

NOMINATION FORM
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICE LEARNING COMPETITION

Institution: Columbia College

Title of Project: Salvation Army Family Store

Project Director: Jessica Berry

Contact Information for Project Director:

Division of Education
Columbia College
1301 Columbia College Drive
Columbia, South Carolina 29203

Establishment Date of Project:

Project began August 2016 with a new cohort continuation Spring 2016 (Dr. Marla Sanders)

Unit That Administers Project:

Columbia College

Total Number of Students Involved: Fall and Spring: 29 Students

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE NOMINATED PROJECT
(Insert your response after each question; the response to each question should be no more than one page)

1. For purposes 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 the institution *and is related* to a college course with some type of reflection activity. How does your project meet the parameters of this definition?

Students at Columbia College participate in Liberal Arts 201 (LA 201) learned how to analyze the construction of social justice in a variety of contexts and systems. They learned how to analyze race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion, and/or religion intersect with social justice issues. Students for the 2015-2016 participated in service learning at the Salvation Army Family Store in Columbia.

The Salvation Army Family Store collects donations of clothing, furniture, automobiles, household items and appliances that they sell to members of the community. Proceeds are used to fund rehabilitation centers, Emergency disaster services, clothes for kids, leveraging literacy program, meal service to the homeless, homeless prevention services. The Family Store is open Monday through Friday from 10am – 6pm and Saturdays from 9am-3pm. These hours allow members of the community to come in to purchase low-cost items that fund service initiatives. Many of the people who shop at the Family Store are on a low or fixed income, and/or were recently homeless or jobless and cannot afford to shop in traditional stores. The Family Store provides a low-cost alternative and a place for people to acquire basic living needs.

Last semester was the first semester of our partnership with the Salvation Army in Columbia. This project carried over to the spring semester with a new cohort continuing the partnership. Columbia College students sorted, tagged, processed, and organized goods at the Family Store. They were interacted with people from the Columbia inner-city community that they otherwise would not have interacted. Although it was not originally foreseen, due to the floods in Columbia and across South Carolina, the students were able to directly provide materials to the families who were in need. Students accumulated over 570 hours where they sorted, bagged, and distributed clothes and other household items to families who lost their personal property during the flood.

The LA 201 students wrote five topic reflection papers during the semester. They wrote about their community involvement with the family store and reflected on the insights that they gained which revealed understanding of the community that they served. They also had to relate their experiences in the family store to the relevant theories and concepts from class. They discussed any social problems that they have come in contact with and reflected on the cause and possible solutions.

Finally, the students discussed how class discussions on gender, diversity, and social justice impacted their service experience, interactions with community members at the Family Store, and how these challenged their assumptions on these issues. They researched articles that explored issues of social justice, diversity, and gender, summarized and evaluated the readings as they related to their in-class and out-of-class learning experiences.

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

Columbia College day students that are in their sophomore year are required to take the LA 201 course. This instructor taught one section and worked closely with the Institute for Leadership & Professional Excellence so that the students were placed together at a service-learning site. They also ensured that the students would be able to create small group projects that would be presented at the spring semester Spearsfest on campus. At this event students complete presentations to the campus and community service visitors that describe their experience during service learning and how it has been an eye opening experience for them.

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

In the Fall 2015 semester 19 sophomore undergraduate students participated in service learning at the Salvation Army. This spring, a new cohort of 10 is continuing the connections established in the fall. The students came from a variety of majors across the campus that included: Speech Pathology, Education, Math, Business, and Music.

4. Describe the target community or communities your project serves.

The Salvation Army of Columbia was established in 1906 and is targeted to serve people living in extreme poverty in the Midlands.

The Salvation Army's Family Store program offers an opportunity to those moving from homelessness, or those who are suffering from the results of natural disasters or other disabling circumstances, to meet their material needs. Shoppers can purchase merchandise in good condition for reasonable prices. Anyone in the community can donate new or gently used clothes.

The clothes may then go to a homeless person with a clothing voucher. Customers of all income ranges also shop at the store. Clothes that are neither sold nor given away are bundled, baled and shipped to developing countries where they are distributed to other people in need.

Income generated by the Family Store supports Salvation Army programs for the homeless and families living in poverty. The Family Store has accommodated 1,158 clothing vouchers for people in need, and 216 families received furniture vouchers (fire victims and homeless people establishing a permanent residence). (<https://www.salvationarmycarolinas.org/columbia/family-store>).

Students from Columbia College were in a unique position during this time to be of direct assistance to victims of the South Carolina floods. Their efforts at the Salvation Army Family Store ensured that families that lost everything were able to receive clothing and other household items as they transitioned through the catastrophe.

5. Describe your project's effectiveness in helping to solve the problems or concerns in the target community.

Each of the students completed 30 hours of service learning at the Salvation Army, totaling over 570 hours during the fall semester. This spring the group of 10 will complete 300 hours of service, which will total 870 hours of service learning at this location.

Through their personal topic reflective writing, and end of the semester presentations the students demonstrated and describe her first hand view of the effectiveness of their service. A student wrote:

"..the most memorable and eye opening experience from my community involvement happened towards the end of experience volunteering at the Family Store. I saw this older lady with her two grandchildren, she was checking out at the register as her youngest grandchild no older than five or six was begging her to buy this toy he had been playing with the entire time he was in the store. The older lady seemed not to have money to spare on the toy since she had only come there to buy one thing, which was less than five dollars. But I witnessed another lady who was standing at the register behind her. A complete stranger who offered to buy the toy for the little boy. The excitement on his face and his appreciation for this woman who didn't even know his name will stay with me forever."

Another student wrote:

"Perhaps one of the most eye-opening things for me was seeing the influx of donations and people needing to visit the store after all of the flooding that happened in our state. There was clothing, furniture, small appliances, and home decorations just pouring in after South Carolina was hit with a rainstorm like we had never seen. We have talked in class about how people that are willing and able are usually not the ones that contribute to those less fortunate than they are, but after seeing that influx of donations I would say the opposite. This generosity really showed me that a community could come together and pull through when times were difficult for so many people. Also, no one was judging anyone for having to come to the store to shop for things, contrary to my preconceived notions going into this. At not one point did I see anyone being embarrassed about being in the store, they were happy and overjoyed."

The students were able to see first hand how the hours they spent folding, hanging, bundling, and packaging clothing and other items in the store were not wasted. They were able to witness the joy on a child's face to receive a toy he had been longing for. Additionally, they were able to see the community come together in a time of desperate need. Through this project there were able to gather materials that went directly to those who lost all that they had. They were helping by way of their service and time at the family store to solve the problem of poverty and lack for community members that live in these conditions and for people outside of the community to whom poverty and lack had befallen due to the floods.

6. Describe the degree to which your project enhances student learning while providing specific examples of the service learning activities the college students engage in. Also explain how the service learning activities reinforce or apply what the college students learn in the classroom.

In this class students are offered a safe environment to have meaningful discussions about the complex interrelationship regarding the issues of diversity, gender, and social justice. The students learned about privilege and the intersection of class, and race on education.

The students participated in a privilege walk activity, which opened their eyes to the disparities that exist between social classes. This exercise enhanced their understanding and sympathy towards those living in poverty. Students wrote the following after this exercise:

“Just as we learned in LA 201 change begins with ourselves, acceptance, and the home. I can first begin living my life by advocating for social justice. Especially as a future educator this is of vital importance to ensure all my students are successful regardless of their race (physical characteristics), ethnicity (cultural characteristics) gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc.”

“We are all different and we should work together to ensure social justice isn’t just a fairytale that sounds good on paper. We should work together to embrace diversity in our schools, churches, communities, in our state, country, and globally and should never make a child believe they have to conform to be accepted.”

Having students placed in an inner city Salvation Army they had to interact with many people whom they wouldn’t normally interact. After our course discussions and scenarios they were able to apply their knowledge of acceptance and non-judgment to the people that they encountered at the Salvation Army. They expressed that because of the candid conversations, videos, and activities about race, class, education, gender, homelessness it made them appreciate their situation and be more open to helping those who are less fortunate. This experience put them in an uncomfortable place, which allowed them to fully embrace the motto of the Salvation Army; “Doing the Most Good”. By doing the most good they were able to provide much needed supplies, clothes, and household items to people during their most desperate time of need.

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

Students receive three semester hours when they take LA 201. The service-learning components must be met in order for students to receive course credit. Each student is required to complete 30 service-learning hours.

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

There is no funding for this project.

9. Add any other comments you may have about your project.

The LA 201 students are demonstrating through the Salvation Army their ability to adapt to new situations, communicate with others that are not from the same socioeconomic background as them. They are also demonstrating the importance of service to all mankind and that doing good can be done behind the scenes. Through the Salvation Army they became the hands and feet of a movement to provide the necessary survival items to families who lost all of their belongings to the flood. That event motivated them to fold, sort, and pack faster than ever because they understood that it would help families across the midlands and across the state. Our students finished this course and service-learning opportunity able to recognize, analyze, and take steps to change some of the issues of diversity, gender, and social justice through their respective career paths.

You may also include supplemental information about the project (such as brochures, pictures, etc.).

Please return this form via e-mail by **February 26, 2016**, to:

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