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Terry O'Day

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Pacific University was founded in 1849 to educate orphans of the Oregon Trail and local Native American children. From these beginnings grew an educational institution that fosters an ethic of service that one of the founders, Sidney Harper Marsh, called "right action". In 1982, this ethic took official form with the founding of the Peace and Conflict Studies program whose mission is to develop in students a broad understanding of their responsibilities to their local and global community and how different cultures approach these issues. As part of this program, the Humanitarian Center links campus to community in ways that both serves the common good and develops, supports, and reinforces academic learning. The late former president, Faith Gabelnick was internationally known as an authority and passionate advocate for service learning who sponsored workshops, seminars and programs for students and faculty on campus.

With the hiring of a new president three years ago, Pacific University began an initiative to emphasize elements of the Arts and Sciences curriculum that incorporate experiences that connect theory to practice and promote a consciousness of and responsibility to community. Experiences such as international travel, internships, independent student research, and service learning connect students to the world outside the educational institute in a way that increases their understanding of and gives meaning to their academic studies. These four cornerstone elements are core educational components at Pacific University and we are developing programs with the intent that students will experience some form of these elements during their course of study. The ORCC grant was instrumental in helping us to discover new and effective ways to incorporate service learning into many of our course offerings as well as helping to develop a new entity that is a center for service learning projects on campus.

With its focus on K-12 education, nutrition, and the rural/urban divide, some of our instructors found the mission of ORCC a perfect fit to their course content. Professors in disciplines such as Literature, Exercise Science, History, Education, and others all made adaptations to their courses to include a service learning component. Though interested in the concept of using service to promote civic awareness and increase their student's understanding of course material, many of these professors were unfamiliar with the process and met with varying degrees of success in their first attempts. Regular meetings allowed participants to discuss problems and brainstorm solutions. Through this process, our service learning coordinator helped participating faculty to develop a

greater understanding of why service learning is important and how it engages students in the educational process by giving them the opportunity to use what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. As is typical with active learning curriculum, the integration of classroom instruction with meaningful activities was a transformative experience for both students and professors. Many professors were surprised at the positive outcomes generated and expressed a determination to continue working to develop the service component in their courses.

One difficulty we faced with the service learning format was a lack of easily accessible service opportunities in our small college town. Many students do not have access to transportation and our somewhat rural location made it difficult for many to find opportunities that fit both their interests and their schedules. To address this concern, one of the projects we funded was the development of an educational community resource that focused on both our new commitment to making the University a model for sustainable practices and the ORCC grant requirements of k-12 education, nutrition, and the urban/rural divide. This new interdisciplinary project is an arm of the Environmental Studies program and offers many opportunities for students to complete research projects, gain experience in their chosen fields and take an active role in promoting sustainable practices for our community.

Though the B-Street project is now directly connected to our service learning center as a multi-disciplinary service learning site, it's original concept was developed by a professor in the art department who was interested in finding a site for an environmental art project. Once a site was found, it became apparent that there were many other potential tie-ins to the development of the site. It was at this point that our service learning coordinator became aware of the project and began working with the art professor to develop a service learning course that would focus on providing the service of helping to develop an educational resource for the community of Forest Grove.

Though only in operation for about two years, the B-Street Permaculture Project is already an active site with students, faculty, and community members working together to create an educational resource center that promotes awareness of and action towards incorporating sustainable practices into individual, institutional and civic operations. The site's mission is based on the permaculture principles of care for the earth, care for the people, and fair share of resources, as applied through systems thinking design methods. Systems thinking requires a broad interdisciplinary understanding of cultural and environmental structures; connecting this project to the study of the liberal arts at Pacific University allows students and faculty from every discipline to contribute and combine their efforts in a synergistic way. In part, the site's outreach and education efforts promote civic activity related to changing our reliance on industrialized international food distribution systems to that of local small farm suppliers and individual gardening efforts. These changes in how we obtain our food will strengthen local economies, improve nutritional outcomes, and redistribute social imbalances across the urban/rural divide.