Service-Learning High-Impact Practice Mini-Grant Program

Service-Learning High-Impact Practice Mini-Grants are designed to provide funding for courses incorporating service-learning. Service-learning is defined as a method of teaching that includes experiential learning, classroom instruction, and reflection. Typically service-learning courses work in cooperation with a community partner and students engage in at least 10 hours of service during the semester.

Service-learning is considered a “high-impact practice” (HIP), or “an investment of time and energy over an extended period that has unusually positive effects on student engagement in educationally purposeful behavior” (Kuh 2010: vi). A HIP is effective with students because it allows them to interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters; increases the likelihood that students will experience diversity; provides frequent feedback about their performance; offers opportunities for students to see how what they are learning works in different settings, on and off campus; and brings students’ values and beliefs into awareness, helping them to better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world (Kuh 2008: 14-17).

Some common outcomes of service-learning are higher grades, persistence rates, and levels of academic engagement; academic gains (including application of course learning); increases in critical thinking and writing skills; greater interaction with faculty; greater levels of civic behavior, social responsibility, understanding of social justice, and sense of self-efficacy; gains in moral reasoning; greater tolerance and reduced stereotyping; and greater commitment to a service-oriented career (Brownell and Swaner 2010: 48).

Best practices for implementing service-learning as a high-impact practice include:

- Create opportunities for structured reflection.
- Ensure that faculty connect classroom material with the service experience.
- Require enough service hours (i.e., 10-20 hours) to make the experience significant.
- Most importantly, focus on the quality of the service, ensuring students have direct contact with clients.
- Oversee activities at the service site. (Brownell and Swaner 2010: 3)
Purpose

Service-learning HIP mini-grants are to be used for actual expenses associated with service-learning incurred by faculty, community partner, students, and/or a department. Service-learning HIP grant funds may not be used to purchase food or to fund travel for presenting research. The maximum amount allowed for expenses will generally be capped at $500.

Service-learning HIP mini-grant recipients may also be awarded a $500.00 stipend. The stipend will be disbursed after the course ends and the course report along with pre/post student surveys have been submitted to the OCEP.

Criteria

Service-learning HIP mini-grant recipients must be USF faculty or doctoral students teaching a service-learning course. In making awards, preference will be given to applicants who have not already received a service-learning HIP mini-grant during the previous two semesters. Service-learning projects must have an identified community partner whose support is indicated in a letter submitted with the application. The following criteria must be present for a course to be designated as service-learning and funded through this program:

- Syllabus must have clearly stated course learning objectives that connect with the service-learning project.
- Service performed by students must meet direct community need and result in a reciprocal learning relationship with community partner.
- Faculty must provide structured opportunities for students to reflect on their service experiences in order to help them connect service with the learning objectives of the course.
- Require enough direct contact service hours (i.e., 10-20 hours) to make the experience significant.
- Faculty or graduate assistant must provide adequate oversight or supervision of activities at the service site.
- Applicant must show why grant funds are crucial to the successful implementation of the course’s service-learning component.

Deadlines

A maximum of 10 mini-grants will be awarded during the 2017-18 academic year.
- Fall 2017 Deadline: November 15, 2017
- Spring 2018 Deadline: April 6, 2018
References

Kuh, George D.


Brownell, Jayne E., and Lynn E. Swaner