.
4. Appreciate Differences of Opinion – We each come from different disciplines and backgrounds with a wide variety of life experiences...opinions will differ. The key for any team member is to respect those differences of opinion and not feel threatened by the fact that they are different than the ones you hold.
5. Anything is Possible...If Everyone Wants It – Our team sought to build consensus on all of the major components and issues related to planning our project. Of course there were differences of opinion, but taking time to make sure that everyone was “on board” with the final decision was important to all of us.
6. Keep It Simple – Making simple projects unnecessarily complex is a recipe for failure.

**Team Leading Edge**  
**VCU Leadership Development Institute**




**VCU is an Anchor University for RVA**



**VCU Current Community Engagement Efforts**

- 2 Days of Service Leave for Full-time VCU Staff and Faculty

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Percent Participating	Percent of Potential Hours
<b>27.8%</b>	<b>18.3%</b>

→

**VCU Current Community Engagement Efforts**

- Service-Learning Coursework

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**173** → **3,109**  
**62,180**  
Hours of Service

**VCU Current Community Engagement Efforts**

- Community Engaged Scholarship

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755 IRB Approved Studies  
263 involved Community-Engaged Research

## The VCU Quest for Distinction

### Theme IV

Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact

IV.A – Expand community engaged scholarship and service learning



## VCU Quest for Distinction

- Do 2 with VCU will contribute to The Quest by:
  - “deepening and expanding existing partnerships in the local community”
  - “contributing to VCU being an ‘anchor university’”
  - “serving the urban region to improve the human condition”
  - facilitating “engagement in mutually-beneficial relationships”
  - “embracing our community as critical to the learning, research, and service endeavors of our faculty, staff, and students”

## Our Project

- **Project Components:**
  - Community Engagement Expo
  - Inaugural Event Keynote Speaker



## Community Engagement Expo

- Targeting VCU faculty and staff
- Day long Expo highlighting up to 80 community partners
- VCU Human Resources available to answer questions related to community service leave
- Three computer stations available to provide access to additional community service opportunities (e.g., [Serve.gov](http://Serve.gov), [Allforgood.org](http://Allforgood.org), [Pointsoflight.org](http://Pointsoflight.org))

## Community Engagement Expo

- **Expo Day Schedule**
  - 9-10 AM - Dedicated time for department chairs, directors, division heads to visit the exhibits
  - 10-4 PM – Expo open to all faculty and staff
  - 6-8 PM – Keynote Speaker

## Sustainability

- Easy fit in VCU infrastructure
- Financially sustainable in subsequent years
- Cost sharing model
- Mutually-beneficial event for VCU and our Community Partners



### Potential Partners to Sponsor Speaker

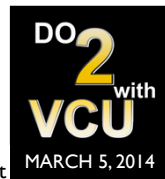
- Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, African American Studies, History, Political Science, and World Studies
- VCU Aspire
- Black Education Association
- Division of Community Engagement
- Honors College

### Leading Edge Team Members

- Ashlyn H. Anderson, MA – Director of Discovery Advising
- Kimberly N. Brown, PhD – Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
- Harinder S. Dhindsa, MD – Associate Professor, Associate Chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine, and Chief of Emergency Services Operations
- Ronald K. Evans, PhD – Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Health and Human Performance
- Mary L. Slade, PhD – Executive Director, VCU ASPIRE
- Lynn Pelco, PhD – Associate Vice Provost of Community Engagement—Our Sponsor

### Team Reflection on Lessons Learned

- Be Flexible, Be Patient, Be Real
- Step out of your comfort zone
- Listen and Process
- Appreciate Differences of Opinion
- Anything is possible....if everyone wants it
- Keep it Simple
- If you Build It (or better yet, Plan It)...they will come We Hope!!



Save the Date – March 5, 2014