

Title: Putting Higher Education To A Practical Use

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ABSTRACT

Daemen College was founded with a vision and a conviction that the individual can make a difference in the world. The Seneca Babcock Community is physically defined by boundaries that make it literally three blocks wide and eight blocks long. The community is located in Buffalo, NY, and is predominantly Irish. Most of the residence have lived there most of their lives. A community assessment completed by social work majors in the spring of 1999 found that of the estimated 2000 residents, 45% live below the poverty level and 53% of adults have not completed high school. Of the 67 students enrolled in the after school literacy program in the spring of 2001, 60% could not read at grade level when they started.

During the first year of the partnership, P. Hartwick, chair of the Education Department at Daemen College, organized Project Achieve. Its purpose was to remediate the significant reading deficiencies in the neighborhood children and to assist them with homework. In addition, specific seminars on poverty, discipline, and the Wilson Reading Program were presented to the volunteers to help them better work in the community.

Students in various departments enrolled in a course titled Learning Through Service, which has a focal requirement of weekly volunteering at a community-based agency in the area. The goal of the course is to help students gain an appreciation that being of service to others is a way of learning and a way of growing as a person. In Spring 2002 over 100 Daemen students and faculty provided service to the community, including tutoring, supervising recreation activities, working in the preschool program, and organizing specific events. In other semesters, students conducted surveys and provided health information.

Project Achieve is continuing with tutor volunteers and data collecting. The purpose is to assess which methods are most successful in helping students achieve in school (which is not under the umbrella of the partnership.) In addition, it serves as a mechanism for preservice teachers to implement techniques in the real world which were learned in a college classroom.

The presentation discusses how to develop a partnership with a local community, how to network within the college, and how to serve department students at the same time. Other segments will center around how the partnership developed a comprehensive grant application to a local foundation to sustain the initiative and a discussion on the importance of engagement in community service by an IHE.