



Learning in the real world

Community service on rise at college campuses

Voluntarism is on the rise on college campuses, and North Carolina is on the trend's leading edge. Student activism is manifesting itself in the form of volunteer service centers, graduation requirements and curriculum-based service learning.

By KATHERINE NOBLE

NEW ORLEANS

It's early morning in New Orleans and a cleanup crew already is sweeping up mounds of empty cups and trash from the nightly drinking and partying ritual that has made Bourbon Street famous.

At a nearby YMCA, a group of college students from Wake Forest University also is up early. Their spring break is almost over and after a week in New Orleans, they're tired. But not from partying.

They easily might be taken for college students on spring break, but they didn't come to New Orleans for the wild nightlife. They came to tutor children from a housing project, help clean and repair a halfway house and paint a home for developmentally disabled women.

Other Wake Forest students spent the week in South Dakota on a Sioux Indian reservation, in Illinois working on flood relief and in South Carolina at a national wildlife refuge.

Wake Forest students aren't alone in jumping on the service bandwagon. Colleges and universities throughout North Carolina and the U.S. are witnessing a resurgence of the idealism and dedication that harkens to the early days of the Peace Corps and VISTA.

"I don't recall, even at that time, that we were so concerned about the world," says Kevin Cox, a spokesman for Wake Forest University.

Throughout the year at Wake Forest, nearly 800 students — one of every four at the Winston-Salem school — volunteer through the student-run Volunteer Service Corps.

Jessica Davey, a Wake Forest junior who spent spring break in New Orleans, traveled last summer to Calcutta, India, to work with Mother Teresa. "It was an opportunity for me to learn from a woman and her followers who have represented, who have been the epitome of what it means to be a servant leader."

Davey and her fellow students themselves exemplify dedication to service.

"We're a student organization that has as its mission to commit ourselves — students, faculty and staff — to humanitarian values and civic responsibility," says Davey of her school's Volunteer Service Corps. "We see community involvement as an integral part of a person's education."

So do educators, administrators and students at Central Piedmont Community College; Elon, Davidson, Guilford, Mars Hill, Brevard and Warren Wilson colleges; the University of North Carolina at Asheville; North Carolina Central University, and Johnson C. Smith University — to name a few.

Many of these schools are on the forefront of a national trend toward incorporating voluntarism and service-learning into college students' lives.

Five colleges in North Carolina recently received grants of \$22,000 to \$50,000 each from the Council of Independent Colleges to put into effect or expand service-learning in their curriculum. Schools in North Carolina received more of the grants awarded than in any other state.

"We believe that a lot of the action in community service and service-learning is at these colleges," says Steve Pelletier, director of public affairs at the council, a group of 345 small, private liberal arts colleges.

The 30 grants are part of a multi-year effort that the organization hopes will produce a publication on service-learning and a national conference on the subject in 1995. The project is being funded by an anonymous gift of \$1.25 million given to the council for the project.

Brenda Armentrout, coordinator of service learning at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, knows already how much service can benefit a student's education. She's been incorporating service-learning into her communications classes for more than a decade. Only recently did she realize there was a name for extending her student's learning environment into the community.



Davidson College student Elizabeth Flemming teaches a lesson at the "Wonderful Wednesday" after-school program.

Photo courtesy of Davidson College



Wake Forest University student Brent Watkins volunteers with "Project Pumpkin" at the Winston-Salem school.

Photo courtesy of Wake Forest University

Now, she's a leader in the state to make service learning a core part of a college education. Last month, she organized a conference on community service attended by 70 representatives from 50 two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities in both North and South Carolina.

Armentrout says integrating service into academic studies is important not only so students can learn the value of helping others, but also so they can investigate possible career choices and establish contacts for jobs after graduation.

And, she says, the skills a student can develop through service are fun-

damental to the whole idea of a liberal arts education.

"It enhances their critical thinking, decision making, time management and goal setting skills," she says. "It broadens their horizons and increases their responsibility. It develops concern for others and self-esteem and confidence."

"Instead of just volunteering," says Armentrout, "service-learning incorporates the experience into the classroom. The classes take on a new meaning and new importance. It isn't just a required class any longer and the student starts to understand why they need that foundation."

As at most North Carolina schools, Armentrout says, Central Piedmont won't make service-learning a requirement. Instead, she is working on setting up a certificate program for students who take a certain number of courses with a service-learning component.

Several North Carolina schools, including Central Piedmont, belong to Campus Compact, a national coalition of colleges and universities formed to help develop national and state policies that are supportive of community service. State Campus Compact offices provide hands-on assistance to campuses interested in setting up volunteer or service-learning programs.

Roger Nozaki, director of planning at Campus Compact headquarters in Rhode Island, says integrating service with academic study is a national trend. Only nine of the coalition's 400 members have service as a graduation requirement.

Campus Compact was formed in 1985 by a group of college presidents who felt that students were getting a

Highlighting colleges that emphasize community service

"Healing is so urgently needed in our country and around the world," writes Miriam Weinstein in "Making a Difference College Guide, Education for a Better World."

"Join with the many caring and courageous people all over the earth who are seeking to make a difference."

Clearly, this isn't your typical guide to choosing a college. Now in its second edition, "Making a Difference" includes inspirational essays on doing good in the world, as well as a report card system for evaluating colleges based on criteria such as a sense of community among the students, whether professors emphasize teaching over research, and whether students consider their teachers to be inspi-

ration. It also looks at graduation rates and career planning and placement services.

Weinstein encourages her readers to remember that many of the most "thoughtful, socially committed and undergraduate-centered schools are small and often little known. These institutions offer small classes, taught by faculty who care more about teaching than research, and who are glad to see students outside of class."

The book describes 72 colleges and universities in the U.S. at

which ethics, service, global concerns and the environment are integral components of the educational experience — both in and out of the classroom.

The book also includes a list of "making a difference careers" that might result from various majors. For example, a major in Peace and Conflict Studies might lead to a career in

arms control and public policy, Third World development and human rights, the United Nations or civil rights. Or a geology major might help industry, government or education find and use new

resources in an environmentally conscious way, or go on to graduate school in urban planning, engineering or environmental studies.

Weinstein says she wrote the book because, as the result of three college searches for her children, she discovered "how ill equipped my family was to make a good decision." Her son is now attending Warren Wilson College in Asheville, the only North Carolina school included in the book.

The book is available for \$12.95 plus \$2 shipping costs from Sage Press, 524 San Anselmo Ave. No. 225, San Anselmo, Calif. 94960, or by calling (800) 218-4242.5

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