Growing A Group Project: Service Learning in the WOST Classroom

Sadie King-Hoffmann
Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne

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Introduction

Feminism & Food, a 200-level Women’s Studies topics course, was first offered at IPFW in spring 2012. This pilot course required the class to collaborate on a student-developed service learning project. Individual students came together as a team and were able to quadruple their projected fundraising goal for Community Harvest Food Bank, while also raising awareness about healthy eating, local businesses, and feminist activism on campus. The project combined WOST program goals and concepts with the universally accessible topic of food, and students of interdisciplinary backgrounds gained valuable skills and experience in the process.

Methods

The project was developed by the students, in and out of the classroom, using interdisciplinary collaborative efforts with other students, faculty, and campus administrators. Students in the class had a variety of backgrounds and experience, and this diversity enabled the class to unite and work towards a common goal.

- Facebook enabled students to maintain contact and share project ideas outside the classroom, via a private class-specific group.
- In-class groups were used to divide the students into groups that utilized their varied skills: groups included writers, marketers, accountants and networkers.
- Circle discussion allowed the class to come together and brainstorm ideas for smoothie recipes, ingredients, and marketing methods, and ultimately to decide where the funds they raised would be donated.
- Surveys helped the class understand what variety the greater campus community would be willing to purchase, and led to a more targeted and successful sale.
- School policy research was crucial to the success of smoothie preparation; campus rules for preparing food are strict.
- Networking with faculty and administrators on campus and members of the community opened doors to donations and resources.

Results

Primary Course Texts


Additional short readings dealt with topics such as body image, eating disorders, dieting, the intersection of gender roles and cooking, food advertisements, food banking, and the ways feminism can intersect with all of these concepts.