

NOMINATION FORM

CHE SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT COMPETITION

Institution: Clemson University

Title of Project: Joining Wisdom with Youth Through Bits and Bytes: Computer Skills Development Through Intergenerational Service Learning

Director of Project: Dale Layfield

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Establishment Date of Project: September 2000

Unit That Administers the Project: Biology Instruction
(Formerly Biology Instruction and Agricultural Education)

Total Number of Students Involved: 30 Students

Signature of Institutional President:



PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE Nominated PROJECT (use the space provided or attach sheets)

- 1. For the purpose of this competition, the Commission on Higher Education defines service learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is linked in a direct, hands-on fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside of the institution. Briefly, how does your project meet the parameters of this definition.**

Students in AGRIC/AGED 200 – Agricultural Applications of Microcomputers initiated their service learning activities during the Fall 2000 semester with volunteer residents from Clemson Downs (Clemson Area Retirement Center). The primary objective of this program was to integrate computer-based experiential learning for students in a unique setting where both groups mutually benefit beyond the traditional outcomes of service learning. Many studies have shown that an increasing number of retired Americans are purchasing computers but often have little or no opportunity for in-service. This program meets the needs of many Clemson Downs residents by providing the opportunity for technically savvy college freshman to teach them introductory computer skills. This experience is formally known as Intergenerational Service Learning (ISL). The concept of ISL is defined as “the combination of two distinct educational concepts that involve planned ongoing interactions between younger and older adults that are mutually worthwhile to both.” During a weekly 1.5 hour gathering in a Clemson computer lab, the volunteers are taught specific computer skills. Students are also engaged in problem solving activities as the volunteers are encouraged to discuss various computer-related issues that were creating barriers to use. Each student is responsible for developing instructional plans to teach specific computer skills and seek solutions to common problems.

- 2. Specifically, which segments of the college/university community does your project involve?**

Currently, this program is incorporated into the AGRIC/AGED 200 “Agricultural Applications of Microcomputers” course that primarily serves students in the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences. Many of the students involved in this course are majors in agricultural and extension education and have a need to be engaged in educational activities in a non-formal atmosphere. However, it is not uncommon to have students enrolled in other colleges throughout the Clemson community as the course fulfills a “Computer” requirement needed by all graduates.

- 3. How many students (please specify degree levels to the extent possible) does the project affect?**

In the past all 15 students were equally involved in the program except for the one coordinator that worked in-depth with the Activities Director at Clemson Downs.

This semester, Fall 2002, students have been broken into groups of 4 with specific computer/technology skills assigned to each group and a team leader from each group is coordinating many of the activities.

4. Can you please describe the target community or communities that your project involves?

The target community in this project is residents of the Clemson Downs (Clemson Area Retirement Center) in Clemson, South Carolina. A large sector of residents at Clemson Downs own computers, yet have little access to personalized training.

5. Can you please describe your project's effectiveness in helping to solve the problems or concerns in the target community.

Students involved in this project initially developed a needs assessment and personally visited with residents at Clemson Downs to determine their various computer needs. Previously a formal evaluation was not used to assess the efficacy of the training sessions. However, plans have been developed to assess fulfillment of desired outcomes at the conclusion of the project this semester. Findings from informal communications between the students and the residents indicate a higher use of computers in many new aspects beyond traditional "Web surfing." At the conclusion of a previous semester, the residents expressed their appreciation by hosting an informal "celebration" for the AGRIC/AGED 200 students.

6. Can you please explain the degree to which your project encourages student learning?

As previously mentioned, AGRIC/AGED 200 is a course that fulfills students' "Computer" requirement for graduation. In earning the "C" credit, students must be engaged in learning the Microsoft Windows and the Microsoft Office package as well as various applications that involve the Internet. Many of these skills learned in class provide the substantive basis for the activities with the Clemson Downs residents. While students are teaching their newly learned computer skills, they also develop a greater competence in problem solving. Some examples of feedback from students related to their experiences include – "I learned a lot from this group, and by going over my computer skills with my group I reinforced these computer skills in myself...they made my semester at Clemson a lot more satisfying."

7. Is there academic credit associated with the project (not necessary for submission)? If so, please explain the particulars.

The service learning component of AGRIC 200 has a value of 20% of the students' overall grade. Students were asked to reflect on their experiences weekly using the discussion board of Clemson's Collaborative Learning

Environment (CLE). The CLE is a network-based computer environment that allows students to share digital files among classmates or designated teams and to communicate via synchronous and a-synchronous modes. This activity had a value of 5 percent of the final grade, substantiating the importance of reflection in service learning. Additional assignments evaluated student participation and skills development that comprised the remaining 15% of the grade.

8. If funding is required, how is the project funded and what is the approximate annual budget for the project?

Very little funding is required for the project as the Department Chair has supported the minor needs of the project. A van that is owned by the College is used to transport the residents from Clemson Downs to the university. Each of the residents was also granted access to temporary network access (by the Clemson Division of Computing and Information Technology) through user IDs that also provided server space for them to save projects. A digital camera that was purchased with previous Service Learning Collaboration mini-grant funds has been used extensively in the project.

9. Feel free to add any comments you have about your project.

This project has truly been the most rewarding activity that I have engaged in throughout my time as a faculty member at Clemson. Each time I worked with this group I have seen students "light up" in a unique way – knowing that they made a positive impact in someone's life. Equally, the residents of Clemson Downs have always commented on the enjoyment they get from spending time with goal-oriented youth and the opportunity to share their wisdom developed through a multitude of lifetime experiences.

This semester students will meet with Dr. Deborah Thomason, Associate Professor of the Family and Youth Development program at Clemson to learn about successful practices that can be incorporated into the project regarding ISL. Additionally, all participants in the will be involved in a study that will assess paradigms created through ISL.